

**AGRICULTURE AND LIVESTOCK AT THE URBAN MARGIN:
FERTILE GROUND FOR COLLECTIVE ACTION**

by

Adam Shiloh Moates

(Under the Direction of Robert E. Rhoades)

ABSTRACT

This dissertation is a comparative ethnographic study of agricultural and livestock production strategies in peri-urban Montevideo, Uruguay which explores variability in production and cooperative action strategies. The main research questions addressed in this comparative study are: (1) what are the primary factors or conditions that shape urban/peri-urban agricultural and livestock production enterprises, (2) under what conditions do urban agriculturalists organize collective action strategies and, (3) how do municipal politics and institutional linkages influence agricultural and livestock production practices in and around Montevideo.

In Montevideo, a rich diversity of urban agricultural strategies and cooperative action involving agriculture and livestock production is practiced. Production strategies and social organization are influenced by many factors in the urban landscape such as shifts in the national

economy, urban land-use policy, differential access to resources, variable land-tenure security, and rural-urban and intra-urban migration. In recent years the social landscape of urban and peri-urban Montevideo has been undergoing a transformation as the number of irregular settlements or land invasions increases. The mixing of displaced urban working class families and individuals, commonly referred to as *neo-pobres* or new poor, well established communities of *clasificadores*, individuals who “live off the trash,” and family-run organic grower organizations that practice various forms of urban agriculture/livestock production and exhibit a diversity of organizational strategies at the urban margin make Montevideo an ideal study site for this comparative research project. The analysis shows that the three populations strategically create organizations and collective actions strategies to improve their institutional visibility, secure and improve their access to urban resources, and to contest and resist municipal land-use policies and the current push to “regularize” irregular settlements. This research also points to the effects of large-scale political and economic forces on the urban margin and the difficulty in implementing policy therein.

INDEX WORDS: Ecological anthropology, agricultural anthropology, urban anthropology, urban agriculture, collective action, social movement, development, margin, urban livestock, scavenging, organic agriculture, economic crisis, urban migration, irregular settlements, squatter communities, urban land-use, peri-urban

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Adam Shiloh Moates

B.A., Radford University, 1999

M.A.A., University of Maryland, 2002

A Dissertation Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the University of Georgia in Partial
Fulfillment of the Requirements of the Degree

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

ATHENS, GEORGIA

2010

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by

ADAM SHILOH MOATES

Major Professor: Robert E. Rhoades

Committee: Virginia Nazarea
Carla Roncoli
William Miller

Electronic Version Approved:
Maureen Grasso
Dean of the Graduate School
The University of Georgia
May 2010

DEDICATION

To Doctor (Rhoades),

As I sat and worked on completing my dissertation and prepared to defend you were constantly in my thoughts. I never in my wildest dreams thought I would get this far and I owe much of that to you alone. You took this poor Appalachian kid under your wing and gave me a chance to do great things. You have been my mentor, boss, guru, motivational speaker, second father and most importantly a dear friend. I will never be able to repay such a debt and only if I am lucky will I touch half as many lives around the world as you have.

Thank you for the days in the mountains, on the farm and in the classroom. Your aggie underlings have much to carry on.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

My connection with agriculture goes back as far as I can remember. Messing around in the garden, playing in barns and sitting on the porch shelling peas with my Mom are some of my earliest memories. Gardening always brought people together but I didn't start to pay attention to agriculture/gardens--as meeting places, as acts of resistance--until graduate school. In Washington, D.C. I saw the social potential of agriculture, the nexus a garden provides for community interaction, a place where folks can leave their egos and hold-ups at the gate. Admittedly, the time at the gardens also was a call back home where I could play in the dirt and pretend to escape the city. During my time in Ecuador, agriculture was at the heart of indigenous revitalization movements and the organic movement was taking off back home in the States. Agriculture as a social movement and the politicization of agriculture is something that fascinated me. I moved on to look at urban agricultural systems in Havana, Cuba, and finally to Montevideo, Uruguay.

A long list of people is responsible for my dedication to anthropology and cross-cultural studies of agriculture. Cecil and Shelley Cook gave me my first taste of life over seas by taking me into their home for a year in South Africa when I was a teenager. Dr. Mary Lalone, my undergraduate anthropology advisor, urged me to study abroad, work hard and continue studying. Dr. Fatimah Jackson, my masters advisor, *really* taught me to work hard, inspired me on many levels and introduced me to Dr. Robert Rhoades, my dissertation advisor here at University of Georgia. I met Dr. Rhoades for the first time in 2000 while I was finishing my

master's research. He hired me on as his project coordinator (SANREM-CRSP) and *expected* me to work harder. While in Ecuador I was exposed to agricultural research, interdisciplinary approaches and “big development” and for the first time I knew the direction I wanted to follow. Dr. Rhoades offered to continue acting as my mentor at University of Georgia and was an unwavering pillar of support over the years even when I was unsure of myself. My research with urban agriculture and agriculture as a platform for social movement is largely inspired by Dr. Rhoades's work and his dedication to and masterful skill at bridging applied research objectives with anthropological inquiry in “the academy.”

My PhD advisory committee Dr. Robert Rhoades, Dr. Carla Roncoli, Dr. Virginia Nazarea and Dr. William Miller, were all investigators involved in the SANREM project in Ecuador, and each one of them played crucial roles in my academic and professional development. Dr. Roncoli was a late addition to my committee yet was undoubtedly the most instrumental figure in developing this dissertation. Dr. Roncoli was there for me at the most difficult of times. Work provided by her and the Southeast Climate Consortium was more than timely as well as beneficial for my methods training. More importantly she stepped up in the very turbulent final months of writing when it seemed my committee was crumbling and acted as the very cornerstone. I am deeply grateful for her professional guidance and her writing genius. Dr. Nazarea was always supportive of my research interests over the years even when others thought urban agriculture was a phenomenon unworthy of intellectual pursuit. Dr. Miller provided a critical perspective from outside of anthropology, kept my research grounded in the soil (Dr. Miller is a soil scientist) and has been a great mentor and friend since we worked together in Ecuador a decade ago.

This study is based on research that was funded by the National Science Foundation's "Ethnographic Research Training Grant," "The Melissa Hague Field Study Award" of the Department of Anthropology at University of Georgia and "The Urban Agriculture Dissertation Research Grant," provided by an anonymous foundation. This research would not have been possible without their generous financial support.

I have to thank my friends from all over. All my bro's and sisters, real and fictive, from back home in the Appalachian mountains of Virginia that thought, and probably still think, that I was crazy for staying in school for so many years yet were there for me in more ways than I can write about here on the page. My friends and colleagues at University of Georgia express a solidarity that is not so common in other departments, Milan Shrestha, Kate Dunbar, Geoff Kelley, Brian Campbell, Todd Crane, Jim Veteto, David Greenawalt, Dave Himmelfarb and many, many others. My friends and colleagues in Montevideo, particularly Beatriz Bellenda, my first contact, who personally introduced me to scholars at the University of the Republic of Uruguay and made gaining *entrée* feel more like joining a family.

The Anthropology Department Chairs, Dr. Erve Garrison, and more recently Ted Gragson, and the other departmental pillars, Margie Floyd, LaBau Bryant, Lisa Norris and Deb Chasteen, were always supportive and went out of their ways to open doors and make positive things happen for the graduate students.

And lastly my folks, Tom and Carol Moates, who were always ready to offer a shoulder to cry on or motivational kicks to the rear, depending on the situation, both being equally invaluable. Tom tried to take my writing to the next level, patiently working through the pages and many pots of coffee during intensive writing sessions back on the farm. I picked up a few

things but I still have much to learn from him. I thank both of them dearly for always being there.

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LIST OF ACRONYMS

CCdCs- *Clasificadores Criadores de Cerdos* (Trash Sorters that Raise Hogs)

CGIAR- Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research

CIP- *Centro Internacional de la Papa* (The International Potato Center)

CIRAD- *Coopération Internationale en Recherche Agronomique pour le Développement*
(Agricultural Research for Development)

COAG/FAO- (Committee on Agriculture/Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations)

ETC- The Netherland's International Urban Agriculture Programme

FAO- Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations

FAO-SOFA Food and Agriculture Organization-The State of Food and Agriculture

FEU- Federacion de Esudiantes Universitarios, (Federation of University Students)

IDRC- International Development Research Centre

IMM- *Intendencia Municipal de Montevideo*, (Municipality of Montevideo)

PPAOC- *Programa para la Produccion de Alimentos y Organizacion Comunitaria*, (The Program for Food Production and Community Organization)

RUAF- Resource Centre on Urban Agriculture and Forestry

TUAN- The Urban Agriculture Network

UCRUS- *Union de Clasificadores de Resudios Urbanos Solidos*, (Union of Sorters of Solid Urban Waste)

UdeLAR- *Universidad de la Republica de Uruguay*, (The University of the Republic of
Uruguay)

UNDP- The United Nations Development Programme

UN-HABITAT- The United Nation's Human Settlements Programme

UPA- Urban/Peri-urban Agriculture

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Examples of urban agriculture worldwide [...] display situations where the practice of city farming accommodates often marginalised subgroups. Urban farming repeatedly allows for the inclusion of women, children, the poor, the homeless and the elderly into constructive food production activities. Thus urban agriculture, in a manner consistent with the practice of conventional community (social and economic) development, can be a constructive contributor to city neighbourhoods, and the social networks of entire cities

(Smit and Bailkey 2006: 145).

This introduction contextualizes the ethnographic research in Montevideo within the overarching theme of urban agriculture at the global scale. Subsequent chapters will focus on ethnographic research among three groups of urban agriculturalists in Montevideo, Uruguay. Grounded in perspectives from agricultural, ecological and urban anthropology the findings reveal a high degree of variability between populations, which practice a range of productive strategies and cooperative actions, responding to diverse economic and political challenges and opportunities. The research project also has an important institutional component, which needs to be fore-grounded in any study of urban agriculture. The urban margin around Montevideo is a dynamic landscape where land tenure, and land use policy have large implications for urban agricultural activities. Therefore the institutional voice, institutions involved in urban

agricultural policy development, enforcement, research, activism (local government, several government offices, NGOs, citizen organizations, the national university) and perspective must be illuminated if concerned scientists and policy makers are to grasp a complete understanding of the limitations and opportunities that are products of institutional policy. As Netting (1981) suggests, a historical analysis can be particularly powerful in investigating how smallholder practices have adapted to pressures on resource bases and in identifying potential policy options.

1.1 Research Questions

The central research questions and related working hypotheses addressed in this comparative study are:

1. What are the primary factors or conditions that shape urban/peri-urban agricultural and livestock production practices?
 - Urban/Peri-urban agricultural practices have been and continue to be shaped largely by political-economic forces and perceived land-tenure security.
2. Under what conditions do urban agriculturalists organize collective action strategies?
 - Collective action for the creation of “community” and/or contentious political action facilitates institutional “visibility” and access to resources necessary for urban agriculture and livestock practices.
3. How do municipal politics and institutional linkages influence agricultural and livestock production practices in and around Montevideo?
 - Municipal politics, such as land-use policy and the current process of “regularizing” irregular settlements at the peri-urban margin, both fosters and impedes productive strategies.

To clarify and operationalize the above research questions some of the terms used deserve brief discussion. Community remains a primary theoretical concept and focal point for research in the social sciences. Recent research in anthropology centers on constructing theories and ideas of community (Creed 2006a, Hyland 2005) to engage issues of social justice, ecological sustainability and conservation (Brosius, Tsing and Zerner 2005). Creed (2006) suggests a critical examination of the concept of community and the understanding of the ways the idea is employed and the various ideological and political functions that it performs. The difficulty in defining community as a concept fuels continued discussion of community as a foundation for building theory, critique, policy and anthropological engagement. Community has long provided a conceptual launch pad for anthropological research and although the concept of community has evolved to include social groups that are not bound in geographical spaces, local communities continue to provide a focal point for anthropological engagement. Increasing globalization and urbanization is driving anthropologists to study the effects of exogenous impacts on local communities and the subsequent range of responses by local communities. These global and local processes are providing an opportunity for anthropologists to investigate the importance and variability of local communities and empower and engage them in meaningful ways (Hyland and Bennett 2005).

In this dissertation collective action is used to describe a social movement process that contests established political and economic institutions. Some researchers go as far as saying, “contentious collective action is the basis of social movements [...] because it is the main and often only recourse that ordinary people possess against better-equipped opponents or powerful states (Tarrow 1998:3).” Collective action also has the ability to do much more than contend: it

fosters the creation of organizations, defines ideologies, mobilizes resources and people and promotes the construction of collective identities.

The margin has been theorized in various ways but is predominantly viewed as a social and physical space that is illegible to the state, of partial belonging and where nature and disorder dominates. Das and Poole offer three concepts of the margin which are particularly poignant to this study. Margins can be seen as peripheral areas where individuals are not sufficiently “socialized into the law”, areas that are illegible to the state, and as a space between bodies, law and discipline. The margin is a space that has to be repeatedly defined and ordered by the state and where “sites of practice where law and other state practices are colonized by other forms of regulation that emanate from the pressing needs of populations to secure political and economic survival (Das and Poole: 1991: 8).” Irregular settlements on the fringe of Montevideo embody both the conceptual social and territorial margins which lie at the edge of society, just beyond the reach of the state providing fertile ground for the creation of social movements and the creation of new identities and social order. The three populations discussed in this dissertation have indeed taken advantage of the margin to create social movements to resist political and economic regulations and hardships. As such the margin is an ideal birthing ground for social movements, contentious politics, the building of sovereignty and autonomy from the state and the creation of community and new forms of identity.

1.2 Urban Agriculture in the Global Development Arena and Anthropology

Urban agriculture is an integral part of the urban landscape of cities around the world. By the mid 1990s the FAO and other development agencies and NGOs were moving toward a

definition of urban agriculture. The COAG/FAO (Committee on Agriculture, Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations) was among the first organizations to come close to a working definition of urban agriculture during the 15th Session of the COAG/FAO in Rome in January of 1999.

While there is not yet a universally agreed-upon definition, Urban and Peri-urban Agriculture [...] is perceived as agriculture practices within and around cities which compete for resources (land, water, energy, labor) that could also serve other purposes to satisfy the requirements of the urban population. Important sectors of UPA include horticulture, livestock, fodder and milk production, aquaculture, and forestry. Therefore, for expository purposes, the term UPA should be understood to be inclusive [of urban and peri-urban agriculture] unless otherwise specified (1999)

This definition portrays urban agriculture as a homogeneous phenomenon that glosses over the diversity of behaviors and characteristics of participants in urban agriculture. Urban agriculture research allows a unique opportunity for anthropologists to examine the variability among participants in urban agriculture and in the productive behaviors as well as the spectrum of social and cooperative actions that are carried out and interact with the greater urban ecological, economic and political systems.

Researchers estimate that by the mid-1990s, 800 million city dwellers participated in some type of urban agriculture around the world as a strategy to increase their food security and diversify their income (Egziabher et al 1994; Smit and Nasr 1996; Koc et al. 1999; Bakker et al. 2000; Santandreu et al. 2000). According to demographers, cities already claim more than half the world's population and projections state that by the year 2025 about two-thirds of the world's

population will be urban, 80% living in the developing world (FAO-SOFA 1998; Mougeot 2000). Particularly relevant for this dissertation research is that, “if present trends hold, the vast majority of these people will be living in irregular settlements, without access to decent food, shelter, water and sanitation (Mougeot 2005:14; UN-HABITAT 2004).” Irregular urban settlements can no longer be viewed as a temporary phenomenon but rather a permanent and growing trend that interacts socially, ecologically and economically with the urban centers.

Anthropologists have contributed to social, ecological, economic, and political dimensions of urban agricultural production to inform policy in a meaningful way though “scholarly” literature from the social sciences is dwarfed by the much more abundant “gray” literature on urban agriculture published as research reports by development agencies and NGOs.

Much of the recent social research that has been conducted, by anthropologists and other social scientists from “the academy,” on urban and peri-urban agriculture frequently straddles the academic and applied/development realms, often being either supported by development agencies and initiatives or responding to such agencies’ agendas. Peter Little’s article, “Confronting Change: Contract Farming and Production Relations in Peri-Urban Areas of Sub-Saharan Africa (2000),” for example, is a paper written for, “Broadening Access and Strengthening Input Market Systems-Collaborative Research Support Program (BASIS-CRSP). Besides Little’s research there is very little that has been published within Anthropology that deals directly with urban agriculture. Guyer’s and Lambin’s 1993 article, “Land Use in an Urban Hinterland: Ethnography and Remote Sensing in the Study of African Intensification,” is relevant though it is largely a paper that focuses on methodological innovation that unites remote sensing technology to ethnography.

Recent books are beginning to explore the social dynamics of urban agriculture yet they

are still rooted firmly in development and policy development. Two of the most noteworthy, leading experts in urban agriculture research are Luc Mougeot, Senior Program Specialist at IDRC, and Gordon Prain, Global Coordinator of Urban Harvest, the CGIAR system wide initiative on urban and peri-urban agriculture. Mougeot's (2008) edited volume, "AGROPOLIS: The Social, Political and Environmental Dimensions of Urban Agriculture," has a strong social science perspective and was published by the International Development Research Centre. Healthy City Harvests: Generating Evidence to Guide Policy on Urban Agriculture (2008) was published jointly by The International Potato Center (CIP)/Urban Harvest and Makerere Press.

Frank Ellis' and James Sumberg's (1997), "Food Production, Urban Areas and Policy responses," critically examines the view of urban agriculture as a phenomenon that reduces poverty and increases food security. They argue that urban agriculture could well, "become one of those fashionable concerns that from time to time cause significant shifts of scarce government, donor or non government organization (NGO) resources away from other strategies and activities aimed at poverty reduction in developing countries (Ellis and Sumberg 1998:213-214)."

Looking back a decade later it seems Ellis and Sumberg were not far off the mark. Urban agriculture as a phenomenon sparked, and continues to spark, a great deal of interest and investment in development initiatives. By 2001 various organizations (The Urban Agriculture Network (TUAN), Swedish International Development Agency, Resource Centre on Urban Agriculture and Forestry (RUAF), and ETC (The Netherland's International Urban Agriculture Programme) compiled and published the impressive "Annotated Bibliography on Urban Agriculture." This document is over 800 pages and is broadly divided into three areas—impacts of urban agriculture, forms of urban agriculture and special subjects. It is a clear product of the

vast amount of attention, as a point of investigation, and the crystallization of urban agriculture as a concept in international development.

Several civil society organizations such as CARE, SAVE, Oxfam, and Heifer Institute are also involved in grassroots projects in various capacities around the world that promote urban agricultural activities in both developed and developing countries. Other major donors and international agencies involved in urban agriculture initiatives besides the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) of the United Nations are the International Development Research Centre (IDRC), Centro Internacional de la Papa (CIP) the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), and the World Bank.

The fact that urban agriculture, as a site of investigation, lies predominantly in the realm of development where the focus has largely remained on its contribution to food security, meeting millennium goals, and the array of management and policy issues that accompany urban agricultural activities is not, however, surprising. Urban agriculture commands attention and is politically charged because of issues that are not normally associated with rural or traditional agriculture—competition for urban resources, tenuous land tenure security, and public health risks. These characteristics of urban agriculture, particularly agricultural and livestock at the urban margin, provide an ideal conceptual platform for building scholarship in Anthropology and for engagement with applied and development programs.

Urban agriculture is not always cited as a positive or welcome addition to the urban landscape. The view of agricultural and livestock production in cities as backwards and as a rural holdover that impedes urban development and creates conflict with urban land use politics will be thoroughly discussed in this dissertation. Issues such as political alignment and positions of conflict, institutional visibility and clandestine production are juxtaposed with other

viewpoints where urban agriculture is seen as an answer to urban poverty. Urban agriculture, however, is not always cited as a positive or welcome addition to the urban landscape. Sanyal (1980), among others have detailed negative actions and perceptions of agricultural activities in cities by institutional authorities. According to Sanyal agricultural activities were perceived as a hindrance to economic development and technological progress and as such should be extinguished. Such sentiments are made quite clear by the following quote that was made at The Second International Colloquium of Mayors on Governance for Sustainable Growth and Equity, UNDP, United Nations, New York City, 1997.

Authorities are hesitant to be more proactive on urban agriculture because it is largely seen as resulting from a failure to address rural development adequately. It is creating havoc in urban land use planning and management. It is holding up city development and redevelopment (Mayor Mwale of Lusaka: 1997).

The role and perception of urban agriculture has evolved over the years and is being recognized for its value in increasing food security and improving the urban landscape. Since the beginning of the 21st century several international organizations, government organizations and non-government organizations have responded to urban poverty and global urbanization trends with agendas such as the UN Millennium Declaration, the Declaration on Cities and Other Human Settlements in the New Millennium and the World Summit on Sustainable Development which all recognize the importance of urban agriculture and the move towards more sustainable urban development and poverty reduction (UN-HABITAT, 2004a). The creation of the United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-HABITAT), the bi-annual summit of the World Urban Forum, Global Urban Observatory and other UN sponsored programs are evidence of an

invigorated focus on the urban landscapes and developments initiatives that are having repercussions at the international, national and local levels (Mougeuot 2005).

A more recent definition of urban agriculture brings us closer to the importance of such interactions and an increased awareness of the importance of the peri-urban landscape.

Urban agriculture is an industry located within (intra-urban) or on the fringe (peri-urban) of a town, a city or a metropolis, which grows and raises, processes and distributes a diversity of food and non-food products, (re-)using largely human and material resources, products and services found in and around that urban area, and in turn supplying human and material resources, products and services largely to that urban area. (Mougeot, 2000:10)

The above definition is cited in publications by UNHABITAT's Urban Management Programme (Cabannes and Dubbeling, 2001; Dubbeling and Santandreu, 2003), the Special Programme for Food Security of the UN's Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) (Drescher, 2001), and international agricultural research centers such as the Centre de Coopération Internationale en Recherche Agronomique pour le Développement (CIRAD) (Moustier and Salam Fall, 2004). Definitions of UA will continue to evolve as they are applied to an ever-diverse range of contexts and situations but the attention to the peri-urban region is particularly relevant for this research.

Populations currently living in irregular urban settlements are estimated at 1 billion and are likely to increase to 1.5 billion by 2020 (UN-HABITAT, 2004c). It is clear from the above figures that a great deal of attention must be given to our cities in the next years if we intend to meet current Millenium Development Goals. In their statement on Urban and Peri-urban agriculture, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations defined the major issues that are central to their mandate in member countries as follows:

to provide adequate access to nutritional food for the growing urban populations of the developing world; to efficiently integrate urban and peri-urban agriculture with rural agriculture (in general they are not substitutes for each other); to develop land and water policies that account for agricultural production in urban and peri-urban areas and; to guide dynamic agricultural practices within and outside cities towards sustainability goals (economic, social, and environmental).

Mougeot (2000:9) points out that, “It is not its urban location which distinguishes urban agriculture from rural agriculture, but the fact that it is embedded in and interacting with the urban ecosystem (referring to both ecological and economic systems).” Future replications of ethnographic studies of urban smallholder behavior in other cities across the world will establish a broader base of data for the testing of external validity and the ability to generalize more broadly about urban smallholder behavior in an array of contexts and land tenure arrangements.

1.3 Theoretical Foundations and Gaps

The origins of and variability in human subsistence systems is a core concern in Anthropology. Within studies of subsistence, Anthropology boasts an impressive amount of literature about agriculture from archeological research (Flannery 1965, 1973; Reed 1977) and studies of industrialized agriculture (Bennett 1982; Goldschmidt 1947, 1978). In general, however, studies of agriculture within Anthropology have historically emphasized a focus on studies of rural, ethnic subsistence farmer communities (Bennett 1969; Barlett 1980a; Geertz 1963; Netting 1968, 1974, 1976, 1993, Netting et al. 1993; Rappaport 1967; Rhoades et al.

1983). The urban transformation that Latin America is experiencing brings with it a range of consequences for urban poor (Halebsky and Harris 1995) and as a result agriculture is making its way into the urban landscape. Rural-urban migrants are often the most important drivers, innovators and participants in urban agriculture (Holm 1992) and often do not come from large-scale agricultural livelihoods (Ellis and Harris 2004). Rural-urban migrants accustomed to smallholder intensive agricultural subsistence (Netting 1993) find it natural to take advantage of small urban patches of ground with the intent to cultivate. “[...] with increasing population pressure against finite natural resources, people will continue to seek ways to improve and intensify [agricultural] production (Rhoades 1984:1; Boserup 1965, 1981; Netting 1993; Netting et al 1993).”

Agricultural Change

Agricultural growth generally follows two trends, expansion—the extension of land under cultivation—or intensification—the increased or intensified productivity of land under production. Expansion is more common than intensification under conditions of low population density and greater availability of lands. In contrast, areas with limited arable land, agricultural growth often follows the intensive use of those available agricultural lands. Theories that seek to explain agricultural intensification can be divided into two broad categories: those related to production for consumption at the household level under conditions of “subsistence,” and those related to production for market demand (Shrestha 2007). Because of limited land or access to land, urban agriculture falls more in line with an intensification of subsistence farming though as

previous chapters illustrate urban agriculture does not always fall in line with this short-lived model of intensification for subsistence.

Other theories that more closely relate to change in productive activities in urban and peri-urban agriculture which, expand on or criticize earlier theories that rely heavily on population growth, point to other factors that influence agricultural change. The Boserupian Theory has been widely used to explain agricultural change in subsistence economies. Some critics, however, believe that the theory is limited in its simplicity (Grigg 1979; Stone 2003). Brookfield criticizes Boserup for placing too much emphasis on population growth (Brookfield 1972: 39) and underscores that “innovation” provides an alternative explanation of agricultural change. Innovation can be a new practice or a new combination of practices that has the ability to change productivity or the quality of a unit of labor input. Innovation can also include change in land tenure, change in settlement patterns or any other intervention that introduces qualitative changes to production systems (Brookfield 1984).

As discussed throughout the dissertation the three populations constantly negotiate and adapt their organizational dynamics to most efficiently access resources and create productive agricultural and livestock enterprises. Other researchers broaden the focus of intensification theory to consider socioeconomic, political and ecological conditions of agricultural growth (Padoch 1986; Stone and Downum 1999). Similarly, exogenous factors, such as market incentives (Brush and Turner 1988), class, and impoverishment (Turner and Ali 1996) can also have considerable impacts on the trajectory of agricultural production.

The semi-urban periphery around Montevideo, Uruguay, and other cities around the world is often characterized by tenuous land tenure security and weak state regulation. Informal settlements, or occupations, at the urban margins, which are typical of Latin American cities, are

attributed more to economics and politics than to a scarcity of land itself (Portes 1976; Perlman 1976; Halebsky and Harris 1995; Gilbert 1998; Low 1999). This research considers large-scale socio-economic processes and their influence on agricultural production (Guyer 1997; Stone 2001; Robbins 2004). The inclusion of exogenous forces such as market incentives (Brush and Turner 1988), land tenure (Moran 1993), class, or impoverishment (Turner and Ali 1996) and collective action at the urban margin makes this dissertation of urban “non-traditional smallholders” timely as well as informative to the larger question of change in agricultural systems. Relations between different economic sectors, economies and political systems are fundamental to determining local dynamics. This point is critical in understanding the unequal relations in and across societies, which allows one sector to extract resources and benefits from another. Looking at relations between different economic sectors and classes focuses political economic analyses and offers other explanations that oppose the technology and demands theories that are influenced by the (neo)-Malthusian views of agricultural change.

Organization and Community

There are numerous case studies about cooperative action in urban Latin America. These studies illustrate the creation of community and a wide range of mutual assistance by poor urban dwellers in Latin America (Portes 1976; Perlman 1976; Cashdan 1985; Halebsky and Harris 1995; Barr 2001). Intra-community and inter-community social networks long have been recognized as having strong influences on the evolution of conflict or cooperation during times of resource scarcity (Simmel 1904 [1955]; Coser 1956; Coleman 1957; Mack 1965; LeVine and Campbell 1972; Laughlin 1974; Laughlin and Brady 1978; Dirks 1980; Corbett 1988; Devereux

1993; Ross 1993; Homer-Dixon 1992; Homer-Dixon and Percival 1996; Hauge and Ellingsen 1998). Much of the literature on cooperation explores situations of persistent or chronic poverty in cities. This research looks at both chronic poverty, in the case of the *clasificadores*, and new poverty, acknowledging collective action after a recent and sudden large-scale economic crisis, in a country that was once considered the “Switzerland of South America.”

This study moves beyond classic migration theory centered on micro economic models by focusing on displaced urban migrants' experiences and behaviors in urban agriculture, the rural-urban interface, and community and network development (Brettell 2000a, 2000b). This research looks primarily at intra-urban migrants and their experience with agriculture, though a historical perspective of the rural “peasants” shift to an urban industrial economy, which has been so well documented (Mayer 1961, 2001; Mangin 1970; Watson 1975; Foner 1987, 2000; Chavez 1992; Gmelch 1977, 1992; Bretell 1979) is also discussed.

Urban dwellers frequently form kin-based and extensive social groups as a cooperative strategy to survive during times of resource scarcity and tenuous land tenure security (Halebsky 1995 and Harris; Lobo 1995 [1982]; Isbell 1985 [1978]). Cooperative welfare projects in urban settlements (Mcfarren 1992) and the Andean minga are other examples of mutual support based on work based solidarity (Buechler and Buechler 1971). This dissertation, more specifically, contributes to recent work on communal action by organized land invasion (Dosh and Lerager 2006; Almeida 2007; Portes et al 2005), and landless movements in Latin America, particularly referencing cases in Brazil and Argentina (Branford and Rocha 2002; Harnecker 2002; Wright and Wolford 2003; Bartolome 2006; Boaventura 2007b) but maintaining focus on agriculture and livestock at the peri-urban margin.

Contentious collective action around agriculture and livestock production activities and the general environment of “the margin” promotes the creation of new forms of community and identities of resistance beyond the reach of the state. This study approaches the processes of the formation of community and cooperative action strategies in a social movement framework because of the sense of opposition by informants’ organizations to political and economic institutions (Frohn 1995) and builds on what social movement researchers (Foweraker 1995; Jenkins 2008; McCarthy and Zald 2008) refer to as “resource mobilization theory” because of the focus on strategy for resource acquisition and the emphasis on economics.

With increasing globalization, anthropologists have sought to understand the impact of outside forces on local communities and the ways in which local communities respond to these forces. In light of this, there remains a strong belief in the importance of local communities and a concomitant effort to enable, empower and engage them (Hyland and Bennett 2005). This research makes an important contribution to relevant literature in Anthropology as well as to a greater understanding of urban social dynamics and subsistence strategies in irregular settlements. We are currently, 2008/2009, facing a global economic crisis and unprecedented rates of urbanization, displacement and unemployment, therefore, the importance and timeliness of this research, which looks precisely at how urban poor organize themselves and create productive strategies, responding to an array of challenges and opportunities, cannot be overstated.

1.4 Research Questions and Methodology

The fieldwork for this research project was conducted over nine months (August 2008-May 2009) in and around Montevideo to follow the duration of the agricultural season. The research also benefitted from two months (June and July of 2006) of preliminary field-work during which time research permits were obtained and official letters of collaboration were petitioned through contacts at The University of the Republic of Uruguay and various offices of the *Intendencia Municipal de Montevideo* and the *Ministerio de Agricultura y Pesca*.

Sampling and Choosing Key Informants

This study is a comparison of three distinct populations' organizational, collective action and productive strategies and as such the methods employed, particularly sampling methods, vary between the populations. Due to a focus on the urban margin, the majority of individuals sampled for the research were selected from CCZ9, ¹*Centro Communal Zonal 9*, the metropolitan district delimited by the Municipality of Montevideo with the highest concentration of irregular settlements.

¹ Montevideo was divided into 18 zonales or zones as part of the process of political decentralization put forth by the capital city's first socialist municipal government, *frente amplio*, which began in 1990.



Figure 1: Map of the 18 *Centros Comunes Zonales* (CCZ)



Figure 2: Aerial Foto of Montevideo with Zonal 9 Highlighted

The purposive sample allowed for maximizing spatial variation and variation on important independent variables (Bernard 2002). The sample includes well documented cooperative production organizations (Gomez-Perazzoli 2007; UdelaR/IMM 2005; Santandrea 2000) thereby fortifying the temporal component of this dissertation. Additional participants were identified with assistance from various institutions and organizations and peer and word of mouth recommendations. The 90 informants across the three populations were interviewed using the structured interview questionnaire as well as in-depth, semi-structured interviews (Johnson 1990; Davis and Wagner 2003). Numerous officials at various institutions (Intendencia Municipal de Montevideo, El Ministerio de Agricultura y Pesca, Montevideo Rural, La Comision Sectorial de Extension y Actividades en el Medio (CSEAM), Universidad de la Republica) were selected to participate in the study.

- Community Gardening “*Comuneros*” (n=30) were selected using the urban agriculture census of Montevideo (UdelaR/IMM 2005), as a sampling frame. I chose a purposive sample of 5 comuneros from six community gardens (5X6=30) spanning 6 of the 18 “zonales” of Montevideo, delimited by the municipality, representing the vast majority of the urban peripheral belt where over 90% of all irregular settlements in Montevideo reside. The sample includes fifteen individuals from each of the six “zonales” involved in cooperative production and represents gardens in irregular settlements on private, individually and commercially owned, and state owned lands.
- *Clasificadores Criadores de Cerdos* (Trash Sorters who Raise Hogs) (n=30), were selected through peer referrals across five communities in “zonal 9.” Zonal 9, besides having the highest concentration of irregular settlements, also possesses the oldest communities of *clasificadores* and both of the primary municipal refuse centers in Montevideo.
- Smallholder Organic Growers (n=30) The smallholder organic growers were selected based on the criteria that their holding is located at the urban margin belonging to the district of Montevideo and that they belong to the Association of Organic Producers of Uruguay (APODU). Informants were selected at APODU meetings and at the market at *Parque Rodo* by self-selection and peer referrals.

Data Collection

To inform research question 1., (What are the primary factors or conditions that shape urban/peri-urban agricultural and livestock production enterprises?) Structured interview data was gathered from the 90 participants to provide baseline data on the following variables: rural-urban/intra-urban migrant, date of arrival, place of origin, employment status, land-tenure security, location of household, location of holding, size of holding, production for consumption/market/trade, food security, presence of livestock, crop/animal choice, organic certification, previous experience with agriculture, and access to agricultural resources (seeds, animal feed, agricultural extension/technical support, bio-mass, water, soil resources and other agricultural inputs). The data collected on the above mentioned variables will be used to create individual and cooperative/organizational profiles.

To inform research question 2., (Under what conditions do urban agriculturalists organize collective action strategies?) I conducted semi-structured interviews (Spradley 1979; Whyte 1960, 1984; Mclellan et al. 2003) with 90 informants to provide in-depth data beginning with cognitive themes that were revealed through free-listing exercises and interviews such as crisis, cooperation, conflict, community, self-reliance, access, politics, resistance, pride and new-beginning. This objective is ethnographically framed by the following research questions: What determines membership in community organizations? What are the goals of the organization? What initiated the formation of the organization and/or other forms of collective action? What forms of assistance/cooperation or conflict have you experienced or initiated with individuals or other institutions, organizations or the state? What is the relationship between the cooperative action goals of the organization and agricultural/livestock production? Is urban agriculture a social response to the economic crisis of 2002 or other political/economic policies? Does urban

agriculture serve other symbolic roles (resistance, rural tradition)? How does life history and place of origin impact production strategies and agricultural knowledge? Is urban agriculture related to underemployment/seasonal work? What skills are required and how are they acquired?

A life history framework was employed during the semi-structured interviews to facilitate the collection of retrospective data, stimulating memory by using temporal landmarks (Axinn et al. 1999). To follow changes in cooperative action or participation in urban agricultural strategies I elicited information from the past using events such as the military dictatorship, the democratic elections of 1984, economic crisis of 2002, election of first socialist president in 2005, interventions by the state or NGOs, development of organic certification, “post-crisis” era, and changes in land tenure security as temporal markers and will explore how these and other factors affect short and long term production strategies. The semi-structured and life history interviews are open ended, yet guided, allowing for the revelation of unexpected data and the discussion of potentially sensitive experiences (Bernard 2002). Participant observation during activities related to production with both populations further strengthens this project. In-depth qualitative data from field notes, participant observation and interviews are used to reveal patterns and/or inconsistencies between individuals and populations.

To inform research question 3., (How do municipal politics and institutional linkages influence agricultural and livestock production practices in and around Montevideo?), I conducted semi-structured interviews with officials at various institutions (*Intendencia Municipal de Montevideo, El Ministerio de Agricultura y Pesca, Montevideo Rural, La Comision Sectorial de Extension y Actividades en el Medio (CSEAM), Universidad de la Republica de Uruguay*) to answer questions such as: What is the legal situation regarding urban agriculture

and livestock in irregular settlements? What kind of extension/technical support is available? Who controls organic certification? Is urban agriculture viewed as positive or as a hindrance to development? Are there plans to make lands more available? How are legal issues of occupation and urban livestock enforced? Is there a vision for urban agriculture in the future?

Semi-structured interviews using life history events to stimulate memory were used as the primary method of data elicitation. Additional semi-structured interviews with institutional informants (n=12) at The Union of Solid Waste Sorters, The Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock, The Ministry for Social Development, The University of The Republic of Uruguay's Office of Extension, PIAI (Program for the Integration of Irregular Settlements) and the Municipality of Montevideo further inform the legal and political areas of the research. Interviews and fieldnotes were then sorted by theme for content analysis. Interviews are cited in text as Clasificador, CCdC or Institutional.

Data Analysis

Cross-sectional, structured interview data from 90 participants will ensure adequate observations to perform inferential statistics. Data from profile matrices, life histories, field notes and in-depth interviews are compared to look for patterns and to cross-check for validity. These data are used to build profile matrices to look at relationships between the variables at both the individual and community levels of analysis as well as between the variables and actual behaviors (Bernard 2002). Field notes and transcribed interviews will be sorted into categories by theme and analyzed textually (Ryan and Bernard 2003). Rich textual analysis permits the emergence of shared experiences and attitudes, through the informants' own voices. I will

conduct pattern level analysis (LeCompte and Schensul 1999) looking at measures of frequency, similarity and sequence and to compare with hypotheses and theories put forth by other scholars. By comparing between cases and populations and looking at themes that cut across interviews (Denzin and Lincoln 1994) patterns emerge from the data enabling the construction of conceptual models (Ryan and Bernard 2003).

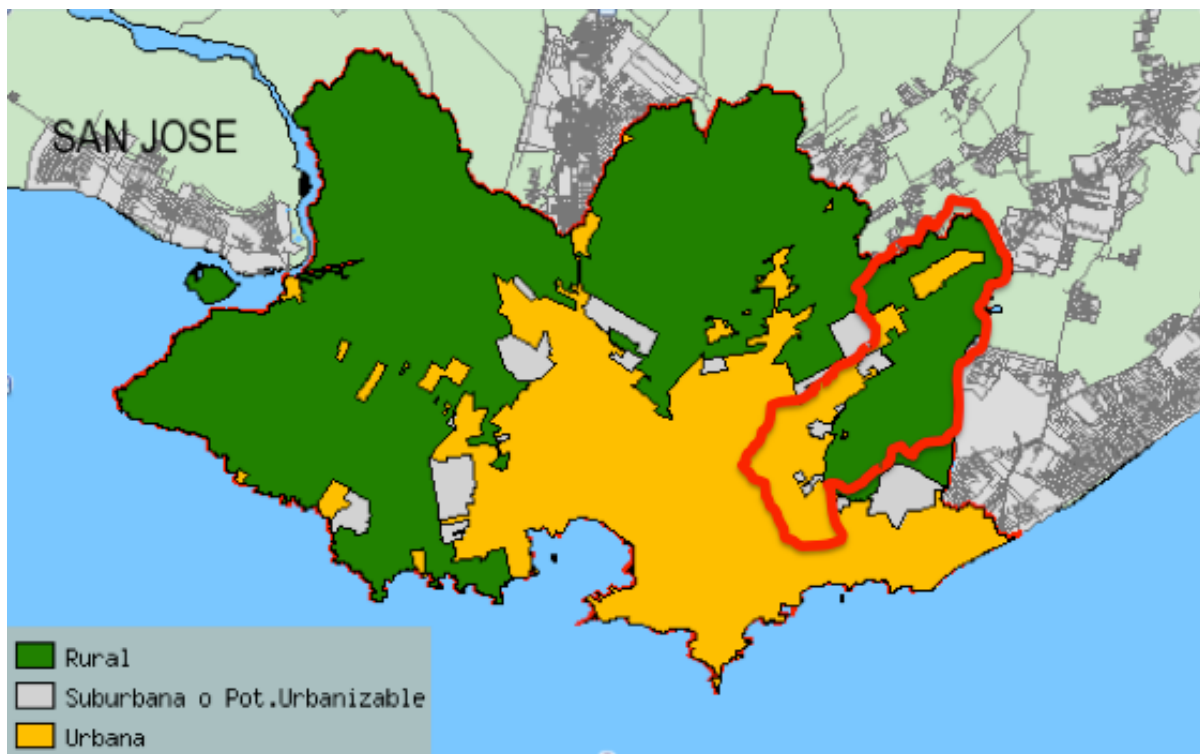


Figure 3: Urban, Suburban and Rural Delimitations of Montevideo with *zonal 9* highlighted



Figure 4: Illustrates the rural characteristic of zonal 9 as well as the proximity of both the International Airport of Montevideo and the municipal dump.

CHAPTER 2

RESEARCH SITE: MONTEVIDEO, URUGUAY

Uruguay: A country “descended from the ships”

The Brazilian Anthropologist, Darcy Ribeiro, referred to Uruguay as a *pueblo transplantado*, a “transplanted nation” descended from the European ships giving its population and its culture deep and unmistakable European features. The entire region around Rio de la Plata, the river that separates Uruguay and Argentina (therefore including Buenos Aires which lies just across the river from Montevideo), is characterized by strong European cultural characteristics (predominantly Spanish, Portuguese and Italian) that distinguish it from other regions in South America. Even the formation of Uruguay as an autonomous nation was the product of imperial interests and enduring conflict between the two “colonial giants” (Argentina and Brazil), at which Montevideo—being at a strategic position for naval engagement--was often at the center. It was not until 1830 that Uruguay, with the help of negotiations under British auspices, was able to draft a constitution as an independent state in the disputed territory which was named the Republic to the east of the Uruguay River (*Republica Oriental del Uruguay*)—“an awkward name for an awkward creation that few expected to last (Donghi 2000:161-162).”

Montevideo

Latin America has the highest level of urbanization in the world and hosts four of the world's fifteen largest cities with 125 million urban poor (Santandreu et al. 2002; MacDonald and Simioni 1999). Uruguay has the highest level of urbanization of all countries in Latin America—an incredible 91.2 % of the population lives in cities (Cerrutti and Bertoncello 2003). Uruguay, unlike other Latin American countries, had high rates of rural-urban migration throughout the 20th century and has been considered *urbanized* since the 1930's (Brannon 1969). High inflation rates in the early 1990's reaching 130% (Portes 1989, Feldstein 2002, Caceres and Arbomo 1994), and the complete economic crisis that Uruguay suffered in 2002 accelerated rural-urban, intra-urban migration and displacement and increased populations in irregular settlements in and around Montevideo (Cerrutti and Bertoncello 2003).

The department of Montevideo is divided into urban and rural sectors. Rural Montevideo covering over 60% of the territory of the department is home to 1,360 productive holdings of varied sizes where 5000 individuals work and where over 60,000 live. The area of rural Montevideo only covers about one, one thousandth of the productive land of the country but it is estimated that it provides more than three percent of the livestock production at the national level. Also, rural Montevideo provides more than half of the leafy vegetables such as lettuce, greens and spinach, more than a quarter of the apples, peaches, pears and cherries consumed in the nation as well as significant contribution to the production of lemons, grapes and tomatoes. These statistics make clear the importance of smallholder agriculture in rural Montevideo and the near absence of horticultural production in the interior of the country.

The further importance of these figures is that inside of the sector of rural Montevideo the average size holding is only 10 hectares and the majority of these operations are family-run.

When these numbers are compared to other farms at the national level that average 290 hectares, the significant contribution of rural Montevideo to the nation's breadbasket becomes clear. Moreover the peri-urban Montevideo, at the fringe of the capital city, is of particular relevance for this research. The peri-urban belt is a very dynamic area experiencing great changes in the last several years with the dramatic increase in precarious irregular settlements, and the countering efforts of the state to regularize them. Land tenure and the various ways that urban land use policy is negotiated are issues that will be explored amongst the three populations over the next chapters.

2.1 Urban Agriculture in Montevideo, Uruguay: Tradition, Cooperation and Crisis

Urban agriculture is not a new phenomenon in Montevideo. It is commonly explained as a traditional practice. Repeatedly informants shared that their parents and grandparents from Spain and Italy or descended there from, had always kept a house garden with fruit trees and a simple vegetable garden. Frequently, this tradition is spoken very fondly of and is proudly upheld as a Uruguayan cultural phenomenon that was brought from Europe. Small house gardens in the patios and backyards of urban homes have been a mainstay in Montevideo for generations. This practice is largely credited to Europeans who began arriving in the colonial period but migrated to Uruguay in larger numbers between the 1930's and 1950's. Descendants of Italian, Spanish and Portuguese migrants asserted that their parents, grandparents and even great grandparents always kept a small house garden with tomatoes, bell peppers, and culinary and medicinal herbs.

The influence that European migrants, especially Italians, had on urban agricultural practices, and Uruguayan identity overall, can hardly be overstated. As early as 1850 there were

three newspapers circulating in Montevideo printed in Italian. By 1865 it is estimated that a third of the population in Montevideo was Italian. The “Italian Legion” bravely defended Montevideo when it was invaded by troops sent from the Province of Buenos Aires during the Guerra Grande that lasted from 1839-1851. And in 1992 a study was completed, *Una Historia de Como se llama la gente*, which found that 43% of Uruguayans carry Spanish first surnames and 38% carry Italian first surnames, as it is customary in many Latin cultures to carry the surnames of both parents. The above figures illustrate the importance of European migration on the construction of Uruguayan identity. The impacts can be further perceived through contemporary linguistic, literary, culinary and agricultural tradition in Montevideo.

Between 1825 and 1950 the population of Uruguay grew 32 times, largely as a result of sizable waves of immigration from Europe. The largest spikes of immigration correspond with the years directly following 1865, and then again between 1900 and 1930, undoubtedly due to events surrounding World War I in Europe as well as the first industrialization boom that followed that was spurred by the development of *frigoríficos*² at the port of Montevideo (Hanson 1938). European migration to the Rio de la Plata region continued throughout the World War II era in much reduced numbers, then declined sharply in the 1950’s when Uruguay began to suffer economic difficulties and political upheaval.

In the 1950’s the Uruguayan state began to develop plans to promote agricultural activities at the household level. It is estimated that several thousands of families were already cultivating home-gardens in and around the city, simultaneously embracing their European heritage and battling economic instabilities of the times (Blixen, Colnago y González 2006).

² *Frigoríficos* are meat processing facilities located primarily at Montevideo’s principal port. Where meat for export was, and still is, refrigerated and frozen for export. *Frigoríficos* revolutionized the “grazing industry” during the first decade of the 1900s creating more flexibility and export options than the export of live cattle and sheep.

Again in 1994 the *Intendencia Municipal de Montevideo* (IMM) or Municipality of Montevideo began to promote small urban agricultural producers by creating projects with NGOs and through the distribution of publications that contained advice and technical support for raising small-scale organic gardens. In the same year the municipality also launched the first program of its kind to provide seeds and compost to small-scale urban gardeners (Intendencia Municipal de Montevideo/Mesa de Agroecología, 1994).

In 2000 a study was undertaken to survey urban agriculture and productive activities in the peri-urban space, or peripheral belt, around Montevideo with the goal of measuring the importance of agricultural production activities in neighborhoods at the urban margin (Santandreu 2000). This study also was elemental in discovering the range and diversity of activities and social organizational strategies around agricultural and urban livestock production. The author classified the production strategies in three categories or productive units: units of permanent gardens with fruit trees and the possibility of animals, units of ornamental species and fruit trees, and units specializing in products destined for the market. The last category is of particular interest for this study because it is largely made up of *clasificadores* and the practice of raising hogs in irregular settlements, which has specific social, political and ecological implications (Castro, 2006).

Until the year 2002 urban agriculture was considered a practice of little significance, barely “visible” to the eyes of the state. Urban agriculture was valued for the cultural and nutritional contributions at the house-hold level but it was not a part of a political agenda that received further support, much less a feasible subsistence strategy or an activity that contributes to the national economy or development in general. [In July of 2002 Uruguay suffered one of

the worse economic and social crises of the nation's history, which had a particularly devastating impact in Montevideo where nearly half of the population of the country resides.

2.2 Military Dictatorship and the Rise of Irregular Settlements

Many historical events, namely political and economic, have shaped the urban agricultural production strategies discussed in this dissertation. A brief discussion of European influence, migration patterns, military dictatorship, and economic crisis will facilitate a better understanding of Uruguayan urban agricultural and livestock practices at the urban margin and the context in which such practices have evolved.

The three populations in this urban agriculture investigation have very different life and migration histories. The vast majority of informants were born in and around Montevideo descended from families that arrived from Europe in the mid-1800's and during later migration waves in the early and mid 20th century. Others, however, migrated to the city in large numbers in the 1950's and 1960's. This may not seem of significance for this study, but upon closer investigation we see that these groups have developed their respective subsistence strategies responding to political and economic factors and have had distinct impacts on their lives and migration histories.

The period between 1945 and 1955 experienced waves of migration from the interior of the country toward Montevideo and represents a very important time for the development of the Uruguayan economy in the 20th and 21st centuries and is integral to understanding rural-urban flows of migration. Two events in particular influenced migration to Montevideo during the post World War II era, an industrialization boom spurred by large amounts of capital flowing from

Europe and the United States, and the reorganization of national production for export that placed large estates in the hands of few. These events both pushed individuals out of the country-side making large expanses of land available for cattle production for export, and pulled them towards the city attracted by the concentration of wealth and employment opportunities provided by the industrialization boom. This period of economic growth and prosperity is referred to as the era of the *vaca gorda* (fat cow), *crecimiento hacia afuera* (growth toward the outside—referring to export), *edad de oro* (golden era), *etapa de crecimiento acelerado* (age of accelerated growth) and *Uruguay feliz* (happy Uruguay) (Frega et al, 2008).

This time of abundance however was short lived and Uruguay began to move further away from being its image as the “Switzerland of South America” as it was fondly known in the early 20th century, and proudly recollected today. By the late 1950s, Uruguay was suffering an economic and social crisis in the midst of the escalating political struggle between the right wing and communist parties, reflected at a larger scale by contemporary politics of that time in Latin America--such as the strengthening power of military governments in South America, growing political ties with North America and the Cuban Revolution.

The phenomenon of macrocephalic growth in Latin America is a general trend, but in comparison with other countries' cities, the process began much earlier in Montevideo. Urbanization trends from 1908 to 1963 clearly show that Uruguay was urbanizing well ahead of the curve compared to other Latin American countries at that time. By 1963 the percentage of the total population of Uruguay living in Montevideo grew from 29.7% to 46.3%. The percentage of people living in Montevideo remains nearly half the population of the country with the other half living in much smaller cities and towns or spread across the largely unpopulated rural landscape. The vast majority of the country's wealth and population is concentrated in

Montevideo and along the nearby coast (INE (*Instituto Nacional de Estadística*) The National Statistics Institute, 2008).

The number of rural to urban migrants during the 1940s and 1950s, caused rapid expansion in Montevideo. Populations pushed from the country grew faster than the industrial and professional sector could employ. The economic hardships in the late 1950s and early 1960s exacerbated this trend laying the foundation for the establishment of *cantegriles*, *asentamientos*, *barrios de ratas* (“neighborhoods of rats”) or irregular precarious settlements. These processes had particular impacts for the evolution of *clasificador* subsistence strategy. High inflation and unemployment rates, crisis in the banking sector in 1965, and the high numbers of recent rural-urban immigrants paved the way for the establishment of the first *asentamientos*, or precarious irregular settlements around the urban and economic center of the country, Montevideo (refer to demographic figures in the introduction). The importance of Montevideo, which has been the cultural and economic center of the country, will become clear as we look at how the population and wealth is distributed across the country.

In Latin America, irregular settlements at the urban margin are a growing phenomenon. They are known by several names across the Americas: [*tugurios*, *villas miserias*, *favelas*, *callampas*, *pueblos jóvenes* and *cantegriles*]. Irregular settlements, typically in precarious situations, often concentrate an important sector of potentially productive workers that industry lost the ability to absorb and capitalize on. They also possess a wide spectrum of characteristics. Settlements illustrate a great variety of heterogeneous situations in regard to occupants’ places of origin, land tenure security, quality of dwellings and population density at the level of the household and settlement. A working or operative definition of an *asentamiento irregular* (irregular settlement) is defined as a “conglomerate of more than four dwellings installed in

public and/or private lands without the authorization of the owners (PIAI, 1998).” According to figures from PIAI (*Programa para la Integración de Asentamientos Irregulares*, The Program for the Integration of Irregular Settlements), based on research by the National Statistics Institute (INE), there are 348 irregular settlements in the Department of Montevideo or 84.5% of the total number of irregular settlements in the entire country.

In the city of Montevideo, individuals who established the first irregular settlements brought with them their rural practices and rapidly adapted them to the urban environment. According to informants and researchers the vast majority of the original occupants became the first *clasificadores*, or *hurgadores* as they were known at the time, who migrated from the country-side in the 1950s and 1960s. As time has passed and generations of the original settlers have been born and raised at the city’s margin the demographic statistics have changed. In the decade of the 1950s, 65% of the inhabitants in irregular settlements in Montevideo were from rural origins in the interior of the country (Bon Espasandín 1963), and by the 1980s, 76% had been born in Montevideo (Mazzei y Veiga 1985). This number is likely much higher now with the rapid expansion of the irregular settlements that began again in the late 1990’s peaking in 2002 and 2003 after the economic crisis of 2002 with the displacement of large numbers of urban working class families.

It is important to distinguish between the use of the terms *cantegril* and *asentamiento*. Historically the term *cantegril* has been used to describe the neighborhoods that slowly developed over years in contrast to the more spontaneous and sudden appearance of *asentamientos irregulares* or irregular settlements. *Asentamiento irregular* seeks to embody the rapidness and creation of communities and organizations and the present process of regularizing and providing services and sanitation in the wake of the settlements’ foundation. Moreover, the

formation of new irregular settlements is typified by a dynamic social movement of social solidarity and organization. Also, it is common to see the use of permanent construction materials and access to basic urban resources, be it legal or illegal, with a sense of permanence that is often in stark contrast to the more haphazard nature of colonizing and less quality building materials that are associated with *cantegriles*. Irregular settlements are providing many families from Montevideo and the interior of the country a piece of land and house that could otherwise not be acquired through legal means. Many inhabitants of irregular settlements have no intention of returning to the apartments and houses where they previously paid rent even as the economy and employment rate have picked back up. After some years of building community through squatting, often on state lands, individuals share that they feel more of a sense of propriety and solidarity though they have no legal title to their land or house.

In recent years, slums have significantly increased in Uruguay, as they have throughout Latin America. Informants blame this trend on failed economic models that successive governments have adopted and applied for decades and the more recent application of Neo-liberal economic policies. This model excludes a large part of the Uruguayan population from the cultural, social, and economic mainstream, forcing them to seek out alternative survival strategies.

Military Dictatorship 1973-1985

The impact of the military dictatorship in Uruguay, as in Argentina and Chile, is still being felt today. In 1966 Uruguay experienced a *golpe de estado* or coup d'état, which many joke as having passed "Uruguayan style" by way of a Constitutional Reform through "tricky

laws and electoral channels (Historia de Los Tupamaros).” In this way, the dictatorship and the leading class were able to implement the necessary forces to repress the Uruguayan people’s popular class rise to power that had been in process for several years. The dictatorship is remembered as an authoritarian iron grip that used deadly force to maintain power and to quiet voices of the opposition. During the years of the dictatorship political opposition parties were prohibited, labor unions made illegal and opposition in general persecuted. The dictatorship held a firm grip on power from 1973 until 1985. The dictatorship in Uruguay was able to solidify its potency through numerous alliances with other military leaders of the entire region of the southern cone. The most well known such alliance was known as *Operacion Condor* which used extreme methods such as coordinated disappearances and murders to suppress political opposition, especially suspected leftist movements.

The dictatorship is hardly forgotten in Uruguay. A constant headline in the news is the finding of more remains of *desaparecidos*, disappeared persons, being identified and returned to their families. The streets are presently covered with signs demanding the *Anular la ley de impunidad*, to annul the law of impunity, so that alleged war criminals can be tried for war crimes and human rights violations. Many informants for this dissertation have only in recent years been reunited with family members and friends who had been in exile in countries abroad, namely in other countries of Latin America, Europe and Canada, and many others who had loved ones disappeared or blatantly murdered. Many of the individuals interviewed for this dissertation were among those who in the last decade have returned from exile. Their reasons for having been in exile almost always revolve around their participation in revolutionary and socialist political parties during the dictatorship, namely the *Movimiento de Liberacion Nacional-Tupamaros*. It is impossible to talk about Uruguayan academics and counter-regime

politics without mentioning the Tupamaros. The Tupamaros was the largest socialist, counter-regime, guerrilla movement in the country.

In 2006 I had an interview with an agronomy student and active member of the PPAOC, *El Programa para la Produccion de Alimentos y Organización Comunitaria* (The Program for the Production of Food and Community Organization), who was able to shed some light on the, then not so clear, relationship between urban agriculture and social movements in Uruguay. Through her words she explains her intimate relationship with the effects of the dictatorship and the general sentiment of embracing the ability to organize and create powerful interdisciplinary projects to help the popular class since the return of democracy and the subsequent rise of socialist politics. This informant is roughly thirty years old and shares a particularly personal and revealing side of Uruguayan history:

I spent about twenty years of my life without my parents. They both passed many years in jail under the regime and after their release they were forced to flee in exile because of threats on their lives due to their known relationship with the Tupamaros and the Communist Party. They like many others have only in recent years come back to Uruguay from abroad to try to start a new life. Many still remain in exile and will never come back, having decided to create lives for themselves elsewhere... We [Uruguayans] have suffered a lot in the past years. The crisis of 2002 left almost all of us poor but even though we are poor the return to a democratic government and the recent shift to the left with our newly elected socialist president, has inspired a strong participatory movement that is well illustrated by projects like the PPAOC. There is a new energy to organize and help each other. We have a new vision for ourselves.

Over the course of the research, the dictatorship repeatedly surfaced as a strong force that continues to affect informants' behaviors and motivations for participating in contemporary social movements and urban agricultural productive activities. In the chapters that follow, urban agriculture will be discussed in the context of such a social movement, with its strong revolutionary and resistant attitude, that empowers residents of Montevideo and creates a fresh arena for the creation of solidarity, a sense of common struggle, dignity, autonomy and resistance. This point is made particularly clear through the words of the new-poor *comuneros* and organic urban smallholders.

The pendulum swung back from the far right after over a decade of right-wing military dictatorship politics. Democracy was restored to Uruguay in 1984-85 and in 1990 the leftist *Frente Amplio* (Broad Front) gained control over municipal politics in Montevideo. Beginning with the rise of *Frente Amplio* in Montevideo and Uruguay's first ever democratically elected Socialist president in 2005, Tabare Vasquez, decentralized politics, and participatory, bottom-up development that had gained some steam in the 1990s became the mantra for development in the country. The return to a democratic government after the dictatorship, the large-scale economic and social crisis of 2002 and the rise to power of a socialist president created fertile ground for participatory, popular class, and nationalist development initiatives (Winn and Ferro-Clerico 1997). The popular class took advantage of their ability to organize and the national university became a nexus of energy and mobilization of national development projects. MIDES (*Ministerio de Desarrollo Social*, The Ministry of Social Development) was created as one of the first steps taken by the socialist government at addressing social and economic hardships in the nation. Several other social programs and development initiatives were launched such as the PPAOC, University Extension, PIM *Programa Integral Metropolitana* (The Integral

Metropolitan Program), *Montevideo Rural*, PANES, PAU *Programa de Agricultura Urbana*, PIAI *Programa para la Integracion de Asentamientos Irregulares* (The Program for the Integration of Irregular Settlements) many which continue to flourish in 2010.

2.3 Uruguay's Economic Crisis of 2002

In July of 2002 Uruguay experienced a large-scale economic crisis that brought with it many challenges for Uruguay's rural and urban poor. Economic analysts conclude that,

The immediate trigger for the crisis was caused by contagion resulting from Argentina's financial crisis, the spread and magnification of the crisis that engulfed the Uruguayan economy was amplified by certain weaknesses of the Uruguayan economy in general, and the domestic banking sector in particular (de la Plaza and Sirtaine 2005:2; Taylor 2007).

The crisis in Argentina reverberated across Uruguay affecting their exportations, profits from tourism and financial markets. The Uruguayan national economy was already experiencing difficulties in their productive, fiscal and financial sectors due to three years of recession leading up to the crisis. Weaknesses in the international reserves, due to the rapid withdrawal of savings, forced the government to abandon the *ancla cambiara* or "anchor change" on June 12th of 2002, which had been in place since 1990. The following months saw a severe drop in the value of the peso further deepening the recession. In a matter of a few months in 2002 the GNP fell 7.8% and all productive sectors fell with it except for agriculture and livestock.

Due to regional economic instabilities and the application of neo-liberal economic models, the Gross National Product fell, the crisis in the financial sector worsened, the peso's

value dropped, the price of basic food stuffs rose and the level of homelessness rose to 18% with the poorest neighborhood being most affected. In the months following the crisis, vulnerability and food insecurity became a serious issue and the rise of a large impoverished urban lower class in Montevideo was sudden and wide spread throughout the city. In Uruguay and greater Latin America, working class individuals that are subject and adversely impacted by large scale economic processes joined the ranks of the “new-poor.”

In a matter of weeks, Uruguay, which boasted some of the highest indicators of human development in all of Latin America, had to confront extreme poverty. Levels of malnutrition spiked, businesses were looted, social assistance programs were insufficient and high rates of depression and desperation were recorded (Graña & de Sierra, 2003; Rosenblatt, 2006). Between June and August of 1999, urban unemployment was around 10.5%. (INE 2004). The unemployment rate continued to grow from that point until it eventually made it to 19.2%, the highest ever recorded rate in Uruguayan history, in the period of August and October of 2002. The most recent available data, February to April 2004, shows that the rate had lowered again to 14.2%. The consumer price index in 2001 and 2002 held a monthly growth of about 0.5% keeping annual inflation below 5.5%. In 2002 the monthly reached 4.8% in July and 5.8% in August and the year closed at an accumulated inflation rate of 27%.

The price of basic goods rose sharply and the devalued peso, reaching close to 100% compared to the dollar in 2002, making it difficult for Uruguayan citizens to acquire basic necessities. The index of average salaries grew by 4% in 2000 and 2001 but in 2002 it rose only 1.2% putting further strain in citizens’ buying power. Between the years of 1998 and 2002 overall poverty indicator in the country rose 45% with 30% alone in 2002 (Olesker). These data are a real indicator of the devaluation and rapid inflation that the economy experienced that lead

to a fall in salaries, an increase in displacement, the closure of many industries and companies and the deepening of the recession and overall levels of poverty. In 2002 the number of poor in Uruguay surpassed one million with 80,000 Uruguayans in extreme poverty or at risk with no access to basic necessities or shelter (INE 2004). With 1 in 3 adults and over half of all children in the country under the poverty line 2002, the period was registered as the most devastating economic crisis of Uruguay's history.

Between 2001 and 2004 many Uruguayans emigrated looking for better employment and better economic opportunities. The economic crisis also provoked rural-urban and intra-urban migration in Uruguay, displacing and pushing many residents of Montevideo into poverty, making food security an immediate and serious issue. Displaced urban and rural working class families, referred to as *neo-pobres* or “new-poor” (Kessler and Di Virgilio 2008), and well established communities of *clasificadores*, individuals who collect and sort recyclable urban refuse for resale and organic refuse for use in their hog raising enterprises, are having to negotiate the dynamic political and ecological environment in and around irregular settlements/land invasions transforming and adapting production strategies to new challenges and opportunities.

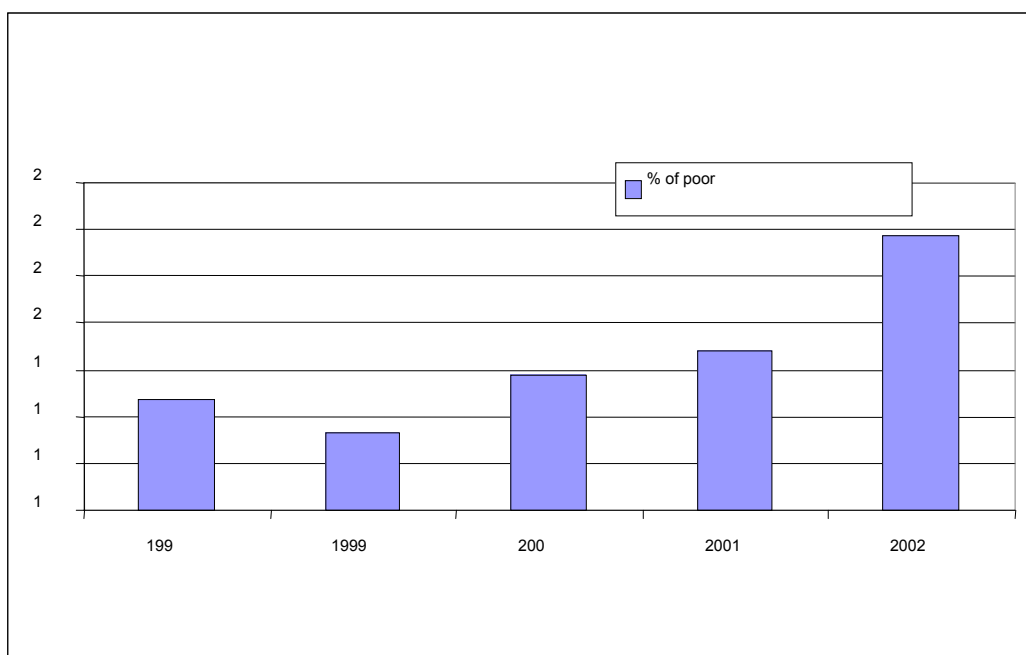


Figure 5: The Evolution of Poverty in Uruguay from 1998 to 2002

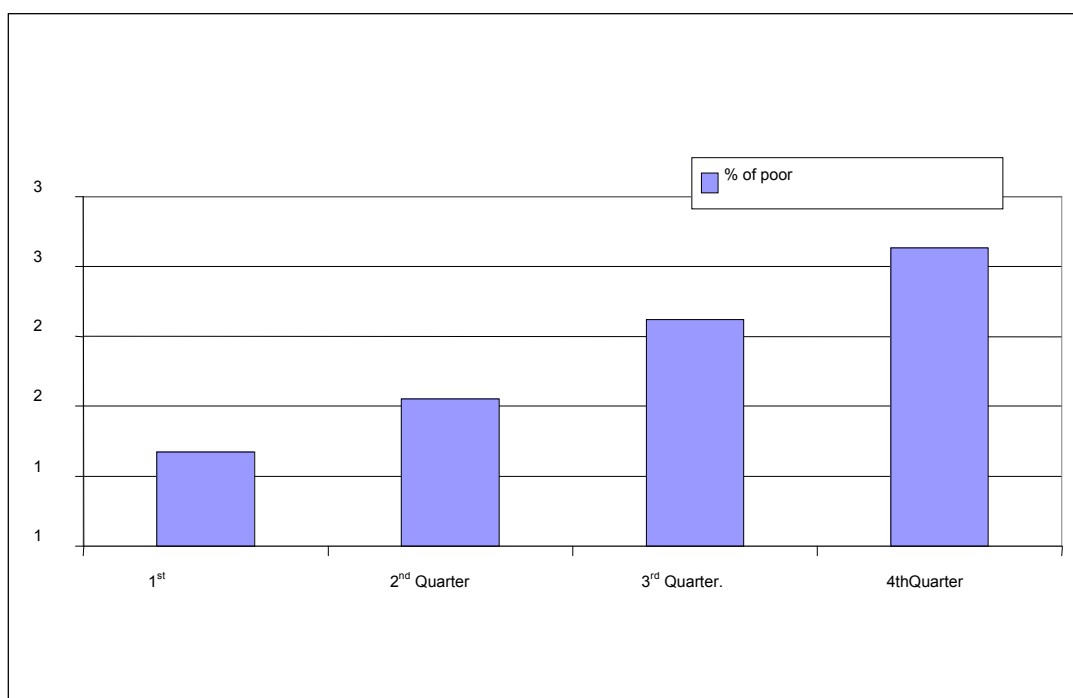


Figure 6: Poverty in 2002-Instituto Cuesta Duarte

In the context of economic crisis and the rapid swelling of numbers of poor that could not access basic necessities and were dependent on charity and limited state sponsored programs lead to high rates of out migration and cases of anxiety, depression, desperation and hopelessness. The social and psychological impacts of marginalization, new poverty and social exclusion reverberated throughout Uruguayan society and stimulated alternative forms of resistance and subsistence

CHAPTER 3

COMUNEROS AND COMMUNITY GARDENS

“It is from HOPE and not from nostalgia, that we have to reclaim the COMMUNAL modes of production and life, founded in the SOLIDARITY and not in greed, the relationship between man and nature and the old customs of LIBERTY...”

Eduardo Galeano

“It’s not the hours of work that matter, it’s not what you earn that matters, it’s not the cash prizes that matter, what matters is the moral satisfaction of being able to contribute to the growth of a society, the moral satisfaction to put something from yourself into that collective duty and see that it is because of that work, because of that small part of individual work, that comes together in thousands and thousands of individual work, a collective and harmonious effort, that is the reflection of a society that is advancing.”

Ernesto ‘Che’ Guevara

The embodiment of the urban agricultural response to the extreme economic crisis in Montevideo was found in the swift development of groups of newly marginalized citizens creating community gardens. These individuals were often referred to as *comuneros*. They came from the popular working class, but fell victim to displacement, unemployment, and hard

times. Many of the individuals had previous experience in social organization being active in labor unions and other political and neighborhood organizations. They were, however, not typically from the most marginalized sectors of the population. They mostly worked in trades such as construction, industrial and factory work, etc., and suddenly fell into situations of severe vulnerability (UDELAR; Intendencia Municipal de Montevideo, 2005) and are further characterized as groups with precarious land tenure and little experience with agriculture.

Many of the *comuneros* already were part of social movements. The dictatorship of the 1970s and 1980s created many exiled opponents. They began to return to Uruguay in the 1990s as the political changes opened the opportunity. When the economic crisis hit in 2002, many from the “leftist movement” who were now in Montevideo again found a natural home in the community garden groups, and became some of the main leaders creating their successes.

3.1 *Comuneros*: An identity is Born

The creation of the community gardens unfolded as a complex set of processes that likely began in community meetings and quickly caught the attention of various institutions. A *comunero* explains: “People began meeting in the communal centers of the municipality and formed small discussion groups to exchange ideas, experiences and seeds. At that moment the university and the municipality started to get involved.” Community meetings were largely facilitated by the political decentralization of the municipality of Montevideo. Zones were created (Centros Comunes Zonales or Community Centers by zone) in the city, establishing community meeting spaces and a platform for making community decisions. The CCZs (Centro Comunal Zonales) are the product of political decentralization of the Municipality of

Montevideo and they function with a *Consejo Vecinal*, a neighborhood advisory committee that is elected by the sectors population and a *Junta Local*, that is a political representation that is designated by the central government (Santandreu et al. 2000).

Additional support for meetings and the creation of community garden organizations was pushed by the *Programa de Agricultura Urbana* (Program for Urban Agriculture), of the municipality and the *Programa Para la Produccion de Alimentos y Organization Comunitaria* (Program for the Production of Food and Community Organization) created by the University of the Republic of Uruguay. These institutional programs were established after strong and deliberate citizen activism by members of the newly formed garden organizations. In many cases, the same individuals who organized soup kitchens and community meals during the early days of the crisis also refocused their energy towards community gardens—a move made not solely for food security, but in their words for, “a dignified solution to the crisis.” What began as a response to food insecurity, quickly transitioned to a social and political movement towards “food autonomy.”

Solidarity, struggle, poverty, dignity, hope, new beginning and pride are concepts often discussed in the community gardens experience. These ideas are fundamental to understanding the social movement that was solidified around community gardens on occupied lands in and around irregular settlements of Montevideo. Community gardens often have names that reflect solidarity and triumph over difficult times such as *Nuevo Amanecer* (New Dawn), *Esperanza* (Hope), and *Nuestro Orgullo* (Our Pride). Community organizations and community gardens provided needed food in times of scarcity. They also provided the members a new visibility to various institutions and access to their resources, and in addition created a platform for an urban agrarian social movement. The occupation of state and private lands by *comuneros* and the

community garden movement in general had a strong revolutionary character that becomes apparent in the analysis of text such as the two quotes above and interviews with key informants. Metaphors of social revolution permeate the discourse of the community garden experience.

The opening quotes to this chapter, the first by well-known Uruguayan writer, Eduardo Galeano, and the second by the renowned Argentine revolutionary, “Che” Guevara, both are taken from documents drafted by *comuneros* wherein they declare the formation of “official” community organizations and their collective objectives making their existence known before the institutional eye. Both quotes begin this chapter appropriately and set the tone for relating the experience of the *comuneros* as they came together to establish community gardens in a social response to the economic crisis of 2002.

The crisis and the community garden movement stimulated a process similar to agrarian reforms that have happened across much of Latin America. Uruguay however is a particular country. It is very urbanized and is an aging country with very few young people. These events have made the Institute of Colonization wake up after many years. People are talking about agrarian reform but a reform means to change something without profoundly modifying the structure. The movement of the *comuneros* is more revolutionary. We have learned lessons from our ancestors that came from Europe to escape war and misery and many of us lived through similar times during the dictatorship. We [comuneros] had a wider vision of changing society and creating something better for ourselves (Personal Interview with a male *comunero*; February 2009).

As a result of the improving economic and social situation in Montevideo, the communal garden movement experienced a nearly complete “disarticulation.” Community gardens, during the two years following the crisis, were found to represent only 20% of the total of all productive urban agricultural enterprises documented in a census from the time published later in 2005. They are considered “the most visible face of the [urban agriculture] movement but they were not able to sustain themselves as organizations or productive systems.” (Institutional Interview with an Official at Montevideo Rural, a branch of the Municipality; November 2009).

The zonal and neighborhood coordination around communal agriculture are no longer functioning, and municipal and university programs have greatly reduced their related activities. For this reason it is important to ask such questions as: What happened to communal urban agriculture in Montevideo? Does the rapid growth of these cooperative organizations and their equally rapid decline validate that urban agriculture is only a response to economic and social emergencies or crisis? Where did the agricultural knowledge come from? Can we learn from these processes to have more continuity and longer lasting benefits? What remains of the experience? What social or community functions did they serve?

Capturing the experience of the community gardens was no easy task. The vast majority of the gardens that spread across the city in the wake of the economic crisis of 2002 only exist now in the memories of the members of the community gardens and their neighbors, and in a few reports published by various institutions. Sampling for this portion of the dissertation therefore proved a tedious process. Using the PPAOC’s database, 30 individuals, representing each of the ten community gardens spread across the eight zones of the city were contacted. After a series of conversations and peer references two individuals from each of the ten gardens, that were either

referred by others or self identified as being particularly active and knowledgeable about the community garden experience, were chosen as informants.

In the community gardens of Montevideo, displaced and unemployed working class citizens in and around the urban center found a new revolution at home. *Comuneros* organized themselves against the common enemies of economic crisis, displacement, unemployment and food insecurity. These platoons took up shovels and seeds instead of rifles and grenades. The movement was a grassroots bottom-up drive that began in a few of the various zones of the city. The message of the movement spread very quickly to the other zones by way of community radio stations and meetings in the *centros comunales*, or community centers, where community leaders urged fellow citizens to work together in solidarity and share agricultural experiences and resources for a dignified solution to their common problem.

A lot of the companions would talk about the revolution and I would tease them and tell them they were no Che Guevara. I was one of the few that thought of the movement as evolution not revolution. A backwards evolution where we end up back to the earth, but backwards in the right way if that makes sense. My reasons were more personal I guess. The first was egotistical. I wanted to show myself that I could do it. The second was that I wanted to see ourselves get out of the crisis. We are working people. And the third is...well, I am not going to talk about the politics of God or the church but for me God is in the ground (Interview with a *comunero*; February 2009).

Considering an overarching view of the community gardens, and contextualizing the political air of the years surrounding the economic crisis as well as the life experience of many of the *comuneros*, it becomes evident why the rise of community gardens took on such an image of

resistance and revolution. The basic social profile of the *comuneros* interviewed for this dissertation, and in the census (UdelaR/IMM 2005), are working class and professional individuals ranging from about 45 to 65 years of age. These individuals all lived through the years of the oppressive military dictatorship that ruled from 1973-1985. Many of them remember with great resentment having suffered personally or having lost loved ones that were “disappeared” along with thousands of others under Plan Condor. In fact, the majority of my key informants were supporters, or had been directly involved in revolutionary parties, such as the Tupamaros, or other left-wing national liberation revolutionary groups, that took up arms in opposition to the right-wing government that came to power by *golpe de estado* or coup d’etat in 1973. Over one quarter of my informants had either served years in prison under the dictatorship for accusations of conspiracy, or had returned in the last ten or fifteen years from exile in countries across the Americas and Europe, namely Cuba and Spain.

Democracy returned to Uruguay in 1985, but several of my key informants did not return home from exile until the 1990s. It is important to note here that the political pendulum continued to swing left which was precipitated, according to informants, by failures in the implementation of neo-liberal politics. The process began in large part in 1989 with the mayoral elections that saw Tabare Vasquez and his *Frente Amplio* take charge of Montevideo. During the 1990s Montevideo, and the rest of the country, began to see the development of social programs, the decentralization of political and economic institutions and the build up to the elections of the first ever socialist national government, also under the flag of the *Frente Amplio*, or Popular Front, in 2005, with the election of Tabare Vasquez, this time as President of the Republic of Uruguay. Vasquez’s government continued with the development of social programs and decentralization at the national level, and in response to the 2002 economic crisis,

created emergency plans such as PANES, *Plan de Asistencia Nacional a la Emergencia Social*, (Plan of National Assistance for the Social Emergency), MIDES, *Ministerio para Desarrollo Social*, (The Ministry for Social Development), PIAI, *Programa de Integración de Asentamientos Irregulares*, (Program for the Integration of Irregular Settlements), and *Montevideo Rural* to give aid to the country's poor and marginalized giving special attention to the growing populations in irregular settlements. Montevideo Rural, specifically, was instrumental in supporting community gardens researching other urban agricultural activities around the city.

3.2 Economic Crisis and Collective Action: Food Security or Food Autonomy?

The community gardens are inextricably linked to the institutional and political context that surrounded the experience during that time. Until the year 2002, urban agriculture was considered a practice of little significance, barely “visible” to the eyes of the state. Urban agriculture was valued for the cultural and nutritional contributions at the household level. It was not, however, a part of a political agenda receiving substantial support within Uruguay's larger development initiatives. Nor was it perceived as a feasible subsistence strategy, or able to contribute to the nation's economy in a meaningful way (Institutional Interview, Municipal Official; March 2009).

As previously discussed, in July of 2002 Uruguay suffered one of the worse economic and social crises of the nation's history. The episode had a particularly devastating impact in Montevideo where nearly half of the population of the country resides. Due to regional economic instabilities and the application of neo-liberal economic models, the Gross National

Product (PBI) fell. Likewise the crisis wrecked the banking sector, the peso plummeted in value, the price of basic food stuffs soared and the level of homelessness rose to 18% with the poorest neighborhoods being most affected. In the months following the crisis, vulnerability and food insecurity became serious issues and the rise of a large impoverished urban lower class in Montevideo was sudden and wide spread throughout the city. In a matter of weeks, Uruguay, who boasted some of the highest indicators of human development in all of Latin America, had to confront extreme poverty. Levels of malnutrition rose sharply, stores were sacked, feelings of desperation and anxiety were rampant in society, and the state's traditional systems of relief were overwhelmed (Graña & de Sierra, 2003; Rosenblatt, 2006). After 2002, the effects of the crisis were manifest in clear ways. The ministries received many calls during that time, as an official from the Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries relates, "the worse that I recall was a call MGAP received from the hospital 'Pereira Rossell,' claiming that small children were being admitted in severe conditions, many of them who had been living off of grass (Interview, March 2009)."

The crisis caused an immediate surge in numbers of "new-poor." New-poor is a concept that arose in the social sciences that attempts to move closer to an explanation of populations who abruptly fall into poverty as the result of similar and acute political-economic factors as opposed to so-called classic or chronic poverty. The concept of the new-poor was first applied in the late 1980s in eastern Europe when large numbers of people faced unemployment and displacement who previously were assured a secure integration in the work force, creating instability within a social class that historically enjoyed stability (Castles 1995; O'Higgins y Jenkins 1989).

In Uruguay the term "new-poor" is frequently used as a blanket description for people who were recently displaced and now live in irregular settlements. There is a great deal of

variability amongst these individuals. Many of the so called new-poor *comuneros* had lived in irregular settlements for several years before the crisis of 2002 and the subsequent establishment of community gardens. The concept of occupying land was nothing new to them. Employment in construction and domestic services is very precarious and hard hit when economies slow down. In the introduction of “Migration and Urbanization,” Dutoit and Safa (1975) note that migration (particularly urban migration) will continue with the same push pull economic forces. Urban workers in secondary and unstable employment, such as construction and the industrial sector, are vulnerable to shifts in the economy and only where the proletariat are empowered, and there is social and economic equity, will that trend slow or stop.

In August of 2002, only days after the initial impacts of the crisis were being realized, a large-scale mobilization began the process of forming an interdisciplinary project in the country with a focus on supporting urban agriculture and the creation of community organizations. On several occasions members of community organizations brought grievances to the municipality and the University of the Republic of Uruguay demanding an active and immediate response in the form of technical support and the establishment of agricultural holdings to improve food security.

In response to repeated petitions by individual activists, community leaders, neighborhood organizations, displaced families and the broader urban public, the university became involved and joined in the struggle for the creation of relief and community support programs. Over the months of August and September of 2002, *La Federacion de Estudiantes Universitarios del Uruguay-FEUU*, The Federation of University Students of Uruguay, alongside *La Asociacion de Docentes de Agronomia*, The Association of Faculty of the Agronomy Department, with the support of various other university services, drafted a proposal

directed at attending to the demands that were brought forth by citizens in the city. The proposed program was called the *Programa para la Produccion de Alimentos y Organization Comunitaria*-PPAOC, The Program for the Production of Food and Community Organization, and its main objectives were to support the production of food and the creation of community garden organizations, making them more institutionally visible, and support community networks through university extension programs. The strategy of the PPAOC is based on the idea that:

“the small scale production of food, using technologies that are appropriate to local realities and sustainable, can in the short and medium term, constitute a valid response to the mentioned issue [economic crisis]. And as such, participating individuals should overcome challenges in the management of resources, in organization, in technical areas, and in the creation and diffusion of knowledge (UDELAR/PPAOC 2002:3).”

After initial rejections and heated negotiations with the municipality regarding details of the proposal and budget of the PPAOC, the FEU organized a large-scale strike and mobilization of hundreds of university students and faculty from various departments.

With continued pressure by students and faculty at the university, particularly in the agronomic and social sciences, the PPAOC was formally presented to the municipality of Montevideo and the University of the Republic of Uruguay, and by December 2002 received formal approval with financing from *La Comision Sectorial de Extension y Actividades en el Medio* (CSEAM), The Regional Extension and Environmental Commission of the University. The project began with intervention in thirty community holdings in the urban regions of Montevideo and Canelones with the participation of over 80 students and faculty from various university departments. A further intervention was drafted between the organizations deemed *el*

Plan de Emergencia, or the Emergency Extension Plan of 2002-2003. After positive evaluation, the PPAOC was approved for funding until 2006. By 2007, as the economy and employment rates rebounded, the PPAOC and the Emergency Extension Plan dissolved as organizations. Since then, other projects have launched with similar objectives. The *Programa Integral Metropolitana* (PIM) and other multi-disciplinary projects continue to launch with the ends of training university students for effective organization and the generation of knowledge that will contribute to the solution of problems that are found in vulnerable sectors of Uruguayan society.

During the early days of the crisis, a team was formed comprising individuals that spanned five university departments: Physical Sciences, Nutrition, Agronomy, Psychology, and Veterinary Medicine. This interdisciplinary team has since evolved into the newly created Programa Integral Metropolitana (PIM), which remains active particularly in initiatives that promote social inclusion of marginalized populations and the “regularization” of irregular settlements. Many other institutions and NGOs were active during this time giving support to various activities under the umbrella concept of urban agriculture. Organic gardens were created at hundreds of public schools throughout the country with support from the United Nations Development Fund and TELEFOOD of the FAO (CIEDUR 2005).

Leaders in communities, who were able to mobilize support at the community level, took the initial steps in the community garden movement. But we cannot overlook the fact that the PPAOC had as a main objective the fostering of the creation of community organizations. The university activism and the decentralized structure of the municipality of Montevideo promoted the creation of the community networks as well as the identity of the “comuneros” as a new social actor. Therefore, there existed more incentive *after* the creation of the PPAOC and the PUA to create official community organizations than before. This made the garden

organizations institutionally visible facilitating access to support and resources. The IMM and the UdelaR only provided support to groups that had reached a “formal level of organization.” The resources the institutions offered were numerous, including seeds, compost and a host of agronomic and social support from the interdisciplinary team. The participation of NGOs that promoted community gardens had a strong presence in the movement and contributed particularly in the development of social projects and participative methodologies (CEUTA 2006).

According to the census conducted in 2003 and 2004, there were 200 families participating in urban agriculture. But, to be included in the census (UdelaR 2005) the gardens had to be linked to either the municipal or university programs in action at the time (UDELAR; IMM 2005; Silva 2007). The census reports only 23 community gardens across the 8 peri-urban zones of the city. If we consider the gardens that were formed by their own volition, not involved in formally recognized networks or registered as community organizations and therefore not “visible” to state or university programs, the number of community and family-run home-gardens is likely under represented. This concept of institutional visibility will be revisited throughout the dissertation. As other researchers in urban agriculture have asserted,

The organization of urban producers into recognizable groups is deemed critical by agencies, governments, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and other social actors. Organization will allow practitioners to better access resources, services and markets, practice more sustainable and profitable forms of UA, negotiate the resolution of conflicts, bring their know-how, perspectives and interests to bear on policy design and take on responsibilities in their implementation. This is an important need and was

identified by a conference of six Ministers of Local Government from East and Southern African countries in 2003 (MDPESA, 2003; Mougeot 2005:274).

It is also important to note that community gardens that began in the months following the crisis got a lot of attention and support, technical, agronomic and organizational, but many urban agricultural enterprises date well before the crisis (Santandreu 2000). This becomes evident in the following chapters. Many existing urban agricultural and livestock production enterprises did not enjoy the same institutional attention, and their members relate very different perceptions of the impacts of the crisis of 2002 on their productive behaviors and their lives in general. It is difficult to estimate the increase in production at the family level, but what was novel was the formation of neighborhood organizations and community coordinated efforts around agriculture (UDELAR/IMM 2005) The Municipality and the UdelaR considered community gardens around the city as a new phenomenon, all of which were established in the last months of 2002, which represented, 20% of all productive enterprises.

In the years that followed the crisis of 2002 production, average salaries and employment slowly increased. In 2005 for the first time in the nation's history, a leftist president was elected and strong political and economic reforms were implemented. Among other things, the new government created MIDES, The Ministry for Social Development, which immediately implemented the "Emergency Plan," attending to the most marginalized sectors of the population giving food aid, medical assistance and educational programs reaching 400,000 people by the year 2006. In spite of many improvements in the country, the economic situation has not returned to where it was before the crisis. The average salary in 2008 is still less than what it was in 2000, and half of the nation's children still live in homes under the poverty line.

As was repeated several times by institutional voices (Municipal, University and NGOs), the community gardens were successful in large part to “university militance” and the decentralized structure of the municipality of Montevideo that facilitated the formation of networks and advanced the identity of the *comuneros* as new social actors. NGOs provided further support in developing social programs and generating knowledge with participatory methodologies (CEUTA 2006).

The Years of Solidarity and Institutional Support

Former *comuneros* are quick to articulate memories of the time when community gardens were in the institutional spotlight.

There was so much energy during that time. Technicians, and the Udelar and the ministerio and the municipality all coming and helping us start something. We didn’t care at first. We are construction workers. We don’t know about growing vegetables. For a while we laughed about it saying that the tools weren’t right for our hands. But then it became contagious. We started one by one to work the garden and everyone began to come and look and help out. It was better than feeling sorry for ourselves, we were used to working hard so we started to work. It was like therapy. We began to laugh and spend more time there—at least we were doing something for ourselves (Male *comunero* of about 50 years; March 2009).

The energy and the extensive support that was available to community gardens in early 2003 is reiterated by another *comunero* from a different community garden.

In our poor neighborhoods on the hill (referring to El Cerro) they [agriculture technicians and veterinarians] dropped on us in quantities. Teaching us to do everything raise vegetables, rabbits, whatever, snails [he laughs], and we started growing food. It was good. This place has a bad reputation. There is violence and we are poor but it was good for a while. We laughed at ourselves, and at them, he laughs again, but it was good. We had more pumpkins and things than we could eat and we were able to more or less raise some animals. Many people would come and work and it was participative. We shared and for lack of money there was usually something to eat (Male *comunero* of about 40 years; October 2008).

There was a great sense of solidarity and community and the majority of gardens achieved at least basic levels of production. The institutional mobilization of resources and support was a major victory but the programs were not designed as long term interventions.

3.3 The Revolution is Over: Community Gardens Disband

Community gardens in Montevideo were a clear collective social and institutional response to economic crisis and food insecurity that hardly lasted more than a couple of years. Only one of the ten community gardens investigated for this dissertation continues to operate as a cooperative or communally operated enterprise because of particular circumstances discussed further along in the chapter. The informants shared that participation gradually declined and members of the gardens went back to work in the city. Institutions, such as NGOs, ministries of agriculture and social development and the municipality and the university, in Montevideo attribute the decline or disappearance of community gardens as a natural phase in the evolution

of a process that arose and just as naturally fell off, but served as a “a temporary patch,” or solution, to economic crisis. Many comuneros agree that the gardens served their purpose in their dignified fight against poverty and returned to cash paying jobs as soon as the opportunity presented itself. One informant shares, “Lately in the last few years each monkey has gone back to his/her tree [laughing]. We don’t have the community like before. There doesn’t seem like there is more money in the country, but people are working and went back to their lives.”

Another *comunero* goes on to explain:

During those years [in the late 1990s and up to 2002] there was a lot of solidarity and cooperation. Those were the years when we were here building houses in the *asentamientos* and creating neighborhoods and a new life for ourselves. We all helped each other out. There was a lot of good energy and then after the crisis we continued and grew food and worked together. We didn’t even have money for buses or food at times but we had each other. I think what happens is after the problem passes you also lose a certain value or a certain friendship or relationship with one another. Leaders are always important too. People are like sheep. We often stand around until one calls out then the rest cross the stream together. Someone just has to call out sometimes (Female *Comunera* about 40 years old; November 2008).

The fact that nearly all of the community gardens disbanded does not however mean that urban agriculture was abandoned all together. The transition back to the formal economy is the principal explanation for the abandonment of the gardens. Statements such as the following abound:

Construction is happening again and now they have gone back to work. Very few families are working there now. About 6 or 7, before there were close to thirty, but there was also a lot of support from the university. I work there and go to market still, but nobody else really works too much. We are all from the city, brick-layers and such. Working the ground was never what we did until recently (Male Comunero/construction worker about 40 years old; December 2008).

Some of the participants in community gardens, especially older individuals, carried the experience and knowledge back home and planted gardens or individually maintained gardens at the community garden site—“Then things got better after a couple years and they went back to work in the city. I am old and the garden was lying there. Before there were over thirty families working and now maybe four or five families are there. Mostly I work there--I like it and am old for construction and to run around the city (Male Comuneros in his sixties; February 2009).”

Other *comuneros* integrated their agricultural experiences into educational activities and worked as promoters and technicians at local schools. Still others accessed markets through organic associations and other channels. Yet, the existence of strong local organizations and the experience of creating community and local organizations have been repeatedly asserted as the most sustainable aspects of the community garden.

3.4 The Unique Case of “Comuna Tierra”

The majority of community gardens occupied state lands, predominantly in irregular settlements, or resided on ceded private lands with user agreements. An exception, *Comuna*

Tierra (CT), however, is both the only remaining community garden, and an occupation on private land. It is located in a sector of Montevideo, *El Cerro*, which has a long history of organized labor movements, poverty, marginalization and violence. The location of the garden itself and several of the members' houses, are on land that belongs to a private industry. Several attempts by the supposed owner of the land to uproot the occupiers, who had come from a notoriously poor neighborhood, and other acts of violence, eventually caught the attention of the university, the municipality and the general public giving a particular face to their struggle.

In the context of the economic crisis, by mid-year of 2002, families began to occupy or squat a piece of land with the intention to raise animals and cultivate crops. The land is comprised of 19 hectares and was initially occupied in a chaotic manner by families united only by the draw to a vacant piece of land close to their neighborhoods. By the end of 2002, as their precarious situation and land tenure insecurity became more apparent, the families began to organize and establish a more clear vision for the 19 hectares in hopes of securing a foot-hold on the piece of land.

In May of 2003, with direction from, and under the broad objectives of, the PPAOC, the university held a workshop with CT to establish further defining characteristics of their organization. Four guiding objectives were designated: 1. to use resources more effectively and communally (cutting costs by buying collectively, creating a community seed bank and greenhouse); 2. look for legal channels to obtain the property; 3. improve the quality of life for the community by supporting the production and exchange of more varied foods and to generate a space of belonging to empower individuals; and 4. to significantly lower food costs of participating families. Early in the establishment of the organization it was clear that both social and agricultural production elements must be very strong if they hoped to secure the piece of

property and that networking with other groups who were achieving successes in the colonizing process would be crucial to their success (Institutional Interview PPAOC September 2008).

In July of 2003 the group of families occupying the land, then plainly referred to as “19 *hectareas*” (19 hectares), called together their first assembly. With support from a group of students studying Social Work at la Universidad de la República, a weekly meeting was called to create the general foundation for the creation of a formal organization. On the 29th of October, gathered in a meeting, the families baptized their new organization, “*Comuna Tierra*”, making official their collective existence and concreting their organizational structure and codes of conduct. At that time 9 separate productive establishments were consolidated into one with a total of 14 workers and 10 families participating, directly benefitting 30 individuals (Institutional Interview PAOC, September 2008).

Comuna Tierra as an organization functions with an Assembly and a Directive Commission. The Assembly and Commission convene on a weekly basis. In the Assembly, each of the 9 productive establishments being represented, and are open to the community. Its plenary meetings are meant to be open, participative, democratic spaces where decisions are made, resources are distributed and conflicts are resolved. The Commission is comprised of the president, the general secretary, the secretary of record and the treasurer. The main role of the Commission is to maintain relationships with external actors and institutions, keep minutes and advance discussions and proposals.

The main objective of *Comuna Tierra*, as determined in the plenary, is to ensure it is a productive organization fostering a social experience with particular emphasis on sustainability and participation. Productivity is understood as work related to the production of crops and animals without the use of external inputs, which also generates marketable products. The

project depends on collective use of resources and democratic participation in the making of decisions. Socially the organization emphasizes a way of life that creates a space of belonging and the overall improvement of the quality of life of the members and their families.

The organization drafted a Reglamento de Convivencia (code of conduct) where norms were established in respect to membership, how sanctions will be enforced and how the land and other communal resources are to be used. The communal resources as defined by the organizations are: horses for traction, the seed bank where seeds are to be kept that are produced on site and obtained from other institutions (such as the agronomy department), and other communal resources such as plows, hand tools, other animals and the goods that are produced as a collective (Institutional Interview PPAOC, September 2008).

The creation of a strong organization is not what separates *Comuna Tierra* from the other community garden organizations. All of the ten community gardens around Montevideo had at least minimal degrees of organization with the same goals in mind: creating a productive and participative enterprise and making themselves visible to institutions and the state so that they may access resources. What sets *Comuna Tierra* apart, however, was the nature of the institutional support they received. Support particularly related to long term and legal (land dispute) elements that other community garden organizations did not necessitate.

Beginning with the first steps of the occupation and throughout the years of developing productive systems *Comuna Tierra* has benefitted from agronomic, technical, material and legal support from PPAOC, UdelaR, PAU, and the IMM. Several NGOs gave further support to *Comuna Tierra*, such as CEUTA, *Centro Uruguayo de Tecnologías Apropriadas* (The Uruguayan Center for Appropriate Technology), with training in alternative energies and production strategies. The FEUU, *Federacion de Estudiantes Universitarios de Uruguay* (The Federation of

University Students of Uruguay) mobilized student support and created a strong relationship with *Comuna Tierra*, from the very beginning of their struggle, as a platform for social and agricultural research and applied programs. The CSEAM, *Comision Sectorial de Extensión y Actividades en el Medio* (The Commission of Extension and Activities in the Environment), a nexus for university extension programs, also had a strong presence in promoting applied research programs. *Comuna Tierra* created an additional alliance with the APODU, *Asociación de Productores Orgánicos del Uruguay* (Association of Organic Producers of Uruguay), which it maintains today and continues to influence their success and longevity, particularly through the effective marketing of their produce.

Comuna Tierra also has been very successful in creating strong relationships with social networks and organizations. Their organization participates in *la Red Intersocial del Cerro* (The inter-social network of The Cerro), *Misión Urbana y Rural* (Urban and Rural Mission), a Christian Organization, and *Haciendo Caminos* (Building Paths), a group of Uruguayan individuals living in exile abroad. Between 2003 and 2005 *Comuna Tierra*, as an organization, participated in several national and international forums held in Montevideo such as the First Encounter of Urban Agriculturalists (2003), The World Social Forum (2005), Congress for Innovative Ways to Use and Access Land, sponsored by The Society for Rural Fomentation (2005), and members of *Comuna Tierra* held active positions on the committees of “Urban Agriculturalists” and “Agrarian Reform.” Their participation and exchange of experiences with other organizations and institutions has been far reaching. Beyond extensive institutional contact, *Comuna Tierra* also maintained relationships with diverse schools where they developed educational workshops. Interestingly, the associated schools received food produced by *Comuna Tierra*, which was seen as a symbolic act to repay the support granted by the municipality.

The importance of their connections with institutions and other organizations, and their overall success in gaining a strong foothold through their presence and attention in the public sphere was essential to the success of their struggle. The attention that their struggle gained was not always intentionally sought after, but served their needs nonetheless in making their voices heard. *Comuna Tierra* eventually gained the support of the local community center's committee (CCZ 17) and the local police force of the zone, which initially were either clearly opposed to the occupation or at least hesitant to become involved or show allegiance. Conflict, as well as cooperation, undoubtedly concreted the support of institutions and the public in general.

The insecurity and vulnerability that members of *Comuna Tierra* experienced over the years deepened their struggle for land and social and productive stability. There were a series of events, primarily in early 2005, that made clear that their struggle for land would not be easy and was far from over. In October of 2003 an individual who had no relation to *Comuna Tierra* made a bold and violent attempt to occupy a piece of land that was considered part of *Comuna Tierra*—their organization was able to stop the invasion. Again, in 2004 individuals from the NGO, “Nosotros,” entered the property, allegedly having negotiated with one of *Comuna Tierra*'s members, overstepping the organization's legislature and was seen as an invasion. In 2004 and 2005 there were several such violent acts on the part of *Nosotros*. On the 18th of March of 2005, one of the members of *Nosotros* entered the property and openly threatened a member of *Comuna Tierra* and destroyed the community's power cables, leaving them without electricity. This act was reported at the local police station the following day.

In January of 2005 the same individual that attempted to occupy *Comuna Tierra* land in October of 2003 repeated his invasion, this time with firearms and open threats to members of *Comuna Tierra*. This individual was able to occupy a piece of the property through repeated acts

of violence. The acts were once again reported to the local police and directly to the Juzgado Penal (courts). During one such act on the 12th of March of 2005 the individual threatened the life of a *Comuna Tierra* member and discharged his firearm in the midst of children and members of the community. No one was injured, but this event further aggravated the already violent and insecure situation in the community. This incident was reported and the individual was found innocent and returned to the grounds within a few hours of the act (Interview with member of *Comuna Tierra*, March 2009).

Also in January of 2005, an individual claiming to be the owner of the property entered and stated that he represented ONSALMA S.A. and YATEY S.R.L, two large private companies. After some research *Comuna Tierra* discovered that the property was controlled by the *Banco Comercial* during that time, but the same individual repeatedly appeared in a threatening and violent manner demanding that the illegal occupiers abandon the property.

In the second half 2004 and the beginning of 2005, there were numerous acts of aggression against the community and their belongings. In August of 2004 a horse was stolen from the community. In February 2005 three horses were stolen from the organization, horses being an integral part of the daily tasks on the property. In March of 2005, one member's dwelling that was housing community harvest and seed stocks was lit on fire. In March there was another arson attempt on a member's house.

After years of violent conflict, robberies, threats and arson with no response from the local police, *Comuna Tierra* went to the central police station in Montevideo to report the violent aggressions of the individual who had repeatedly returned to occupy lands and threaten the lives of the members with a firearm. After talks with the Minister of the Interior and officials at the central police station, attitudes began to change. Peace was eventually restored to the holding

through a process of police and citizen pressure, and tensions of *Comuna Tierra* members were defused (Interview with member of Comuna Tierra, March 2009).

The impressive social pressure was generated with the participation of diverse actors and social organizations that supported *Comuna Tierra* such as PPAOC, FEUU, *Red Intersocial del Cerro, Misión Urbana y Rural*, among others. A clear example of such support was the use of night guards from the mentioned organizations that volunteered their time to watch over the property ensuring the safety of the lives and the possessions of the members of the organization. In addition, the general public, by way of radio and other forms of written local media testified to *Comuna Tierra's* struggle, contributing to the pressure and increasing awareness of the risks the community was experiencing (Institutional Interview, Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries April 2009).

The members of *Comuna Tierra* are split down the middle in terms of those born in Montevideo and those born in other areas of the country. About 30% of the members are from rural areas, and the rest were born in urban areas. However, over half of the members of *Comuna Tierra* have experience working in agriculture. Furthermore, two of the founding members have extensive experience with agriculture and establishing productive enterprises for market. In fact, only these two members of community gardens across Montevideo considered themselves as having a “*cabeza de campesino*,” or the head of a farmer. This is a critical point as the vast majority of new poor and *comuneros* involved in community gardens had very little previous experience with agriculture having come from primarily urban construction and industrial employment type jobs. Having the head of a farmer greatly facilitated the development of long term production plans for *Comuna Tierra*, which the other community

gardens lacked. These two experienced leaders influenced *Comuna Tierra* and helped ensure a constant and diversified harvest.

The two leaders were also nearing sixty years of age and explained that employment in construction would no longer be a feasible option and neither one of them had any intentions of returning to work. Their perseverance and the strength of the community continued with improvements in their production systems and the on-going battle with the institute of colonization to secure their piece of land. The fight went on for several years but by the final months of 2008 CT was producing for market and receiving the first glimpses of hope of the possibility of escaping the precarious land tenure situation through formal channels of the Institute of Colonization (Interviews with the two leaders of *Comuna Tierra*, March 2009).

These events have manifested in *Comuna Tierra's* ultimate transition to market growing and an alignment with the organic growers association of Uruguay (APODU). Their victory with the Institute of Colonization was bitter-sweet. They were eventually granted a piece of land but it is far from their social network, far from the markets and the land is virgin. A huge investment will have to be made to prepare the land and build houses.

3.5 Community Gardens and The State

The following quotes from officials at the Ministry of Agriculture illuminate the institutional perception of urban agriculture, and the community garden experience in particular. The quotes clearly depict urban agriculture as a romantic or idealistic notion that is not easily situated into an urban development agenda in Montevideo. It is likely that other municipal and

government institutions in Uruguay and in other countries share the similar challenge of incorporating urban agricultural initiatives into national and municipal development agendas.

The ministry does not have concrete actions only isolated experiences that many times did not persist for long. The central objective is to generate policy with respect to traditional agriculture *not* urban agriculture. There are zones that are not clearly delimited but we are making progress. One of the big advances in that sense in the *Ley de Ordenamiento Territorial* (Laws of Land-Use), that permits the creation of a framework for certain activities, one of the former objectives has been accomplished as a law but it is not implemented or regulated because the implementation remains in the hands of departmental and municipal governments. (Institutional Interview with an official from the Ministry of Livestock, Agriculture and Fisheries, February 2009)

If someone plants a garden in the back of the house, no one is going to say anything to them, but if you have animal production, hogs or birds or cows, there's a problem because there is a conflict of interests. There are people that are bothered by the smell, the flies and the noise. But a tomato plant doesn't provoke smells, noise or flies.

(Institutional Interview with an official from the Ministry of Livestock, Agriculture and Fisheries, February 2009).

3.6 Conclusion

The organization of community gardens was a clear response by new-poor communities and institutions to economic crisis. The gardens, from very early on acted as catalysts for

something much more profound--it was a vehicle for the organization of people within a territory and the ability to change their conditions of life and not to simply produce food. Development initiatives optimistically promoted community gardens as a short and medium term “patch” to cover processes generated by the capitalist socio-economic system and not because “new-poor” were poor by chance.

After probing beyond purely economic factors, informants began to offer other explanations that take us closer to understanding the social and cultural difficulties in establishing a long-lasting connection/relationship with agriculture in an urban setting. Statements such as, “the tools never fit our hands right,” and “we do not have the head of a farmer” were common in interviews throughout the research period. Many *comuneros* explain that as urbanites they prefer access to cash because you can buy whatever you want, whenever you want it. The sense of immediacy does not translate well to agriculture and the long term planning it takes to develop a productive garden.

Ultimately, the community garden experience of the *comuneros*, while clearly urban agriculture, had far less to do with agriculture than social transformation. Growing food in the immediate fallout of the economic crisis rescued some of the new urban poor from additional insults to their terribly strained condition in the irregular settlements. However, what remains of the community garden movement isn’t gardens, or seeds, or agricultural techniques for the urban margin, but rather the collective experience of organizing, embracing values such as solidarity in difficult times, the improvement in self esteem, and the improved institutional linkages and accessibility (Facultad de Agronomía - UDELAR, 2003). The gardens were not able to provide a complete coverage of necessities for families. According to estimations by researchers and the *comuneros* themselves, about half of the gardens were able to self-sufficiently produce 35% of

their nutritional needs (Gomez-Perazzoli 2007) and were host to a broad range of crops. The table below illustrates the great diversity of crops that were being cultivated across the city in both home-gardens and community gardens at the time of the census (Udelar/IMM 2005). The table provides data on the total of crops observed across 89 family-run gardens and 23 community gardens (112 total gardens) across Montevideo.

Table 1: Crops Represented in Community and Homegardens across Montevideo in 2004,
(Modified from the census conducted by Udelar/IMM 2005:26).

Crop	Number of Gardens	% of Gardens
Tomatoes	103	92,79
Aromatic and Medicinal Herbs	88	79,28
Bell Peppers	78	70,27
Maize	73	65,77
Winter Squash	64	57,66
Miniature Winter Squash	52	46,85
Sweet Potatoes	50	45,05
Chard	43	38,74
Beans	33	29,73
Lettuce	32	28,83
Cabbage	30	27,03
Leeks	28	25,23
Onions	26	23,42
Fruit Trees	26	23,42
Eggplant	25	22,52
Greenbeans	25	22,52
Beets	25	22,52
Catalán Peppers	20	18,02
Carrots	18	16,22
Celery	15	13,51

Though the gardens did not cover all of the participants' nutritional needs they certainly helped to diversify their diets and provided a powerful lesson in creating better spaces, both geographical and societal, as *comuneros* strove for nutritional and political autonomy.

The community garden experience fits the image of urban agriculture as a temporary solution to resource scarcity and crisis as mentioned in the introduction, yet provided much more to the *comuneros* than food. The formation of community garden organizations served the state by rationalizing and standardizing “social hieroglyphs into legible and administratively more convenient formats” (Scott 1998: 2-3) which enabled the state and other institutions to more efficiently allocate resources.

Comuneros and the broader new-poor population continue to use community organization, a skill honed during the community garden era, as a powerful political tool for defining space and order at the urban margin. In the following chapter, the use of organization as a political lever for negotiating with the state and other communities at the urban margin is further explored. The turbulent process of regularizing irregular settlements, and the impacts this has on other forms urban agricultural and livestock practices will become clearer.

In the case of the community gardens the push for institutional visibility was a collaborative effort between the municipality, the University of the Republic and community leaders and citizen activists. By creating community garden organizations individuals were able to access technical and legal support as well as other basis agronomic resources such as seeds and compost from said institutions. The phenomenon of community gardens was relatively short lived but community networks have remained strong across the city's zones. Many individuals carried the experience back to their homes and created back yard gardens. One community garden was able to transition into commercial production with the organic market and some of

the members of community gardens went on to act as technicians and promoters of urban agriculture in educational centers and schools across the city.

The existence of local organizations and the experience of creating those local organizations is the most sustainable aspect of the community garden experience in Montevideo. Solidarity, autonomy, dignity and the ability to organize remains a powerful tool for facing future challenges in a dignified way. In Uruguay community gardens fulfilled an important role during the years of the crisis, not only in terms of improving food security but also because of its role in strengthening social networks in poor and working class sectors and the promotion of the linking between institutions. The experience made possible the improvement of abilities of particularly community gardeners and professional to develop small-scale production systems that are appropriate to the urban condition.

CHAPTER 4

CLASIFICADORES: “LIVING OFF THE TRASH” AND RAISING HOGS AT THE URBAN MARGIN

“Authorities are hesitant to be more proactive on urban agriculture because it is largely seen as resulting from a failure to address rural development adequately. It is creating havoc in urban land use planning and management. It is holding up city development and redevelopment,”

(Mayor Mwale of Lusaka 1997, The Second International Colloquium of Mayors on Governance for Sustainable Growth and Equity, United Nations Development Programme, United Nations, New York City)

If someone plants a garden in the back of the house, no one is going to say anything to them, but if you have animal production, hogs or birds or cows, there’s a problem because there is a conflict of interests. There are people that are bothered by the smell, the flies and the noise. But a tomato plant doesn’t provoke smells, noise or flies.

(Institutional Interview with an official from the Ministry of Livestock, Agriculture and Fisheries, February 2009)

This chapter describes in detail the production and organizational strategies of *clasificadores-criaderos de cerdos*, clasificadores that raise hogs (CCdC’s as they are referred to in the text) and the ways they negotiate urban and peri-urban landscapes differently than their

new-poor neighbors. As the introduction to this dissertation and the previous chapter have suggested, there is a rich diversity of urban agricultural production strategies found in and around Montevideo, particularly in *asentamientos* or irregular settlements. Agriculture and livestock production in Montevideo is very dynamic and there is some mixing or overlap of strategies between populations which take advantage of access to urban resources and open peri-urban spaces, though the populations employ very different production and organizational strategies.

In Montevideo *clasificadores*, or classifiers/sorters, make their living by gathering urban refuse, often by horse cart, from the city and municipal refuse centers, and selling the recyclable or reusable materials to industries for a profit. Many *clasificadores*, particularly those that live in established *clasificador* communities at the urban margin, and without coincidence in close proximity to municipal dumps, also raise hogs with organic refuse to supplement their incomes. This urban ethnographic research describes in detail the production and organizational strategies of *clasificadores* who raise hogs in irregular settlements around Montevideo and how they negotiate the changing political landscape of urban land use policy and access to trash. They have carved out a unique ecological niche taking advantage of urban resources, and peri-urban spaces to develop an intensive livestock production system in relatively small areas which is made possible by constant inputs of organic refuse from the city.

Organized manifestations and the creation of the first ever union of *clasificadores* is providing them with “visibility” to the state and forcing the municipality to move toward the institutionalization of *clasificador* livelihood and increased social inclusion. Since the economic crisis Uruguay suffered in 2002 irregular settlements at the urban margin have experienced rapid expansion. Efforts by the state to regularize the irregular settlements as well

as questions of the legality of raising hogs in urban areas with refuse forces communities of *clasificadores* to respond in various ways and further complicates their often antagonistic relationship with the local government. To understand agricultural and livestock production by CCdCs and maintain continuity in the overall research framework, this chapter is guided by the same questions as previous chapters; Who are *clasificadores*? How is their agricultural and livestock production managed in the urban and peri-urban context? How are agricultural and livestock production behaviors of *clasificadores* affected by economic, and variable land tenure. What is the institutional/legal landscape? And how do these factors impact behavior over time and influence their visions for the future?

With organization, such as the development of *clasificador* cooperatives and more recently a labor union, comes “visibility” to the state. This awareness and acknowledgment of *clasificador* livelihood strategies puts pressure on the municipality to implement policy. The outcome could be a move toward the institutionalization of *clasificador* livelihood and increased social inclusion. But in their case the increased institutional “visibility” could also lead to intensified repression and/or complete elimination. Irregular settlements at the urban margin have expanded rapidly since the economic crisis Uruguay suffered in 2002, Efforts by the state to regularize the irregular settlements, as well as questions of the legality of raising hogs in urban areas with refuse, forces communities of CCdCs to respond in various ways and further complicates their often unsympathetic relationship with the local government. Montevideo’s present situation is a probable glimpse into the future; as most cities around the world become increasingly like Montevideo, the subsistence strategies of their poor likely will fall in line with those such as the CCdCs.

4.1 “Living off the Trash:” Chronic Urban Poverty in Montevideo

Clasificadores are bound by their livelihood, which in the last few years has given them some institutional visibility and political clout. Their life histories and perceptions of the greater world span a wide spectrum, as well as a few generations. *Clasificadores* struggle in common to become a visible, dignified part of society. Regardless of product specialization, life history or the presence of livestock, their political campaign and struggle unites them.

Clasificadores were previously known as *hurgadores*. The verb *hurgar* means to poke around in, or stir up. Calling them *hurgadores* carries a derogatory connotation in Uruguayan usage and strips away their legitimacy thus working against their common struggle. They are fighting the public and municipal perception of the *hurgador* who blocks traffic downtown, makes his children work and leaves trash and horse droppings strewn about around the dumpsters and in the streets. They are battling for a new identity as *clasificadores*, and in recent years are enjoying political power and a new, more respected role in the urban landscape. They wish for their work be considered “real” work--a legitimate job like any other.

In general, *clasificadores* live in situations of chronic poverty over generations. Thus they have very different life histories, and have developed distinct production strategies and social organization, than other groups who practice urban agriculture at the city’s margin. There is a great deal of variability between *clasificadores* and the materials they work with, but as a guiding definition, the Ministry of Social Development offers the following:

Workers and their families that collect and classify solid urban wastes as part of an informal economy that comprises one of their principal modes of survival wherein they sell and trade the raw materials that can be recycled or reused and take advantage of

organic residues for consumption in the household and for the raising of livestock (Uruguay Clasifica/MIDES 2008:11).

The fact that the CCdCs (*clasificadores* who raise hogs) continue to maintain the tradition of raising hogs and using horses as their principal mode of transportation, even being two and three generations “urban” or city dwellers, seems odd at first glance. Looking at the rationalization of their subsistence strategy and the way they take advantage of the urban margin to carve out their ecological niche, their productive and sophisticated livelihood strategy becomes evident.

The following history outlines major events that impacted *clasificadores* and their livelihood strategies. Organizational strategies and urban agricultural and livestock production continue with rural traditions that were brought to the city by the parents and grandparents of many *clasificadores* some fifty years ago. A broad overview is necessary at this point to clarify some of the obstacles *clasificadores* have confronted as a marginalized population in general, and later draw distinctions between who is referred to as *Clasificadores-Criadores de Cerdos*: *Clasificadores-Hog Producers*, (CCdCs) and other kinds of *clasificadores*.

In the 1970s *hurgadores* were prohibited from entering municipal dumps. A second generation CCdC shared that the prohibition was enforced, as many rules were during the dictatorship years, with armed force. She shared that she and others from the communities around the dump that had settled there in the 1950s were threatened with being shot on sight if they were found in the municipal dump, and recalled several instances where shots were in fact fired. This meant a shift in strategy for *hurgadores* who had to make rounds to gather refuse in residential and downtown areas before the municipal and private companies had the chance to

collect it and take it to the dumps. This is still the strategy for many CCdCs who make their rounds in the city at night reducing contact with traffic and police pressure.

Toward the end of 1980, the recollection services of residential neighborhoods and the downtown area were privatized. This essentially denied *clasificadores* access to the urban refuse on which they depended for their livelihood. After small protests, and the first march of *carritos* (horse-carts), *clasificadores* enjoyed a small victory and continued to access urban refuse. In 1985 with renewed spirit and the return of democracy, a group of *clasificadores* created the first refuse center for themselves, where they could earn a better living and create an environment for organization and recognition or institutionalization of their work. The center operated for seven years and supposedly marked the first time that *clasificadores* were able to set fair prices by weight for their sorted materials with industry and intermediaries.

In 1990 a census was conducted in Montevideo under the newly elected socialist municipal government. The census was voluntary with the incentive to those who participated being an authorization permit to sort garbage. The municipality recorded the presence of 3,500 *clasificadores* in Montevideo. In the following census of 2002, 5,312 were registered. The last census was completed in November of 2008, but the numbers are hotly contested between the municipality and the newly formed UCRUS, *Union de Clasificadores de Resudios Urbanos Solidos*, (Union of Sorters of Solid Urban Waste), the first union of its kind in Uruguay. According to the municipality, the most recent census registered 5,700 *clasificadores*, close to the same numbers as 2002. The vice-president and spokesman for UCRUS claims that the municipality is lying, or at least did not do a thorough census, with the aims of maintaining politics of exclusion—fewer officially registered *clasificadores* translates into fewer permits and thus fewer sanctioned sorters. Some of the 5,700 *clasificadores* that were registered received

permits to work with solid wastes in the city and a tag for their horse-carts that permit them to circulate in downtown areas. The municipality acknowledges that these numbers fell short and agree that according to their estimations there are closer to 10,000 *clasificadores* in Montevideo. UCRUS pushes the number even higher, closer to 15,000, asserting that the numbers of *clasificadores* operating in Montevideo exploded in recent years, particularly after the economic crisis of 2002. Moreover, there is a troubling number of child workers in the streets that was not as pronounced in the past (El Tiempo September 16, 2008 and Interview with member of UCRUS December 2008).

Privatization and access to trash is an ongoing battle between the municipality and *clasificadores*. In an article from El Pais, the national newspaper, published on October 2, 2008 entitled “*Clasificadores amenazan volver a movilizarse*” (*Clasificadores Threaten to Mobilize Again*), a representative of UCRUS was quoted in the national newspaper *El Pais* that the union rejects the formation of an NGO, which would be dependent on private interests.

In rejection of the privatization of the municipal dump “Felipe Cardoso,” *La Union de Clasificadores de Residuos Urbanos Solidos* (UCRUS) is considering the possibility of mobilizing in response to the privatization of Municipal Dump #5 where for some time a cooperative of 70 individuals has been operating. The representative of UCRUS, Eulogio Mora said to El Pais that the members of the cooperative reject the formation of an NGO that would be in a situation of dependence on private interests. “If that were to occur, we would make a miserable salary and we would be told what to do by other people,” he asserted. Some of the recyclers have worked for 7 years at the dump and recently were able to form a cooperative. They make between \$100 and \$150 [pesos equivalent to approximately 4-7 US dollars] a day but estimate that they could increase their incomes

during the “high season” in summer, when “more is consumed, more plastic, cardboard and metals are thrown away,” the syndicate representative added. Mora said that the 70 individuals work with 23 trash trucks that dump their residues in the dump of the which there are nine “special trucks”: much more clean and with a higher quantity of recyclable refuse. The director of Adeom Alvaro Soto pointed out that 500 trucks arrive daily to the municipal dump[...]. This shows us that the labor opportunities that are being lost,” added the municipal employee. [...] (*El Pais* February 10, 2008).



Figures 7 and 8 are photos of the manifestation by UCRUS protesting municipal politics in 2008.

Photos courtesy of *La Republica*, February 14, 2008

The Municipality and the ministries of Social Development and Environment and Work acknowledge that the fact that sustained growth in the economy and the rise in employment

opportunities has not had a significant impact on the number of *clasificadores* in Montevideo and that it is likely that they will remain a fixture in the city as the *cartoneros* in Buenos Aires and *catadores* in Brazil have done regardless of shifts in the economy. The numbers cited above make important points. The number of *clasificadores* working in Montevideo have likely doubled if not tripled since the crisis of 2002.

Among such strategies developed by slum dwellers, the collection and sorting of domestic solid wastes (organic and inorganic) has become an important source of income. Inorganic wastes are sorted and sold to local recycling industries, while organic wastes serve, in many cases, as animal feed, primarily for pigs. Pig raising has become a common economic activity in Montevideo, in both rural and urban zones. Among the slum dwellers who sort urban solid wastes, those who raise pigs are a distinct group. This activity, however, has important sanitary and environmental impacts, such as the transmission of animal-borne diseases to humans and the contamination of soil and water.

The IMM, *Intendencia Municipal de Montevideo* (the municipal government), has developed several strategies aimed at regulating waste sorting and pig raising which attempt to improve the storage and sorting conditions of organic wastes. The processing of organic wastes destined for consumption by pigs is a critical issue in this productive chain. The Veterinary School of the UDELAR (Universidad de la República de Uruguay) has become involved in researching and developing techniques and processes aimed at reducing the sanitary and environmental problems involved in the inadequate processing of waste used to feed pigs. Due to diverse factors, such as the socio-economic characteristics of the majority of the CCdCs in the irregular settlements and the sanitary conditions where these activities take place, the raising of

pigs in such an environment is a distinctive and highly politicized manifestation of Urban Agriculture in Uruguay.

Due to the clandestine nature of urban hog production it is a difficult task to approximate the overall number of CCdCs in Montevideo. It is estimated, however, that a large proportion of the several thousand *clasificadores* that circulate in the city raise hogs as an important component of their subsistence strategy (Santandreu, Castro and Ronca 2000). Researchers from various fields agree that hogs provide an essential complement to *clasificadores*' subsistence strategy, particularly by providing an economic safety net for unforeseen emergencies (Vitale et al, 1996; Moreira, 1997; Tommasino et al 1998). Other researchers, such as veterinarians and social workers, who have had contact with *clasificadores* that raise hogs in irregular settlements add that,

Within the *clasificadores* that use solid residues the ones that raise hogs constitute a group with particular characteristics. They operate under family production logistics covering nutritional necessities for autoconsumption or of an economic nature as a secondary income. The reutilization of domestic refuse as food is a common practice although the use of commercial refuse is also used (wastes from bakeries) and industrial (wastes from butchering, etc). Generally there is no prior treatment (such as heating) of the organic residues (A. Lozano y V. Basanta 2004).

According to *clasificadores* interviewed for this research and UCRUS, the majority of *clasificadores* raises at least a couple hogs or are involved in raising hogs. There are characteristics that distinguish established *clasificadores* from individuals that have recently begun working the streets. The most clearly distinguishing factors are the retention of rural

productive practices and the presence of livestock in their communities—most importantly horses and hogs. CCdCs and new *clasificadores* are often forthright in their self identification.

Informants who clearly define themselves as “real” *clasificadores*, or others that specialize in a certain products, demonstrate this point. “No, we do not raise hogs. We do not work *en la mugre* [in the filth]. We are not like those *clasificadores*. We are *cartoneros* and *papeleros*. We collect cardboard and paper and sell it to the factories and middlemen (*Clasificador*: March 28, 2009).” This individual was referring to his family and community and wanted to make it very clear that they were not *that* kind of *clasificadores*. Similar statements, such as, “When I get home I take my clothes off and shower so that my kids do not see that I work in the trash...I do not want that for them (*Clasificador*: April 10, 2009),” were recorded from informants who have recently begun working in the trash

Both of these statements are from individuals that began working in trash in recent years. The latter case is noteworthy because this individual lives close to the main dump of Montevideo, therefore has easy access to trash and has forged agreements with *clasificadores* that allow him access to buyers who come with trucks to pick up the separated recyclable materials. These individuals do not raise hogs nor do they depend on horses. Their cases are more aligned with the “new-poor,” as individuals that were displaced after the economic crisis are referred to, more and more of whom are finding that classifying and selling refuse is a viable livelihood option. There exists flexibility among *clasificadores* and CCdCs in employment. Many of them have worked in domestic work and construction, but typically return to classification of garbage where they are their own bosses.

There is a great deal of variability between *clasificadores*. This chapter is not meant to over generalize about their behaviors. Many *clasificadores* work in refuse centers or do rounds

throughout the city with horse-cart, bicycle or even on foot, and classify refuse for its economic return alone by selling the recyclable materials they gather and for basic sustenance. Much of their subsistence strategies rely on social networks that provide access to specific resources that are economically valuable in terms of their payoff by weight or for their value in putting weight on hogs. Social capital and access to markets, supermarkets, bakeries and construction sites are valuable for their use in raising hogs back in their communities. These social networks are complex and far-reaching throughout the urban landscape and would take an exhaustive study to uncover in a meaningful way. For the scope of this chapter and maintaining the thesis of the dissertation overall the focus will be on those *clasificadores* who consider themselves “traditional” or “real” *clasificadores* who engage in livestock production and predominantly rely on the horse for mobility and as a beast of burden.

The number of the rural urban migrants during the 1940s and 1950s, caused rapid expansion in Montevideo and the numbers of individuals pushed from the country-side grew faster than the industrial and professional sector could provide employment. The economic hardships in the late 1950s and early 1960s exacerbated this trend laying the foundation for the establishment of the first *cantegriles*, *asentamientos*, and *barrios de ratas* (slums). Communities of *clasificadores* are better established in irregular settlements than their “new-poor” neighbors, often having arrived there in earlier waves of migration (Frega et al 2008). The vast majority of the cases coincide with waves of migration that occurred between 1945 and 1955. Originally from the interior of the country, with the passing of time the characteristics of inhabitants of irregular settlements have changed. In the 1950s, 65% of the inhabitants were of rural origins (Bon Espasandín 1963), and by the 1980s, 76% were born in Montevideo (Mazzei y Veiga 1985).

The tradition of “living off the trash,” in many cases began with individuals who arrived from the country during the difficult times following the previous prosperous “fat cow” era. Many of the rural-urban migrants who arrived during the rapid expansion of Montevideo held on to rural tradition, some applying that knowledge to the urban landscape carving out their niche as *clasificadores*. It is because of these individuals that communities of *clasificadores*, some now third generation urban Montevideans, continue with their rural traditions of raising hogs and maintaining a close relationship with horses. The majority of *clasificadores* interviewed for this study are second and third generation *clasificadores* who have never, themselves, lived in the countryside, yet proudly hold on to horse culture and rural smallholder production practices. The migrants continue their rural traditions of raising animals, mainly hogs and horses, in the semi-urban periphery or peri-urban belt.

4.2 Organization for Resistance: Cooperatives and Unions Fight for Access to Refuse

We [*clasificadores* of solid wastes] are being ever more excluded from society, leaving us each time fewer places where we can recollect recyclable materials, arbitrarily restricting new transit zones. This is a response to the present municipal politics, which intends to remove *clasificadores* from the city, pushing us out, especially in the central zones and touristic neighborhoods to hide poverty, that instead of lowering it [poverty] is maintained or grows more (Interview with a leader of UCRUS, April 2009).

Representatives of the state, admit that *clasificadores*, in general, are symbolic of deeper societal problems but as the municipal officer points out in the quote below the most pressing

issues that *clasificadores* present for the city are related to transit, public health and pollution of the urban environment (Institutional Interview with an elected official at CSEAM).

The public politics of the Municipality and the ministries towards *clasificadores* has always been based in the environmental issues that they generate. They have always thought about politics that would resolve the transit issue in Montevideo, or ways to stop them from creating other problems with the refuse in the city and importantly solutions to the care of their hogs that can be multipliers/carriers of foot and mouth disease. The essential problem, however, poverty, has never been considered. We need to think together with them about strategies and as long as we continue to begin discussions with transit or trash we will be mistaken. Historically the majority of politics have not thought of the *clasificador* as a social subject. I believe that we have to think about the issue of the *clasificadores* and urban agriculture in such a way.

A former Municipal Director of Montevideo made his sentiments quite clear. He was quoted saying that, “The recollectors must be swept of the streets of the city.” The newly formed union of *clasificadores* (UCRUS) responded that “Our [*Clasificadores*] work must be recognized and that we must be respected as individuals.”

Conversations and interviews with *clasificadores* invariably begin with, *I know what you think about us*. Or, *We know how people look at us in the city but they do not understand that this is our work, we do our work and we go home just like they do and I take care of my kids better than some of them*. The independent nature, autonomy, freedom and pride of *clasificadores* are themes that arise repeatedly in interviews and conversations with them. Phrases such as, *nadie me manda*, (no one tells me what to do), and *todos somos patronos* (we are all bosses) rang

through almost every interview. The construction of an identity of autonomy and freedom is illustrated over and over and often are related to the problems they have organizing themselves. In a letter from the office of UCRUS to the Ministry of Social Development's program *Uruguay Clasifica* (Uruguay Sorts) UCRUS asserts the importance of their independence and their fight for the institutionalization of their livelihood:

We are used to living a hard life, but we do not have bosses; we have to work hard to get by but we don't have bosses telling us what to do. We have to work to live but we have the freedom to stop when we want. Those of us that watch out for the interests of the rest are conscious of the fact that those values of ours should be respected but they also make it difficult for us to get organized to be able to receive basic benefits such as health care, retirement, and other things (Uruguay Clasifica/MIDES 2006).

Though they pride themselves in their independent character and lack of bosses, *clasificadores* have a strong sense of work-based solidarity and the ability to organize themselves.

Clasificadores have clearly illustrated their power to mobilize for political gain. A clear and amusing example of their power to organize came to light during an interview with an official at the Municipality of Montevideo who took pleasure explaining that:

Clasificadores are not just poor people who live in shacks at the edge of the city and go around gathering trash anymore. They have become a force here in the city and are moving towards the creation of unions and the institutionalization of their work. A couple years ago the Municipality attempted to prohibit *clasificadores* from doing their work downtown. From the point of view of the Municipality *clasificadores* are sometimes seen as hindering development and harming the image of Montevideo as a progressive city. And their horse-carts really cause problems in the downtown areas

making traffic difficult and causing a general pain in the ass for the Municipality [...]. The day after the Municipality declared that horse-carts were to be prohibited from the downtown area we were surprised to find a couple hundred horse-carts gathered at the front of the Municipality blocking the 18 de Julio [the main avenue downtown]. This sent a strong and clear message that they do in fact have the ability to organize and can cause a great deal of problems for the city. Since then they continue with their activities with little interference from the Municipality and continue to gain momentum in the formation of unions and the institutionalization of their work. The organization of a *clasificador* union is a clear response to established power. I believe that in the case of *clasificadores*, their form of answering to such a power is in their existence alone, their being the concrete face of poverty. When their re-collection activities were threatened they gathered a few hundred horse-carts around the *intendencia* [the municipal building]. What cannot be said is that *clasificadores* are not organized. The logic of their organization operates quite differently but they can organize. Also, they have a lot of communal sense in their minds and in their ideologies, just like ours: how things are transformed, how to contest, ways to change society, organization, how to fight so that their children are educated in their neighborhoods. With their presence alone they are interplaying and interacting with greater society every day and it seems to me that that too is a form of struggle that is very particular and organized in a very different way from our own (Institutional Interview with an official at the Municipality April 2008).

The antagonistic relationship between *clasificadores* and the local government is not surprising. The march of 2008 mentioned above, that blocked the municipality and the principal

avenue (*18 de Julio*) of Montevideo, was a clear act of resistance. Both sides see two major events--the march of September 2008, and the formation of UCRUS--as a crystallization of *clasificadores'* efforts to resist municipal politics and a manifestation of power. In the following statement by an UCRUS spokesman and leader, who has spear-headed much of the move to unionize, he makes clear that the present relationship between the UCRUS and its members and the municipality is far from a cooperative or peaceful one.

MIDES [the recently created Ministry of Social Development] granted Juan Cacharpa [a small *clasificador* labor cooperative] a warehouse that was generated with funds from the diaspora, Uruguayans that left the country in search of employment in other countries. These individuals in Canada and Europe maintain a social cohesion and through an agreement created a support fund for such projects with MIDES. They provided this nice new warehouse to them with the objective of separating them from UCRUS. The government does not know what to do with clasificadores. There are no alternatives for us and in that moment the clasificador him/herself was not the cancer. The cancer was UCRUS because of its intention to organize in an independent manner away from bosses and the government. This is the essential ideological matrix--to produce cooperatively, maintaining harmony between the two antagonistic streams, the enterprising and the solidarity. And also to not break with obligations between classes all classes of salaried workers. That is the cancer that the system has. Those that are up there, the intendencia, and the ministers, are all agents of the system. For them the existence of UCRUS is a cancer that they have to tolerate. And we have to see how we can accomplish a tolerance that serves us and that makes it possible for us to operate in a way that breaks the ideology of classes.

The ideological cultural matrix that the individual has been able to create in a primitive manner is the reproduction, at a lower societal scale, the same ideological hierarchy as in main stream and upper society--the individualism, the “he does his own”, the “I compete with the rest of the *clasificadores*.” Their matrix is not fed by elements of solidarity but by competitive elements that reproduce at the lower scales the same values as the upper scales, adapted to their world, their sub-situation. When some of us came together to promote our organization in a unión it was an immense ideological leap from that ideological matrix. I don’t have any reason to be associated with the others because I compete with the others. In the street and at the dumps I keep what I find and the money I make is mine. When we begin to organize and create associations that changes; we have to begin to share and work together. It’s a big leap and a powerful one [...].

The present management of the union is nourished by anarchist militants, Marxists, independents, that are all united by a common respect for the basic conception of independence from the classes, from bosses, in the face of the bourgeoisie and the government...The older individuals were the umbilical cord that was creating the same society of classes within the world of *clasificadores*. The highest level of organization, which is a syndicate, is not inside of the capitalist system. Those individuals were trying to create, inside the dynamics of the cooperative, the same relation that they had when they were independent [not part of the cooperative or union], the same hierarchy and relations of classes. They were taking advantage of their relations to class and power to climb the stairs and oppress their own companions (Institutional Interview with Representative and Spokesman of UCRUS March 2009).

The social organization and cultural dynamics in irregular settlements in *clasificador* communities have evolved in interesting ways since the 1950s and 1960s. Basic social organization is typically centered around the nuclear and extended family and there are no representatives or elected community or neighborhood officials as is common among the “new-poor.” Communities are typically comprised of several extended families that practice cooperative strategies around work, the classification and selling of recyclable refuse, and raising hogs.

On the surface power dynamics in *clasificador* communities seem egalitarian and based around the family but upon closer inspection there is often a re-creation of classes and hierarchy of status among members of *clasificador* communities, as the spokesman for UCRUS mentioned above. The most obvious status symbol, which also provides a clear economic advantage and mobility, is the horse. Horses are very valuable, ranging anywhere from \$500-\$2000, and facilitate the collection of superior amounts of recyclables and organic refuse providing a larger cash payoff that would otherwise be very difficult. The horse was repeatedly asserted as the most prized and coveted possession of the *clasificadores* (Interviews with *clasificadores* January-May 2009).

Power dynamics in the social landscape of the irregular settlements, especially among *clasificadores*, is an informal negotiation. This informal hierarchy of power is reflected well by the arrangements of *clasificadores* and their “helpers.” *Clasificadores*, with the means to, will often hire helpers. The helpers have a wide range of responsibilities including “working the streets,” gathering and separating refuse from dumpsters in the urban center, feeding the hogs and horses, and cleaning the animals’ pens. Helpers are compensated for their labor through

informal agreements that include a percentage of the earnings from the sales of hogs and recyclables, and use of the horse-cart for their own means.

The most striking social category is that of *perros* within the communities. The word *perro* is the Spanish word meaning dog but in this context refers to individuals who work for other clasificadores without being compensated for their labor in cash. Being someone's perro is a clear assertion of their social and economic status as well as a sense of being owned or in a situation of servitude. This is a good example that even amongst the most marginalized groups there exists a clearly demarcated social stratigraphy. These unfortunate individuals work for families or a group of families by collecting and classifying refuse and taking care of the hogs who, in return, are compensated with something to eat and when lucky a corner of the dwelling where to rest their heads. Being a *perro* is not a permanent title but rather a declaration of the individual's status in a community.

No one can tell me about *mugre* [filth]. I have lived all over in so many *canteras* [dumps] and always the same—living off the trash, working with the *carritos* [horsecarts], classifying trash, raising hogs. I have been a *perro* and have had *perros* of my own. Its not so bad, we almost all know each other and work together but its never so pretty to be a *perro*. Those are hard times (Interview at the Principal Municipal Refuse Center with a third generation *clasificador* March 2009).

Becoming someone's *perro* happens for a number of reasons. Informants shared that one becomes a *perro* when there is no other way of making a living and is usually attributed to an unfortunate event or circumstance such as being orphaned or generally lacking family ties, lack of means to work such as having a horse or at least a bicycle, or in more recent years drug abuse

(referring always to *pasta base*, unrefined cocaine). Some *perros* have the fortune of using their “master’s” horse-cart for their own ends once they have fulfilled their duties and in such a way can access cash and feasibly climb out of their servitude (Interviews with Clasificadores January-May 2009).

4.3 Raising Hogs at the Margin: Clandestine Swine Production

The horse is the most prized possession of the *clasificador*. “The horse *te gana la vida* (earns you a living)...without a horse you might as well be a *perro*,” is a frequent statement made by informants. Another informant shared,

If we have to we bring the horse into the house. It’s very small but still we put him in there because if we don’t someone could steal him. I would rather sleep outside than to leave my horse there sometimes. Or even put my kids outside before I would leave the horse out...no one would steal the kids (Interview with a CCdC, November 13, 2008).

This is further evidenced by the fact that horse theft is considered the most serious of the three most-frequently named negative social problems among *clasificadores* in their neighborhoods--violence and drug abuse coming in second and third respectively.

Some horses are brought in from the interior of the country, but largely they are raised, trained and sold all within the communities. Some bloodlines of *classificadores* cart horses have been established for generations. At first glance a horse doesn’t seem to be a good fit for this lifestyle, especially in terms of the ecology of urban and semi-urban areas. Horses need to be taken to pasture or else provided with fodder. These horses typically have access to some pasture areas in the irregular settlements and around the dumps. They also benefit from organic

refuse, but only very specific organic refuse is given to horses, and it is painstakingly inspected for any potentially harmful materials.

In economic terms, the horse provides a great deal of utility as a beast of burden pulling carts around the neighborhoods and city streets on a daily basis to collect the refuse for sorting, recycling and feeding the hogs. The horse plays a larger cultural role in the lives of these people. *Clasificadores* brought with them their rural culture and the horse being an integral part of that culture was not left behind.

Hogs are perfectly suited to fill a unique ecological niche for CCdCs. Hogs essentially turn trash that is brought in from the city or refuse centers into weight on the hoof in a fairly efficient manner. Hogs become a sort of savings account in this context that can be cashed in for both food and money. Hogs also do not need room to roam and therefore fit well into small urban and peri-urban landscapes where small lots are common.

According to reports by researchers in Montevideo, hogs provide an important supplement to CCdC families' diets, however, data gathered for this research run counter to such findings. In fact in 100% of the interviews with *clasificadores* that raise hogs, the hogs were discussed purely in terms of supplementing CCdCs' income and not their diet. Repeatedly informants referred to their hogs as "living savings accounts," or "money on the hoof," that provide a considerable pay off at the end of the year when demand for pork is high in the city, or for times of need, such as accidents, illnesses or horse theft. Informants insisted that hogs are too valuable to eat, and only under exceptional circumstances would they slaughter hogs for consumption in the home. On several occasions CCdCs went on to explain that many in their communities would prefer not to eat the hogs at all. One such informant had no qualms explaining that, "We know what they eat because we feed them. They eat whatever, diapers,

anything. They are nasty animals. You would be no better than the hog if you were to eat them (CCdC: March 13, 2009).” This statement is in stark contrast to reports that state that hogs are an important supplement to the CCdCs’ diet.

Hog production is often maximized to provide income throughout the year for many CCdCs. The most common strategy is to time production so that small pigs are available for sale throughout the year while maintaining a few hogs to raise to full weight for sale at the end of the year for a more considerable sum. These urban farmers closely follow market trends, and are very savvy in their dealings with direct buyers and intermediaries.

The following quote is from a second generation CCdC, about 30 years old, who has “lived off of trash” and raised hogs his entire life just as his parents did. The quote illustrates his knowledge of market prices, and more poignantly the stigma that many urban Montevideans have of *clasificadores* and CCdCs and their lifestyles.

A few years ago a guy from urban Montevideo came to buy a hog from me. People know we raise hogs and come looking when they want to have a party or at the end of the year when it is customary to eat a lot of pork. He was offering me half the market price at the time. We do not raise pure lines of hogs but they [the market] give two prices—one for pure line hogs and one for others like we have. He was offering half the price of even the hogs like ours. I told him the price and he said, “but you are a *hurgador*, I am sure you need the money. Just take it and stop being difficult.” I told him what he should do with his money and to go back to the city before I made trouble for him.... That is the problem, people see us in the city getting trash out of the dumpsters and they think we are dying of hunger. They do not realize it is our job and we raise our kids better than some

of them do. Only the very poor make their kids work in the street. My parents never let me work until I was 17 years old (CCdC: November 23, 2008).

Intermediaries able to falsify documents, such as animal transport permits, work in tandem with CCdCs. These legitimate hog farmers are the means by which CCdC hogs enter the regular market. These “capitalists,” as many of the CCdCs refer to the intermediaries along the production chain, are often resented for their manipulation of prices and their control of the market. They exercise a monopoly over the CCdC producers. The intermediaries have capital, and the usual scenario is that they finance the production by providing the piglets, so weight can be put on them. The cost of the piglets is subtracted from the finished weight price of the hog at the time of sale, but the hog may only be sold through the original provider. Then the cycle repeats. These intermediaries are well connected in the meat industry and pass by irregular settlements to pick up the hogs from the CCdCs and deliver them alongside the legal hogs they raise, and in the end nobody knows the difference. The middle men make the most money because they play with the clandestine nature of the operation (Interviews with CCdCs January-May 2009).

Intermediaries are nonetheless important players in the production of hogs in the irregular settlements and provide employment and access to “official” markets for smaller producers. The control of access to markets, and the negotiated percentages of profit, is often the source of the resentment by the other producers, but they are grateful to have a channel for the marketing of their illegally produced swine. The lack of permits and documentation would make it otherwise very difficult to sell swine outside of the irregular settlements at market prices. Arrangements with intermediary buyers and sellers has proved a positive strategy for CCdCs and creates a

positive feedback or incentive to continue the activity and even expand production through more cooperative and social arrangements (Interviews with CCdCs January-May 2009; Santandreu, Castro and Ronca 2000).

Among CCdCs, there is also a wide range of the scale of production from one or two sows, to the production of hundreds of hogs a year. One of the oldest CCdC communities comprised of several families, located virtually on top of the largest municipal dump in Montevideo, was producing over 500 hogs a year. This case, however, is exceptional and is due to their incredibly close proximity to the dump and established connections with intermediary buyers. It is important to note that this community is presently (2008/2009) in the process of being relocated after several of their children were found to suffer from health issues related to lead poisoning. The community is being rebuilt about two kilometers from the dump. A few of the families continue to raise hogs and they plan to expand production to the community level where communal hogs are raised, alongside privately owned hogs, to cover communal expenses and emergencies.

It is interesting to note that none of the *clasificadores* interviewed for this research project cultivated home-gardens. When asked why they do not responses fell into two categories: Either “it doesn’t interest me” or “the ground is too dirty”. The first response is suggestive, falling closely in line with assertions that rural Uruguayans rarely have the tradition of cultivating gardens. Traditional rural Uruguayan culture is, however, closely associated with *gaucho* or cowboy culture. The rural interior of the country is an open landscape of rolling pampas and large ranches. As discussed in the introduction to this dissertation, the tradition of home-gardens was brought from Europe, which stayed largely in the area in and around Montevideo. The latter point is of particular importance to the urban and peri-urban

environment. The ground, in some areas, is in fact too dirty to cultivate. Lead poisoning has become one of the largest health concerns in *clasificador* communities.

There are three factors in particular that are positively associated with the number of hogs that can be raised by CCdCs. First, irregular settlements situated in closest geographical proximity to refuse centers exhibit the largest hog raising enterprises. Refuse centers are located at the margin of the city and are therefore very accessible to *clasificador* neighborhoods that are almost exclusively located at the urban margin. The geographical proximity makes for easy access and quick classification of refuse as well as an abundant and constant supply of organic refuse for swine production. Some CCdCs manage to raise hogs by arrangements with specific bakeries and markets, utilizing the waste foods, but this usually is more problematic in terms of distances and transit issues in the metropolitan areas. Second, membership in *clasificador* labor cooperatives greatly facilitates access to municipal dumps. Cooperatives, in recent years, are negotiating with the local government and have been granted special access to refuse centers. Therefore, being a member in a cooperative provides formal entrée and better access to trash and well-established networks of buyers of recyclable materials and hogs. In such a way the dump operates as the social nexus of exchange of contacts, hogs and money. And third, the horse-cart, once again, is fundamental to mobilizing resources and reiterated as an essential resource for raising hogs.

Strategy for greater access to trash clearly provides greater revenue for CCdCs by improving their recycling efforts. As a by-product, the clandestine hog raising likewise benefits, as greater access to trash in general provides more organic feed material for their urban agricultural livestock production. It is a peculiar twist—although much is discussed and fought out in the public view between the municipality and *clasificadores*, the subject of hogs and

CCdCs is circumvented entirely. The illegal nature of the hog raising in irregular settlements is common knowledge on all sides, but a pact of silence and looking the other way attitude seems to work for all involved. It is a political aspect of the agriculture of CCdCs that eventually may be pushed into the light.

4.4 Politics of Urban Hogs

Raising hogs in the Department of Montevideo is regulated by decree 2243 that defines hog producers as, “all establishments where hogs are raised or fattened for commercial ends.” The decree also established the principal characteristics that the enterprises should possess such as the quality of materials used in construction and mandatory periods of time when production must cease. Even if CCdCs met the requirements they would still be in violation of raising hogs with refuse and within urban limits with commercial ends. Raising hogs by *clasificadores* is a subject that historically has remained a discussion centered on public health risks and the environmental degradation that the practice implies. Because of the illegality of the practice it gets no attention from UCRUS or in cooperative meetings as their main objective is to foster visibility and the institutionalization of their work. Raising hogs in general is a subject that is very little discussed in the movement of the *clasificadores* although “a significant number of the thousands of *clasificadores* in Montevideo rely on hogs as part of their survival strategy” (Castro 2007: 35). According to the MGAP and the Municipality raising hogs is a very separate issue from the *clasificadores* social movement but one that is becoming more serious as irregular settlements grow and regularization policies are being enforced.

The fact that CCdC livestock production is a largely clandestine venture is no coincidence. Pig farming in rural areas of the department of Montevideo is permitted and regulated. But in urban areas the municipality prohibits raising hogs for slaughter. Many municipal decrees further outlaw raising hogs with urban organic refuse. Raising hogs is common across the country but urban hog raising is concentrated principally in irregular settlements that are characterized by precarious housing and a lack of basic services such as water and electricity. This creates a situation of intense contact between the animals and humans and an increased threat of zoonotic disease transmission. After the crisis of 2002 there was an intervention by agricultural extension services, and many hogs were slaughtered to control the spread of diseases. It is estimated that now the number of hogs being raised in irregular settlements around Montevideo is higher than in 2002, and increasing. Much of the literature about *clasificadores* in Montevideo centers on public health risks and comes from technical reports written by veterinarians (Castro 2007; Tommasino et al 1998), officials at the Ministry for Social Development (MIDES) and NGOs.

The following interviews, the first with an agricultural extension officer and the second with an official from the Ministry of Livestock, Agriculture and Fisheries (MGAP), summarize in detail that the central issue with urban hogs revolves around the public health risks that are involved. They also openly share the difficulties in enforcing policies to ban the practice as well as failed attempts to relocate their hog production enterprises.

Raising hogs in the urban zone is a survival strategy but it has to be represented in a way that recognizes the sanitary risks that are involved. The management of the animals and the organic residues has to be reoriented because the levels of environmental impact in regards to health are very important. We have tried to implement proposals to improve

the process, like the processing of the residues, because fermenting them lowers the level of acidity and in such a way many of the transmitted illnesses, above all the bacterias, are reduced. We also tried to convince people not to raise hogs right beside the house, in precarious situations, but out in a more rural environment. We tried creating rural collective organizations but we failed. There was a cooperative that was developed with people from an irregular settlement. They were relocated to a rural zone. The group did not work and they fought amongst themselves and more over it was more noteworthy the tendency to return back to their places of origin because they were very removed from everything there including their social environment. I think that in any case we have to continue with politics to reduce the risks that are involved with raising hogs but it would be difficult to prohibit the practice altogether. If we were to prohibit raising hogs we would have to offer another strategy for survival. What we have to do is change society so we do not have people that have to live off the trash. But to be able to arrive at such there is a very long road that implies working together with clasificadores to find political, social, and technical alternatives and see how we can think about poverty in a society of classes and how we transform that society of classes into a society of equals where people do not have to live off of trash and raise hogs with sanitary and health risks to be able to survive or basic things like celebrate a daughter's birthday (Institutional Interview: University Extension: March 2, 2009)

Clasificadores that raise hogs need to be close to the source of the feed and the city generates that. The more concentrated the inhabitants, there is more refuse and the classification is better. But the rest of the city wants that producer to be far away with his

hogs. Their mode of transportation is the horse-cart so they cannot go more than 30 or 40 kilometers, so they have to be close to the city and the trash. From the point of view of sanitation, working with residues from food consumed by humans implies huge risks, except in the case where it is treated to disinfect it and avoid possibilities of contamination. To be able to offer tools or support to help with sanitation, the production would first have to be legalized. It's a complex situation and no official has the ability to offer a solution. If you ask me which would be the best solution, I would say that it would have to be a decent job like any one of us has, but that's a long term plan. There is a contradiction that we have not been able to resolve and as far as I am concerned the best thing would be to change their system of work... There was a cooperative that was developed with people from an asentamiento. A piece of land was obtained about 10 or 15 kilometers from the city so that they would implement the production of hogs without the problem of having people close by. It was a rural zone, Camino Mendoza. The group did not work and they fought amongst themselves and more over it was more noteworthy the tendency to return back to their places of origin because they were very removed from everything there including their social environment (Institutional MGAP: September 18 2008).

Initiatives to improve sanitary and production conditions, and relocate the settlements, failed. From the above interviews it becomes clear that the interventions did not work for the CCdC production system that has been established over generations, which depends on social networks and readily available refuse. Relocated communities of CCdCs were too far from trash sources, could not effectively utilize their horse carts, could not effectively raise hogs, and were

removed from long standing social networks in the city. Both officials recognize the shortcomings of the interventions and see *clasificadores* as symbols of larger societal problems that have no quick or simple solutions.

We had an experience in an *asentamiento*, irregular settlement, with the Agronomy department with hog pens 50 meters from the houses. We built them with concrete floors, in accordance with sanitary regulation: masonry walls with blocks, metal roofs. I participated in that work and I pushed it but when it was over I regretted it because the hogs had better materials than the human beings. It was a contraction between the favoring the well being of the animal or human and I have doubts that that the first is people, but in these situations it can get confused. We believe that to be able to rehabilitate that sector so many transformations would have to be made that it would be better to have other sources of work, more noble, more quality, that would enable then to live in another way.

In a 2006 report by the Ministry of Social Development the *Intendencia Municipal de Montevideo* estimates that there is a substantial number of CCdCs in the capital city and family level swine production is estimated to be more prevalent since the 2002 foot and mouth scare that provoked a large scale culling of animals. In the same report they are launching a plan, with support from INAC, to prohibit the possession of hogs in urban and suburban zones. This plan would compensate the individuals who surrender their hogs. As part of this pilot project the FAO has proposed to establish hog raising enterprises in rural areas where interested individuals could relocate and continue raising hogs. This proposal will likely fail for the same reasons as

discussed above by the institutional informants. Re-locating CCdCs' hog raising enterprises to rural areas has not proved a viable option.

4.5 Effects of the Economic Crisis of 2002 on *Clasificador* Livelihood

If we speak of the effects of the economic crisis of 2002 in terms of winners and losers then *clasificador* communities play by different rules or play a different game altogether. If we look at some of the comments made during interviews it begins to make sense. The most striking comment came from a woman in her fifties who came to Montevideo with her family when she was three years old. She grew up close to Felipe Cardoso, the principal municipal refuse center, without coincidence one of the oldest irregular settlements in the city. Her memories of her parents begin at the refuse center and “living off the trash” though she knows they came from the rural interior of the country and brought with them the tradition of raising hogs and using horses as beasts of burden. She remains there to this day with her children and grandchildren who continue the same practices. Her story is similar to other *clasificadores* from the older generation. She has worked hard her entire life and continues to work and has experienced tragedies that would be difficult for many of us to imagine. Among many other hardships she shared that her husband was murdered 25 years ago. Her difficult and socially marginalized life made her response to the perceived effect of the crisis of 2002 on her life initially surprising. She responded quickly and quite frankly that, “We have never suffered a crisis here. We have never lacked food to eat or passed a crisis (Interview with a second generation CCdC and grandmother, February 2009).” Other *clasificadores* responded quite similarly clarifying her sentiments:

We really didn't suffer so much around those years. Maybe there was less. People would think about fixing a blender or whatever instead of throwing it out. Food was more expensive so there was less food and people in the city threw away less but we really didn't suffer. We [clasificadores] are different than the city people. We do not worry about prices of gasoline and stuff like that. Our cars eat grass [laughing]. And we, thank god, don't have jobs to lose so nothing changed so much. We do have more neighbors [neo-pobres] now [laughing again] and there are more poor people but we still did ok. We still had food to eat and raised a few hogs to sell (Interview with a second generation CCdC and father, March 2009).

The "new neighbors" to which this informant is referring are the so-called "new-poor" that have been displaced beginning in the mid 1990s. The trend increased throughout the 1990s and hit its peak around the time of the economic crisis of 2002. Many of the new-poor were the same individuals who lost their jobs in construction and the industrial sector and were forced to leave the inner city in search of a cheap or free place to live. Many of them settled in irregular settlements and created community organizations and community gardens as discussed in the previous chapter. Efforts by the state to regularize irregular settlements by enforcing land use policy and delivering basic services and "new-poor" community organizations that find urban hog enterprises in their proximity unsavory are bringing to light the issue of urban hog raising that has until recently been quietly tolerated. Community scale conflict around the theme of urban hogs is becoming more of an issue as irregular settlements grow and become "regularized."

4.6 Conclusion

The case of CCdC subsistence provides a clear example of the complexities that are faced in urban agriculture and livestock research. CCdC subsistence goes against the typical perception held by the development community that urban agriculture is a temporary response to economic crisis. *Clasificador* communities, with their half-century of history in Montevideo at the urban margin, show their unique strategy works and has endured as a viable means of livelihood over generations. However, they now are caught between two fights, a political fight for the access to trash and institutionalization on the one hand, and efforts by the municipality and encroaching “new-poor” communities to regularize irregular settlements. This is a clear case of the difficulties in implementing urban agricultural and more specifically urban livestock policy—an issue that is gaining importance around the world (Cole et al 2008). Uruguay’s urbanization trends give a view of what is likely to come for other countries. Utilizing refuse to raise urban livestock is not a new or isolated incidence (Miller 1990) in Montevideo. In Cairo, for example, an estimated 400,000 individuals make their living by raising hogs with refuse (Slackman, Baldwin and Owles 2009). As the numbers of urban poor rise around the world it is likely that such livelihood strategies will continue to gain in prevalence.

As the settlements continue to grow and individuals who consider themselves “new-poor” become increasingly established and in contact with *clasificadores* certain issues have arisen that are particularly poignant to the discussion of urban agriculture and sources of social tension and conflict between these groups. A frequent complaint by the “new-poor” is that the *clasificadores*’ activities, particularly the raising of hogs, creates an unhygienic atmosphere and in quite plain language an unpleasant smell.

Clasificadores, in general are enjoying more institutional visibility, social inclusion, recognition of their social, public, ecological roles but their practice of raising livestock in urban zones presents a problem. And the rapid growth in numbers living in irregular settlements around Montevideo is calling attention to their clandestine hog production operations. The new-poor, often more highly educated, oppose themselves to the *clasificadores* as the “real poor.” In one hundred percent of the neighborhoods where data was collected the new-poor had at least a very basic level of organization. In every community there was at least a community spokesperson or president who is charged with calling meetings to order, making certain decisions, bringing complaints and requests to the municipality, and further, acting as a representative and liaison between the municipality, NGO’s, health officials, the Udelar and any other institutions involved in providing services or aid to the community and the community itself. The declaration of outlawing the raising of animals in the neighborhood signifies a clear demarcation of where CCdCs are allowed and where they are not. The encroaching new-poor communities with their organization and institutional linkages are marginalizing an already marginalized people.

CHAPTER 5

THE ORGANIC REVOLUTION

The idea [organic certification] is very good. It works. I believe, however, that in principal, organic products should not have to be certified. It should be the other way around. Conventional produce should have to be certified. If you have a lettuce, it should come in a bag and it should declare that to produce this lettuce such and such toxic products were used and which products can leave toxic residues behind that are harmful to your health, such as the case with tobacco and any other products with warnings that they contain preservatives etc. It would make much more sense. Why is it that we have to certify that what is natural is natural, that what is good is good? They should have to label what is not natural, what is toxic.

(Interview with organic market grower: Montevideo, May 2009)

5.1 New Beginning: “Neo-Rural” Farmers

The establishment of Uruguay’s first association of family-run, small-scale organic growers, APODU (*Asociacion de Productores Organicos del Uruguay*), the Association of Organic Producers of Uruguay, was driven by many of the historical, political-economic and social processes discussed in previous chapters. Several of the same domains resonate through the “neo-rural” farmers’ stories as the “new-poor” *comuneros* and *clasificadores*. New beginning, military dictatorship, dignity and social justice, and the power of organization lie at

the heart of the nascent organic growers movement in Montevideo. As such this chapter will continue to build on the thesis of this dissertation—agriculture as a platform for social movement.

Informants were selected using basic criteria. To be included in the sample informants had to be active members of APODU and their farms had to fall into areas that were zoned urban or peri-urban. The average size of the holdings, both across all members of APODU and the sampled informants, falls between two and three hectares. Grower members of APODU have clear title to their land, which continues to play a crucial role in their ability to design long-term organizational and production plans.

Secure land-tenure makes the organic growers at the urban margin an exception in this comparative ethnographic research. Land-tenure security allows APODU and their growers to work towards a sustainable relationship with the market. Like the other two populations discussed in this dissertation (“new-poor” community gardeners, and *clasificadores* that raise hogs), organic growers are consciously moving toward increased autonomy from the state though their land tenure security enables them more confidence and long-term vision. Their movement is less politically contentious than the “new-poor” community gardeners, and *clasificadores* that raise hogs. Their productive small-holdings and title to land give them a freedom from the state that is manifest in their collective action strategies which are more creative and productive in nature than resistant or contentious.

The general profile of the members of APODU deserves attention and will make clear the strong ideological foundation of the organization. The members of APODU that produce on urban and peri-urban holdings are commonly referred to as *neo-rurales* or “new-rurals” because of their urban backgrounds and relatively recent moves to rural and peri-urban areas. The

majority of the members were brought together over the years because of common interests in the benefits to health and the environment that organic agriculture can offer but there are often deeper social and political motivations that date before the establishment of the organization. Much as the comuneros were able to create an identity of resistance and autonomy, in the wake of the crisis of 2002, so too were the “neo-rurales” a decade earlier. As a spokesperson from APODU shares in 2008:

Our association has a profile of people from the city that have opted for various reasons to join but we were not born in the rural environment. The majority of us had spent our entire lives in the city. We don't have rural culture; we are not from the country. It all began as a decision between a few of us. We wanted change. We were living through a very difficult time and wanted out of the city. We were young, some with small children and we wanted something different for them. It was very difficult but we continue to believe. We moved twenty-four years ago to the country and it has gotten better. I don't regret our decision but it has not been easy [...]. The vision is more about health and the environment now but we have grown and are convinced by what we are doing and social justice is still a very strong component of our association (Interview with organic grower member of APODU; April 2009).

Many of the members cite deep societal and social reasons for establishing their small holdings outside the city. The most salient reason for moving out of the city was cited as a fresh start and escape from the pressures of the city. The secondary reasons which led to the establishment of networks of organic growers and the eventual establishment of the association of growers were a common interest in the environment and health and devotion to social justice

and equal access to healthy food. 100% of the 30 sampled informants cited the era of the military dictatorship as a primary motivation for moving outside of the city and working towards political and nutritional autonomy.

I had what would be considered a normal life in Montevideo. I studied and graduated as a certified carpenter and worked for several years in construction. In the 1970s however I began to get involved in political activities and was integrated into the MLN (Movimiento de Liberación Nacional) [The National Liberation Movement] known as The Tupamaros. Then during the military dictatorship I had to leave because I was required by the armed forces and remained in exile for fifteen years. I left in February of 1973 and returned once the dictatorship had fallen in 1985 [...]. While in exile I began in Argentina, then I went to Chile. I was in Chile for a short time because they also had a *golpe de estado* [military coup] shortly after so I went to Cuba. I was in Cuba for four years during the 1970s. I have wonderful memories of Cuba. I went to work and take political and military courses but once again I had to leave. Things broke down with the division of China with the Soviet Union and the rising conflict in Angola. A large division was created between Cubans that aligned themselves with Maoists and those who were Marxist/Leninists. Later I was in Algeria and across Europe and finally ended up in Sweden (Interview with organic grower member of APODU; April 2009).

Though this man's story is an extreme example of the impacts of the dictatorship on the lives of Uruguayans he is not alone amongst the members of APODU. In fact 21 out of the 30 informants were directly or indirectly involved with the Tupamaros and 9 out of the 30 informants spent time either in prison or in exile while the military regime was in power.

Interestingly, in several of the cases money earned while in exile abroad or by family members in exile, made it possible for them to gain a foot-hold on a piece of land and invest in their holdings.

5.2 Organization: The Creation of APODU

A small group of family-run farms was beginning to solidify a vision and network of growers by the late 1990s. The main goal of the network of growers was to create better ways to promote and commercialize their products. They began to plan production amongst themselves to offer a wider range of products at the market. As an informant explains many of the growers have similar life histories and looked to agriculture for a fresh start though the reason to crystallize their network into an organization or association was an economic strategy to gain visibility in the market and better promote their goods.

We are brought together mostly to be able to commercialize our products better but we do not all live in close proximity. We help each other with issues of production whenever we can but what brings us together is the biggest problem for most small producers, which is how to create and improve channels of commercialization and sales. That's why we founded the Ecotienda and work together to have a strong presence in the market. We are a group that started working together in 1998 and 1999. In 2005 our little group saw 2005 we saw the necessity to join together and create a cooperative for better marketing. It is a question of necessity not philosophy. When we are isolated we cannot do anything but when we come together we can do well (Interview with organic grower member of APODU; March 2009).

Before the establishment of APODU the close-knit family-run farms were already working together and planning to provide more variety for the season. APODU and small farm networks provide much more than marketing. Informants often cited the deep social connections amongst themselves and the sense of solidarity and common struggle. “Solidarity has always been our foundation. [...] Organic growing is a social activity. We work together on farm, at the market. We exchange produce and we help each other in anyway we can, from a few carrots to fixing the tractor.” The solidarity and participation is reinforced at the market where the growers are active in the direct sales, from farmer to client, at APODU’s meetings and at assessments of farms.

La Asociacion Certificadora de la Agricultura Ecologica, (the Association for the Certification of Ecological Agriculture), was established around the end of 1996. By 1999 the Association and its certification methods were officially recognized by the Livestock, Agriculture and Fisheries Ministry and granted permission to use the “Urucert” seal on certified products. In the first couple years membership in the association was comprised almost entirely of rural producers, and NGOs involved in promotion and assessment of the “ecological products.” In 1997 *La Asociacion de Productores Organicos del Uruguay* (APODU), The Association of Organic Growers of Uruguay, was formed which in contrast to the association of the certification of Ecological Agriculture, brought together organic growers with a strong presence of small-scale family-run farms largely based in and around Montevideo. APODU created a platform for the organization of local small-scale organic producers involved in developing appropriate technologies and markets for locally and organically grown products as well as added value products such as jams and wines.

APODU is a small group of growers that are dedicated to the national market and are trying to reach more Montevideans using education and the discourse of the benefits of organic agriculture—such as the caring for the environment, health and supporting small-scale production. The small-scale has limitations but also has advantages. Neither the growers, nor the association, have much capital to invest in the family-run enterprises and the expansion of overall production. This lack of access to capital and credits, however, is also praised by the members for avoiding risk and likewise attributed to their escape of devastating effects the economic crisis of 2002 discussed further along.

The small-scale nature of the association also enables the growers to maintain a direct relationship with the market and consumers, leaving out middlemen. The direct sales at the market, and the closed circuit from production to sales “puts a face on their products,” and bypasses second hand mark-ups thereby maintaining low prices at the market. The growers take advantage of the contact with consumers to speak of the benefits of organic production and invite them to visit their farms and to become part of the association and the participatory certification process. These interactions further strengthen the association’s goals, which center on transparent certification and socially and ecologically responsible production methods. It likewise broadens the client base. Despite the small-scale of the enterprises, many of the member growers are satisfied with the level of production that they have reached.

There are many growers like in my case, that have reached a standard of life that’s not bad and we do not want to risk that. Selling so many boxes of produce, I have a lifestyle in which I am content. We are content and try to stay steady. I am not rich and not much is left over after the sales but I am content because I live there on the holding and my daughters don’t lack anything. I have time to spend with them, to work and to be at home

and I wouldn't want to lose that. If we begin to promote and spend a lot expanding production, we will have to invest and it will be a big risk. I am tranquil right now. We do not have the ability to put others in charge of production, deliveries, running the market, neither do we have money to hire someone to market organic produce for us.

Small-scale, organic enterprises are perceived as the best option for the family-run enterprises around Montevideo. The costs of inputs for conventional production are increasingly more expensive. Virtually all of the petrochemical fertilizers and chemical inputs are imported to Uruguay. Transitioning to conventional agricultural production would entail scaling-up mechanization, inputs and expansion of holdings, which in urban and peri-urban areas would not be a feasible option. The small-scale, family-based farms produce enough for the organic market relying almost exclusively on manual labor and are meeting market demands on their two to three hectare holdings. The growers express pride that organic and manual methods may not be the easiest way but, in contrast with conventional methods, their farms become more productive over the years instead of more degraded. Many hope their children will continue to produce food on the small-holdings.

5.3 Participatory Organic Certification

APODU and the larger Urucert, with the intention of creating an integrated vision of agro-ecological production in the country, joined forces to create the unifying “*Red de Agroecología*,” (the Agroecology Network) a participatory “third-person” certification process that continues today. The Agroecology Network brings together organic growers, consumers,

processors, distributors, and diverse social organizations and institutions that share the common view that ecological production has positive social, economic, environmental impacts and agree to promote its development. The first meeting of the Agroecology Network was in May of 2005 and membership is open to any individuals or organizations that share the vision described in the network's declaration which holds as its priority to guarantee the quality of the production, processing and distribution of ecologically grown agricultural products. To ensure the quality of the products the network created standards of ecological production that must be upheld as well as an agreement that agricultural holdings associated with the network are subject to a continuous participatory inspection. The Agro-ecological Network does not only measure the quality of the product in terms of the technical standards of production but also by principals and values outlined in their declaration that include social and equality considerations of the workers on the agricultural operations.

The Network defines participative systems of guarantee or certification as:

Evaluation programs that ensure conformity to the standards of ecological agriculture in which producers and consumers actively participate with the intervention of other stakeholders in the production, distribution, consumption of the products and services involved in ecological agriculture. A participatory certification network is then characterized by the presence of multiple actors organized in and by the network (Interview with organic grower member of APODU; March 2009).

The Uruguayan's participatory certification process is not a Uruguayan tradition. As many informants acknowledged, APODU borrows concepts from the Brazilian *Sistema de Garantia Participativa* (System of Participative Guarantee), which involves consumers as an

integral part of the certification process. APODU believes that to be truly participatory in the certification process consumers must be involved as much as the producers and technicians (agronomists, soil scientists). Only in this way will organic certification reach a level of complete transparency and involve the three main components, producers, technicians, and consumers. This makes participation possible throughout the entire process, from production, harvest, elaboration of value added products, and marketing and promotes community support and direct linkages between consumers and farmers.

The technicians that participate in the certification process are frequently from the agronomy department of the University of the Republic of Uruguay but there is also a lot of involvement by technicians from NGOs working in environmental and agricultural projects around the country and others that have been hired by conventional growers associations around Montevideo. The consumers that participate are self-identified and volunteer their time for the assessments. Consumers are seen to also play a vital role in making other citizens aware of the value of organic produce as well as other marketing tasks. Organic growers feel that involving consumers as stakeholders creates a more responsible process and empowers consumers to assume more of a role in the evolution of their food system and puts them in touch with the ecological and social realities of the very food they eat.

The producers, technicians and consumers form an ethics committee that visits the farms. Before serving on a committee the consumers must attend workshops where they learn the organization's standards (acceptable techniques, in-puts, working conditions). Each of the growers maintains a log with information on what crops they are growing and an approximation of the land cover of each crop. The committees that assess a given farm can vary in size from a few individuals up to about ten but the minimum number to be present for an assessment is three.

The committee verifies the information in the growers' logs and checks for compliance with the ecological, and social norms set by APODU. Occasionally growers are negatively assessed. In such cases APODU with support from the committees will call for follow-up workshops and capacity-building sessions to bring the establishment under question to the standards set by the organization.

Besides the transparent and participatory nature of APODU's certification process, the costs are also relatively low for the growers. Each grower only pays about 1000 pesos a year for the service--a reasonable rate for the year yet enough to cover costs incurred by the technicians and other basic expenses, such as transportation, on the days of the evaluations. The organic growers could never afford to pay private firms' rates that work with large-scale producers in the country that grow for export and APODU as an organization could not cover those rates either. The participatory certification allows APODU and their growers to maintain control over their standards, keep overhead costs low and connect farms and farmers to consumers.

The participatory certification process is not supported in any way by the government. The Ministry of Livestock, Agriculture and Fisheries has proposed plans for certification of organic produce for small-scale growers but presently the state remains outside of APODU's certification process. Peru and Brazil have similar certification processes and in Uruguay the hope is that the state will too acknowledge their system of participative guarantee or certification.

The growers that belong to APODU believe that the certification process is moving in the right direction but some admit that the system has not yet been perfected. Several informants complained of a lack of theoretical development and the difficulties faced by growers evaluating fellow growers' enterprises. There was also much complaint of poor preparation of consumers

serving on certification committees. A typical statement by informants was that consumers often visit farms as part of a committee and leave without offering any critical or productive insights. “Your average consumer on a committee comes, looks and says ‘how nice’ and at the end of the day does not certify anything.”

Participation of fellow growers in the certification process is praised by grower members as a fruitful collaboration where ideas are shared and production is improved across the organization’s members.

At the same moment that your farm is being assessed other farmers will offer advice. Often it is the little things that you do not think about that really can make a difference—different rotations of crops, a new way to deal with pests or how to make a small greenhouse to lengthen the growing season. Other farmers may be more experienced or know a technique that you may have not seen. That’s another reason participatory certification is good; it’s an educational exchange for all three parties. I have learned quite bit from other growers. We have a lot of solidarity and all of this exchange and participation further strengthens our association (Interview with organic grower member of APODU; March 2009).

APODU is presently experimenting with “group certification,” which further lowers the costs for its members’ growers. Three individuals are chosen from the commission that oversees all the committees. Those three individuals visit all the farms of a given group, normally defined in a geographical space, and submit a report to the commission. The commission then randomly selects two or three farms from that group for a complete evaluation by a certifying committee. If the committee is satisfied with the standards of the randomly selected farms, all the farms in

the group will pass the evaluation. Group certification works as a lottery, therefore it reduces the time spent doing evaluations and the basic overhead costs and expenses paid to technicians.

Besides fellow growers, consumers and technicians, group certification also includes a “social agent,” which can be anyone as long as they are recognized by the community. Often, priests or doctors or other well-known members of the community are selected to participate in group certification to further foster the ethical and transparent face of participatory certification giving it more credibility in the community as well as in the larger community of the city.

5.4 Politics and Institutional Support

Organic growers have created their own organic certification process and a presence in the market with very little state support. Their efforts to organize were based on economic strategies to spread risk, create more variability in their products and make themselves and their products more visible at the market. The organic growers association developed their own organic certification process that operates independently of the state. Their participatory organic certification is representative of an independence from policy or state interventions in organic agriculture, which is further evidenced in their search for more market opportunities with the state, such as with hospitals, and exportation possibilities.

The most complicated issue of organic production is sustainability of markets. I think organic agriculture is one of the tasks we must work on, because we have no policy directed at its organization. There is a certain number of producers that market well and could also make more with state contracts, to hospitals for example. But to date the development of organic production, as far as the municipality is concerned, doesn't have a roof. The market of organic products is stagnant and public politics aren't giving much

support. Many of the small producers have disappeared across the country but the organic growers are a small and dedicated group that have resisted (Interview with official from the Ministry of Livestock, Agriculture, and Fisheries; May 2009).

The call for more state support was echoed through the interviews. State contracts with schools and hospitals would provide reliable sales, supplement the earnings from the market and store and encourage expansion of enterprises and the overall organic market.

What we would like at the level of the organic market is that the state pulls more weight. The hope is that the state will begin to buy in hospitals and schools and give clearer signs of support to reinforce our message that organic is good. There is a general lack of diffusion of these ideas and people are not aware of the benefits to health and the environment that organic production promotes. Not to mention social benefits of small-scale production. Uruguay is known for organic beef which is exported to Europe and the States. There are strict certification standards for beef and it is supported by the state because of its importance in the national economy. Organic produce and small producers are not on the agenda but the national market has maintained and we are better organized and now we have EcoTienda. We are hoping that the minister will soon recognize our participative certification and create more possibilities for us (Interview with organic grower member of APODU; May 2009).

5.5 Effects of Economic Crisis

The majority of the family run neo-rural holdings have been operating their small farms at the edge of the city for over twenty years. Many of the present organic growers-members of

APODU established their farms in the early 1990s as a conscious effort to move towards social and nutritional autonomy and considered themselves “neo-rurals” prior to the organization of APODU and the organic movement. In their view the 1990s represented a time of new beginning for them and for the exiled, a fresh start back home. This same period, becoming more pronounced in the late 1990s, coincided with economic recession, devaluation of the Uruguayan peso and concomitantly a severe drop in real estate values. These events preceded the total economic crisis of 2002. Returning exiled Uruguayans with the desire to claim a small holding at the end of the city suddenly found themselves in an advantageous position.

Cash savings earned abroad in Europe, Canada and the United States, and remittances sent from relatives and networks created while abroad was invested in small parcels of land at the city’s edge. Many of the exiles claimed that after their return they were less impacted by the economic crisis than almost anyone else in the country and without a doubt suffered less than the neo-poor. Their reasoning is that by the time the large-scale economic and social crisis of 2002 had taken hold they were well-established growers and though they may not have enjoyed certain luxuries, they were not concerned with going hungry. By the time of the crisis the neo-rurals had begun to organize cooperatives and even begin the dialogue of organic production and certification. This social and agricultural network gave further support to the established growers providing the platform for trade of a diversity of products between the growers in such difficult times. The more established neo-rurals explain that what saved them from being heavily impacted by the crisis was in many ways the same thing that motivated them to leave the city in the first place.

The fact that the crisis of 2002 did not negatively impact their lives as it did so many others in the country can be attributed to their well-established, small-scale and autonomous

nature of their enterprises as well as their secure land tenure. Money that was made abroad while in exile was used to invest in their farms and buy land and by the late 1990s and up to 2002 many of the small family holdings belonged to social networks that gave them more protection against shifts in the economy. An informant offers:

First of all, we didn't have jobs to lose in the first place. We escaped what happened to the others. The difference is that we did not have large debts because we are family growers and as such we cannot assume such large debts. And moreover, we never had a lot of capital to work with so we were never able to take out big loans to expand our farms. The larger industries, farms, and individuals that had big debts in money that was borrowed in dollars and the dollar took off. They were the ones that really took the hit. [...] We were on the farm and helped each other out so food was never an issue. And of course workers in industries and workers on those farms who lost everything and came to the cities with nothing...and as you know still have nothing. [here she is referring to the neo-poor]. I guess it was more luck than anything that the majority of us small producers didn't have the resources or desire to go into big production. That saved us from losing the little we have here (Interview with neo-rural organic farmer, and board member of APODU; April 2009).

Interestingly, member growers actually experienced positive effects during the time around Uruguay's economic crisis of 2002.

In my case the crisis didn't have much impact. I have been a part of a small group of growers for many years. By the time the crisis hit in 2002 we had already developed a closed system of production and commercialization and have a clientele that we continue

to manage pretty well. The crisis was a hard hit to many other types of businesses but not as much for us at the market because a lot of the people that were used to buying at the super markets had to begin to look for better prices so their money would go farther and the result was more sales at the market...Prices are always higher in the super market, now and during the crisis. Prices are higher than at the market. We sell directly to the consumer and the product doesn't pass through many hands and is a healthier product. This point is also important and has helped persuade more people to buy from the market and the store. We are small producers and our production is based on manual labor. Also we do not have access to much credit or loans from the state and it is just not our culture as small growers to go into debt because we know that we will not be able to pay it off later. Luckily for us the crisis didn't change much.

The neo-rural urban organic growers share a picture at the other end of the spectrum from the other two populations discussed in this dissertation regarding the effects of the crisis on their livelihoods. Among the urban smallholders that produce food for the organic market, the majority actually enjoyed positive effects and intensification of production. As inflation rates soared in the national economy and prices in the super markets for produce rose sharply sales in informal markets saw a great increase. Thus the economic crisis is largely remembered by the organic growers as a positive time when demand for their products rose. The crisis also created many networks between growers and made their markets more visible, which gave strength to the organic movement that was still gaining speed in 2009.

5.6 Conclusion

The organic growers, with the establishment of their association APODU, are solidifying a long-term plan. Their recent consolidation of numerous members in an association lessens the inherent risks of agriculture on the individual farmer, ensures constant supply and provides a broader variety of products. Access to stable markets such as the permanent store “*EcoTienda*,” or “EcoStore,” and the market at *Parque Rodo* allow for long term planning. The possibility of future state contracts will increase the demand and market reliability. The participatory certification process APODU is developing is creating a viable alternative for small-scale producers responding to state supported certification processes which favor large-scale and export producers that have the ability to access and pay for state sponsored certification.

Agriculture at the urban margin provided a fresh start for many families. Several of the “new-rural” farmers moved to the edge of the city to escape political pressures, yet, just as the *clasificadores* and “new-poor” community gardeners, they were, and still are, people with urban tradition. Even though they are referred to as “new-rural” Montevideo remains their cultural and social nexus.

The evolution of a movement that began as a few scattered family growers to a growers’ network and finally the establishment of APODU was a relatively fast progression of events. Many of the growers benefitted economically from time spent in exile during the military dictatorship, investing their savings back home to secure their holdings. Many growers also speak of other lessons from their time abroad. As part of their devotion to social justice they are dedicated to keeping organic produce accessible to everyone—not marketing and pricing organic produce as an elitist product out of reach of low and middle income families as was happening in

areas of the United States and Europe. Their success at maintaining low prices through direct sales, participatory certification and low input costs was made clear during their economic crisis and their prices remain competitive with large conventional producers' prices at supermarkets in 2009. After several years what began as a handful of "new-rural" family growers transformed into a group of dedicated growers that had organized production and marketing so well that they not only weathered the economic crisis of 2002 but benefitted from increased sales during that time because of their ability to out compete prices at supermarkets.

The organic movement in Montevideo and the establishment of APODU was a conscious choice to begin a new lifestyle, grow and provide healthy food to fellow city dwellers, and have some autonomy from state control and regulation. APODU has created a long-term urban agriculture production system that was not a reaction to economic crisis, but a collective action strategy based on economic, ecological and social principles, which was possible largely due to (in contrast with new-poor community gardeners and *clasificadores*) secure land-tenure. The organic growers association provides another example of the complexity and variability that exists in urban agricultural production and the wide range of adaptive strategies to challenges and opportunities in the urban environment.

CHAPTER 6

DISCUSSION OF RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

UA remains a relatively new field of inquiry in mainstream academia [...]. Urban agriculture is still viewed as the oxymoron par excellence. Yet, it is part of a larger set of trends that is transforming our living urban (and rural) space on a massive and unstoppable scale. At the beginning of the 21st century, more people from wildly different walks of life are engaging in forms of UA, either for therapy, recreation, self-provisioning or income—or a combination thereof. I am not aware of any pieces of literature, scientific or other, which a generation ago would have predicted the growth of this trend to the point it has reached today [...]. Together with less agrarian developments, as in information and communications technologies, urban agriculture is stalling, if not erasing, the compartmentalization of spaces and times that a Western generation has come to know. These developments are transforming the way in which our cities are laid out and, more immediately, the way in which they work. No doubt these transformations will profoundly affect the very meaning of urbanity and rurality in the future Mougéot 2005: 24).

Addressing the research questions (1., 2. and 3.) of this research project provide critical data for looking at the global trend of staggering moves towards increasing urbanization. Uruguay is Latin America's foremost-urbanized microcosm—the rest of the region will show numbers similar to that of Montevideo likely in the next decade. Other parts of the world show

this trend as well.

In backyard plots, along the sides of roads, and on the edges of schoolyards, this scenario of urban and peri-urban agriculture is prevalent throughout sub-Saharan Africa. While often a survival strategy to compensate for consumption shortfalls and low incomes, its importance demonstrates the extent to which informal economic activities characterize African economies. The increased significance of peri-urban agriculture vividly shows just how much recent structural adjustment programs have turned urban waged employees into part-time farmers, as well as raised prices of certain foods (e.g., import commodities) (Little 1994:2).

It is therefore poignant that the urban poor and irregular settlements of Montevideo, and the recent and longer lasting experiences of these groups and their use of land, be held up as typical for other cities in the near future given current trends.

6.1 What are the primary factors or conditions that shape urban/peri-urban agricultural and livestock production enterprises?

This comparative study in the thin peri-urban area of Montevideo reported in this dissertation is host to a broad spectrum of agricultural and livestock production strategies and points to several conclusions. In addressing research question 1., the most notable factors that influence the longevity and success of urban and peri-urban production strategies are land tenure security, land-use policy, economic crisis, access to markets and institutional linkages, though secure land tenure did not positively correlate with long term production systems across all three

cases discussed in this dissertation. Combined, these are the most prominent factors that influenced decision-making and organizational strategies across the three study populations.

Urban agriculture and livestock production in Montevideo, particularly in and around irregular settlements, represents a wide range of productive strategies and is situated in the midst of ongoing and intense political negotiations to define urban space. Urban agriculture and livestock production responds to a host of opportunities and restraints that “traditional” or rural agriculture does not—high population density, land-use policy, zoning, public health risks, competition with urban resources, urban pollutants.

Though this study is not an agricultural intensification study in the traditional sense it still points to some interesting conclusions about the trajectory or evolution of urban and peri-urban agricultural production systems. As discussed in the introduction, urban agriculture often is perceived as a short-term response to food shortage and as such has been constructed as a phenomenon that is most appropriately nestled in applied contexts and short-term development initiatives. Only in recent years is it gaining ground in longer-term municipal and national development agendas. Peter Little, drawing on his research in Africa, concludes that through the creation of markets, export opportunities and contract peri-urban farming of high value crops, a more enduring and economically sustainable urban agriculture is possible--though this scenario, as he admits, seems an exception.

A final comment is in order about the recent enthusiasm for urban and peri-urban agriculture and the feeling by some practitioners that it will endure in many African states (see Tinker 1994). No doubt urban and peri-urban cultivation reflect important trends, as well as valued livelihoods for literally hundreds of thousands of low-income Africans.

Yet, since urbanization is accelerating at an alarming rate there is little question that “the

fringes of most African cities are unstable with respect to settlement patterns, population density, and land use (Ellis and Sumberg 1998:216).” This has led some scholars to suggest that the proliferation of urban and peri-urban agriculture may be historical moments that while important do not hold long-term solutions to Africa’s poverty and development problems (see Ellis and Sumberg 1998). At least part of this position is valid, since subsistence food production in urban and peri-urban areas is partially symptomatic of larger structural problems in the economy. These include poorly developed food markets and extraordinarily low levels of waged employment and industrial investment. However, the contract farming of high-value products may be an exception and this type of market-oriented production is most likely to occur near urban areas. In contrast to subsistence-based food production, contract farming responds to important niche markets and other opportunities that are likely to persist for some time in peri-urban areas. However, whether or not this is a favorable development for alleviating poverty has been shown to be questionable (Little 1994:34).

Schultz (1964) made similar observations stating that markets and external relations of neo-liberal politics can have stimulating effects by providing rewards to the individual farmer for intensifying production, encouraging specialization and facilitating entry into “free markets.” Contract farming of high-value crops for export requires a great deal of capital investment, good access to air transport and markets, the availability of “winter” or niche markets for produce, and private sector services and development programs to diversify exports and create the necessary infrastructure (Barnham et al. 1992; Meerman 1997; World Bank 1989). This dissertation research shows that access to small-scale markets, formal or informal, has proven invaluable for

the longevity of urban and peri-urban agricultural activities across the three populations though the move towards export production thus far remains out of reach.

Drawing clear distinctions between expansion/intensification and subsistence/market production is not always easy. As such agricultural production and change in strategies in an urban context depends much more on land use policy, access to resources, land availability and tenure and institutional visibility and linkages.

Through an historical approach this research revealed a wide spectrum of productive strategies across three populations at the urban margin and explains the variability at a more complex level than the common perception of urban agriculture as a simple response to urban poverty. Community gardens in Montevideo were a short-term strategy, predominantly occupying state lands or in temporary ceded agreements, spurred by shifts in the economy which saw a major effort to both intensify and expand food production for food security that was heavily supported by institutions. Little's research in Africa shows similar impacts of how fluctuations in the economy and "structural adjustment programs have turned urban waged employees into part-time farmers, as well as raised prices of certain foods (e.g., import commodities) (Little and Lundin 1992) (Little 1999:2)." The community gardens represented a platform for social change and the definition of social and physical space, which quickly transformed from a move for food security to a social movement for food autonomy that simultaneously refined and strengthened the ability of communities to organize themselves.

Urban hog-raising in Montevideo is a long term subsistence strategy that has persisted for at least fifty years. The practice began with rural migrants who brought with them their rural tradition of raising hogs and horses. The longevity of the practice can be attributed in part to the fact that CCdC livelihood is somewhat insulated from fluctuations in the national economy yet

their subsistence strategy not only relies on constant access to urban refuse but also stable access to meat markets albeit through clandestine and informal channels. The most surprising part of the CCdCs' story is that their livelihood and production strategies have endured the longest of the three populations yet their land tenure security could be considered the most precarious.

The organic growers, with the establishment of their association (APODU), are solidifying a long-term plan. Their recent consolidation of numerous members in an association lessens the inherent risks of agriculture on the individual farmer, ensures a constant supply of produce for market and provides a broader variety of products. Secure land tenure, permanent physical market spaces, their store and active pursuit of additional markets, allow for long term planning.

As researchers have suggested improved access to markets may be the key for creating urban agricultural systems that will endure. Urban agriculture is often seen as an anomaly because of its "production of low-value crops on a relatively scarce and valuable resource, suburban land (Little 1994: 2)." Organic growers are working to tip the scale in their favor in a number of ways. They are seeking out niche markets like government contracts with hospitals and schools for high value produce and export opportunities. They are also increasing their returns by making value added products. In such ways the organic growers are maximizing profits from their small holdings. Much of their ability to plan for long-term production lies in their secure land tenure, which makes them the exception in this urban agricultural study.

6.2 Under what conditions do urban agriculturalists organize collective action strategies?

The three populations explored in this dissertation exemplify high variability in organizational dynamics. Recent scholarship challenges romantic ideas of communities as being

egalitarian, autonomous, or closed systems. Communities are viewed now as more complex, and seen to possess internal hierarchical power structures and individuals of heterogeneous characteristics and backgrounds. Examples of conflict between *clasificador* and “new-poor” communities as well as power struggles within *clasificador* cooperatives wherein internal power structures and hierarchies created are clear examples of these points. Communities no longer operate as politically, spatially and socially bounded autonomous groups. They are much more likely to be a part of, or at least influenced by, political and economic forces and are often highly mobile and diverse and not necessarily quick to adopt management plans with the goal of promoting sustainable resource use (Agrawal and Gibson 2001; Brosius, Tsing and Zerner 1998, Li 1996; McCay and Jentoft 1998; Oates 1999; Zerner 1994). These studies and others reveal complexities in the notion of community and assert that a more nuanced understanding of communities is necessary especially for conservation, sustainability and development initiatives.

Building on James Scott’s (1998) work, Brosius (2006) suggests that the creation of community often serves as a simplification that makes people and places “legible” to the state, governments and other organizations. Community organization for institutional visibility serves the purposes of both large-scale modernist projects such as development and conservation and the local communities themselves, as evidenced in this dissertation, in the extraction and allocation of resources.

Community and other forms of organization for increased visibility are visited throughout the dissertation and is a central concern in generating policy for urban agricultural practices. Urban agricultural activities, as stated in the foreword of Healthy City Harvests are, “invisible to many, have at best been defined as illegal or a concern, even though they are widely practiced (2008:V).” Making urban agriculturalists and their practices “visible” through the organization

of “communities” and organizations follows closely in line with James Scott’s (1998) assertion that states seek to rationalize and standardize “social hieroglyphs into legible and administratively more convenient formats (1998:5).” Once people and practices are organized into official organizations and are visible it is easier for the state to more efficiently and effectively redistribute and manage resources. Community garden organizations, *clasificador* cooperatives and organic grower organizations make themselves institutionally visible for political and economic gain as it facilitates negotiating with the local government and accessing resources and markets. The formation of UCRUS, the *clasificadores*’ union, however, was a clear use of organization for creating contentious politics in resistance to local government policy that aimed at controlling *clasificadores*’ movements in the metropolitan area and their access to urban refuse.

As scholars in Anthropology have asserted, social organization and cooperation is especially important in times of resource scarcity and researchers in urban agriculture poignantly add that:

The organization of urban producers into recognizable groups is deemed critical by agencies, governments, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and other social actors. Organization will allow practitioners to better access resources, services and markets, practice more sustainable and profitable forms of UA, negotiate the resolution of conflicts, bring their know-how, perspectives and interests to bear on policy design and take on responsibilities in their implementation. This is an important need and was identified by a conference of six Ministers of Local Government from East and Southern African countries in 2003 (MDPESA, 2003). In cities, organization is key to being invited, heard, listened to, accounted for, supported and rewarded. Urban producers'

organizations must not only defend their own interests but also speak the 'urban language' and show they can help other urban actors solve their problems. Organization is essential to urban producers becoming valued urban actors (Mougeot 2005:275).

The issue of organizational strategies and institutional visibility played out in a variety of ways within the three groups. Community gardens' push for institutional visibility and the creation of a *comunero* identity was a collaborative effort between the municipality, the University of the Republic and by community leaders and citizen activists. By creating community garden organizations individuals were able to access technical and legal support as well as other basic agronomic resources such as seeds and compost from said institutions. The phenomenon of community gardens was relatively short lived but community networks remain strong across the city's zones. The existence of local organizations and the experience of creating those local organizations is the most sustained aspect of the community garden experience in Montevideo. Solidarity, autonomy, and the ability to organize remains a powerful tool for facing future challenges in a dignified way.

The case of the *clasificadores* is quite different. The creation of *Clasificador* cooperatives promote cooperation amongst themselves at the municipal dumps, to distribute wealth equitably amongst workers, and to create a new societal model outside of the urban labor market. Yet, as admitted several times by informants, the main objective of *clasificador* cooperatives was to secure and maintain access to garbage. However, the urban agricultural side of *clasificador* life as practiced by CCdCs, has a singular and curious expression of visibility/invisibility between them and the local government. CCdCs enjoy a don't-ask-don't-tell relationship wherein avoiding any official organizational strategy concerned with raising urban

hogs for market. Urban hog raising in Montevideo is illegal yet tolerated by the local government and ironically is a practice made possible largely due to organizational strategies at the cooperative and union levels and political negotiations that secure CCdCs access to garbage.

Organic growers have created their own organic certification process and a presence in the market with very little state support. Their efforts to organize were based on economic strategies to spread risk, create more variability in their products and make themselves and their products more visible at the market.

As Tarrow points out “Contentious politics occurs when ordinary people often in league with more influential citizens, join forces in confrontations with elites authorities and opponents [...] contentious politics is triggered when changing political opportunities and constraints create incentives for social actors who lack resources on their own (1998: 2).” Throughout this dissertation research and across all three populations in Montevideo we can observe how scholars and citizen-activists are acting in explicit ways, taking advantage of existing social networks and common identities in constructing new identities through community organization and collective action to strengthen autonomy, and challenge political and economic structures with varying degrees of revolutionary and reactionary tactics and discourse. Their organizations are local and self-selected social groups that utilize community, as both concept and practice, thereby creating alternative cultural models, and gaining political clout and visibility. Their models are based on solidarity and other shared values and goals that have arisen from common struggle, economic crisis and critical perspectives of predominant cultural values and institutions.

6.3 How do municipal politics and institutional linkages influence agricultural and livestock production practices in and around Montevideo?

The three populations investigated for this dissertation are heavily implicated by state and local government policy and decisions to which they respond in both transparent and clandestine ways. Land-use policy, land tenure, public health risks, access to urban resources and refuse and community conflict are among the issues explored that are continually negotiated through complex political and social processes that are influenced and enforced to varying degrees by local authorities.

Community gardens, during the crisis, were the most institutionally visible face of urban agriculture in Montevideo. They therefore perpetuated the perception of urban agriculture as a response to economic crisis and not a viable strategy to provide food for the masses or to generate income. However, it was affirmed in Montevideo that the social processes involved in the development of various urban agricultural production systems go beyond feeding people. In fact, it provided a platform for the articulation of important urban policy with regard to education, land use planning, citizen organization and participation, health, environmental awareness and quality of foods (Interview with a representative of the municipality's office "Montevideo Rural," April 2009).

Institutional informants clearly suggest that urban agriculture has no place in their municipal or national development agendas by repeatedly referring to urban agriculture as a "temporary patch." The following quote is from an elected municipal official who works in extension and has been intimately involved with each of the three populations discussed in this

dissertation. He clearly voices the potentials of urban agriculture in Montevideo, the impacts of economic crisis on individuals and the difficulties in developing policy to support urban agricultural activities.

The process of urban agriculture that we registered in Uruguay was in 2002, in an intense social and economic crisis. People did not have food to eat and turned to the community gardens to produce for their daily needs. I think that there could be community gardens that could comply with various things, such as the organization of a territory to profoundly change society. I think they could meet nutritional needs of people that work in the gardens and generate economic incomes. It seems to me that basically the strategy lies in a larger objective being the organization of territory and people. What is the foundation of the community gardens? To cover the nutritional needs maybe? Basically it was a vehicle for the organization of people in the territory able to change their conditions of life and not to simply produce food. Because that is a kind of 'patch.' The problems of food security are generated by a socio-economic system and not because those particular people were poor by chance. When the crisis eased a little and above all this government of *frente amplio* applied programs *PANES* and other social programs to provide support to sectors of extreme poverty, labor opportunities grew and unemployment rates went down and the community garden movement deactivated or fell apart and you will see very little left of that experience. Again, it was a response to crisis because of lack of work and lack of subsidies from the State that would allow for basic needs to be met [...]. The raising of hogs on the other hand has been a stable practice here in Montevideo for at least the last 50 years. I get the feeling that the collective gardens are an economic activity that competes against formal or paid work. When there

is work, even temporary or seasonal work, people prioritize salaried work. That is a natural reaction for urban people. It's a good activity for retired folks, for example. But I think we have to talk a lot to decide whether or not we [referring to UdelaR and the IMM] are going to push it forward or not. That would mean moving beyond thinking about it as a patch to cover processes generated by the capitalist society. Urban Agriculture is a precarious solution to poverty. We should have a social and productive process that does not imply processes of exploitation that determines that people would have to put themselves to grow an onion to be able to eat. The deeper theme of urban agriculture lies in what society we are going to build for the future and what role we assign to urban spaces and where agriculture fits as a part of that space. I believe it should be humanized and think about a different kind of urban space, different kinds of work and recreation strategies. It seems to me that the center of discussion about urban agriculture should be that and not in technical talk of production or what is produced. All that I think is accessory. Proposals by the FAO and others that I have seen should give more attention to social sustainability (Institutional Interview with Extension officer: February 2009).

The Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock and Fisheries (MGAP) asserts the same position. In both interviews the officials argue two basic points: the need for a clear delimitation of space and the general lack of policy for urban agriculture.

The ministry [MGAP] does not have concrete actions only isolated experiences that many times did not persist for long. The central objective is to generate policy with respect to traditional agriculture not urban agriculture. There are zones that are not delimited

clearly but we will be working in that direction [...]. The most complicated issue of sustainability with the community gardens is generating income.

The case of the *Clasificadores* is quite different. Their legal and institutional position is not a product of a lack of policy but a question of the enforcement of policy making their situation more resistant in nature. For close to fifty years the local government has attempted to control *clasificadores*' movements and restrict their access to refuse in the metropolitan area and municipal dumps. Their ongoing struggle to maintain secure access to urban refuse has been manifest in both formal negotiations with the state and organized protests. Their response to the prohibition of raising hogs in urban zones with urban refuse remains outside of the public arena. They continue to raise hogs in urban zones and access formal markets through informal channels and have thus far enjoyed a lack of enforcement by authorities. The regularization of irregular settlements may see more proactive interventions on the part of the state.

Scavenging activities, such as those performed by *clasificadores*, are generally grouped into the theoretical context of the "urban informal economic sector." The informal economy, as a concept, was first coined by J. Hart (1973) who grounded his definition in the distinction between wage earning and self-employment and is criticized for not distinguishing those self-employed in the informal sector from those in the formal sector (Davies 1979). Dualistic economic models such as Hart's informal and formal, Geertz's bazaar and firm (1963), Santo's upper circuit and lower circuit (1979) and Germani's marginal and modern (1973) permeated social theorists' and development discourse throughout the 1960s and 1970s. These theories and international development initiatives at the time were strongly influenced by modernization

theory. Development discourse relating to informal economies, in Latin America expressed a clear agenda:

which advocated the gradual elimination of marginal groups as a matter of development policy and the incorporation of its members into the modern sector. Marginalization was seen as an obstacle to Latin American modernization and development, and even as parasitic by some. The International Labor Organization adopted a dualistic view of Latin American societies and defined the informal sector as comprising occupations performed by unskilled labor, using simple technology in competitive market conditions that allowed easy entry (Medina 2006:5).

The Peruvian economist H. de Soto further analyzes the concept of the informal economy. Drawing from research conducted in Peru, De Soto argues that, “the informal economy is the spontaneous response to the state’s incapacity to satisfy the basic needs of the impoverished masses.” De Soto goes on to state that Peruvian and larger Latin American economic systems, more generally, “benefit only those with political and economic power, excluding the poor, who have no alternative but illegality. Legal institutions, rather than constituting an instrument for the development of Third World countries, are the principle obstacle to it (Medina 2006: 11).”

“Apart from health hazards, environmental and nuisance aspects of urban livestock need neighborhood level management and reconciliation mechanisms (Cole et al 2008: 233).” This is a particularly relevant point for conflicts between *clasificador* communities and new-poor communities that is playing out in the process of regularizing irregular settlements. Through the institutional voices in the past chapters and echoed again in the following quote, it is clear that

policy development for urban agriculture is very difficult, particularly for urban livestock. An agricultural extension officer that works closely with both the municipality and national university explains that a:

If we were to prohibit raising hogs we would have to offer another strategy for survival. What we have to do is change society so we do not have people that have to live off the trash. But to be able to arrive at such there is a very long road that implies working together with *clasificadores* to find political, social, and technical alternatives and see how we can think about poverty in a society of classes and how we transform that society of classes into a society of equals where people do not have to live off of trash and raise hogs with sanitary and health risks to be able to survive or basic things like celebrate a daughter's birthday (Interview, March 2009)

As stated in the Right to Food declaration, "Local and central governments are obliged to respect the Right to Food, meaning they cannot stop people from providing themselves with food essential to their survival (Cole et al 2008: 232)."

Organic growers are proactive and have responded to the lack of institutional support by creating their own organic certification process that operates independently of the state. Their participatory organic certification is representative of an independence from policy or state interventions in organic agriculture, which is further evidenced in their search for more market opportunities with the state, such as with hospitals, and exportation possibilities.

I think organic agriculture is one of the tasks we must work on, because we have no policy directed at its organization. There is a certain number of producers that market well and could also make more with state contracts, to hospitals, for example and

international markets. But to date the development of organic production doesn't have a roof. (Official at MGAP, March 2009).

Montevideo's urban and peri-urban organic growers association is an example of urban agriculture that has the potential for sustainable production that was not born out of crisis. The importance of support and creation of markets are crucial factors for their success.

Municipalities can play a key role in linking the needs of consumers and small-scale urban producers by facilitating a broad-based collaboration among relevant stakeholders. Traders, transporters and market administrators are as important as producers and consumers in securing food supply and distribution that can respond to the food crisis (Cole et al 2008:232)."

6.4 Effects of the Economic Crisis of 2002. Whose crisis was it anyway?

As an anthropologist in Montevideo said, "there are always winners and losers after economic crises." At the moment the anthropologist was referring to international investment opportunities and global business not differential urban agricultural production strategies but the point is relevant. A significant component of this dissertation research project focuses on the impact of economic policies and crisis on urban agriculture and livestock production strategies and how behaviors associated with production respond to challenges and opportunities. This research is comparative in nature looking across the three study populations to compare adaptive strategies and effects of economic policy, namely but not limited to the social and economic crisis of 2002. If we take the social and economic crisis that struck in July of 2002 as a point of reference we see that the perceived impacts are discussed in very different terms across the three

populations. The effects of the crisis of 2002 were not all negative, in fact the perceived effects of the crisis span the full spectrum across the three populations ranging from very negative perceived effects, no perceived effects and even positively perceived effects.

The organization of community gardens was a clear response by predominantly new-poor to this large economic crisis. As the economy and employment opportunities improved in subsequent years, many of the gardeners returned to work. Participation in community gardens fell sharply, especially in the years of 2004 and 2005. This example is clearly one of urban agriculture as a response to crisis where production was initially intensified and later fell off after the economy picked back up.

Members from the well-established communities of *clasificadores* paint a very different picture of the crisis. *Clasificadores* that raise hogs for market rely on access to organic refuse and informal channels to market their hogs. Their livelihood, though socially marginal, possesses flexibility in the variety of materials that can also be recycled for profit. *Clasificadores* have a very specialized knowledge of trash³ that would merit a study of its own. Their marginal position in society and lessened dependence on the cash economy buffers them from shifts in the outside world economy and development initiatives. Rhoades and Nazarea draw a similar parallel describing how groups in geographically and socially marginal areas, “are somewhat insulated from ‘roadside’ development (1999:228).” Moreover the “margin” or “insulated pockets” are frequently home to specialized knowledge and innovation as well as hot beds for agro-biodiversity (Rhoades and Nazarea 1999; Veteto). *Clasificadores* are fighting a battle for social inclusion and the institutionalization of their work yet their detachment from formal institutions, their persistence at the margin, their use of horses and not petroleum for

³ *Clasificadores* often refer to the changing seasons of trash where certain products are more abundant in specific months—such as plastic bottles in the summer when Montevideans consume more soft drinks in the streets.

transportation, and their resistance to policy, are what has allowed their continued existence for at least the last fifty years. *Clasificadores* repeatedly downplayed the economic crisis of 2002 that devastated the nation with statements such as, “we have never experienced an economic crisis,” “there is always trash and something to eat,” and “our cars eat grass not gas.”

In stark contrast urban organic growers share a picture at the other end of the spectrum regarding the effects of the crisis on their livelihoods. Among the urban smallholders that produce food for the organic market, the majority actually enjoyed positive effects and intensification of production. The organic growers were self-employed and thus didn’t have jobs to lose. When inflation rates soared in the national economy and prices in the super markets for produce rose, sales in informal markets saw a great increase. Thus, the economic crisis is largely remembered by the organic growers as a positive time when demand for their products rose. The crisis also created many networks between growers and made their markets more visible giving strength to the organic movement that was still gaining speed in 2008/2009.

The 2002 economic crisis, however, had the largest influence on the landscape at the urban margin of Montevideo. In the immediate aftermath of the crash, irregular settlements exploded. *Clasificadores* may have felt little or even no effects from the economic effects from the crisis, they certainly could see the expanding neighborhoods of squatters arriving from their homes and work places. Urban agriculture clearly aided in feeding and improving the health of these new poor during the acute trouble of the crisis, and even after the growers have returned to work, the settlements remain and the landscape forever altered around Montevideo. The organic growers, likewise operating in these marginal urban sectors, live in constant contact with the irregular settlements, which grew out of the crisis.

6.5 Implications of urban agriculture for agricultural anthropology

Urbanization and globalization are forcing anthropologists to broaden their focus in agricultural research and allow for a more dynamic perspective. Scholars have incorporated broad socio-economic and ecological conditions into their analyses (Padoch 1985, 1986; Morrison 1996; Stone and Downum 1999) and multi-linear models of intensification (Brookfield 1972; Guillet 1987; Stone 2004). The inclusion of those exogenous forces and others, such as market incentives (Brush and Turner 1988), land tenure (Moran 1993), class, or impoverishment (Turner and Ali 1996) makes agricultural studies more complex.

Studies of urban agriculture likely will find increasing room to build scholarship in Anthropology, in general, and agricultural anthropology, more specifically. Agricultural anthropology, as a field, developed relatively late, given such a strong background in issues of agricultural production and agrarian life-ways in Anthropology. Netting's 1974 "Agrarian Ecology" (a collection of studies of agrarian societies) responds to this point saying that, agriculture "was too basic for the ambition of the new science of man" (also quoted in this context in Rhoades 2005). He goes on to describe how anthropologists at that time were too engaged in studies of kinship, and ritual to look at mundane agricultural issues. The rural and agrarian nature of much of early ethnography would also make the terms "rural anthropology" or "agricultural anthropology" seemingly redundant.

Robert Rhoades was instrumental in the formation of "agricultural anthropology" as a sub-discipline in anthropology. Agricultural anthropology as a concept and as a practice matured in the 1970s and 1980s when Rhoades and other anthropologists were amongst the first to penetrate large development agencies, introducing anthropological perspectives and methods to

development. In the late 1970s Rhoades used the term “agricultural anthropology” to convey to the “hard scientists” at The International Potato Center (CIP) the work he was conducting with highland Andean farmers. By the early 1980s anthropologists were gaining a better foothold working in international development contexts and Rhoades had come up with a conceptually clear definition of Agricultural Anthropology:

Agricultural anthropology is the comparative, holistic, and temporal study of the human element in agricultural activity, focusing on the interactions of environment, technology, and culture within local and global food systems, and it has the practical goal of responsibly applying this knowledge to improve the efficiency and sustainability of food and fiber production. Agricultural anthropology views agriculture neither as a mere technical process nor even as techno-economic combination, but as a complex human creation and evolutionary process that includes equally important socio-cultural and ideological components in interaction with each one another and the natural environment. Agricultural anthropology is broader in scope than other agricultural disciplines, which focus, and rightly so, on specialized and limited problems in agriculture [1984:46].

Thus, agricultural anthropology maintains the holistic approach of anthropology and focuses on the complexity of behaviors surrounding agricultural production through time. Anthropology does not operate in a bubble and in general tends to follow trends in greater society. Agricultural anthropology has not been an exception, which reached its height in the 1980s and waned as the sustainability paradigm gained importance in the 1990s (Rhoades 2005). Trends in environment and agriculture continue to shift and concerns about food shortages around the world are bringing agriculture back onto center stage (UN News Centre 2008). Urban

agriculture will have an increasingly important place in addressing these concerns, especially as indicated in this research and that of others' that trends show population explosions in urban areas across the globe and economies the world over look to be precarious at best for the foreseeable future. As Cole asserts, referring to his book "Healthy City Harvests: Generating Evidence to Guide Policy on Urban Agriculture,"

In mid 2008, as we were editing this book, a global food crisis was again grabbing world attention with acute food shortages in thirty-six countries, more than half of them in Africa (FAO 2008). Because of unequal access to food, there is roughly the same proportion of food insecure households and malnourished children in urban slums as in rural areas (UN-Habitat 2006, pp.104-107). Urban agriculture is once more being recognized as an important response that millions of families use to obtain food. The internationally recognized Right to Food (FAO 2005) implies that urban food production and distribution should be encouraged not only to alleviate crisis situations such as that now prevailing, but also as part of a longer-term strategy for hunger and poverty alleviation. However, fostering such self-reliance and promoting the safe production and distribution of urban as well as rural food present enormous challenges for urban stakeholders and municipal policymakers (Cole et al 2008:3).

In such a light anthropological research on urban agriculture will continue to broaden traditional agriculture research in anthropology by applying questions of agricultural and livestock production, power inequalities, marginality, social organization, resource flows, economics, and politics at the global and local scales to an urban environment—issues that are also germane to development. Ethnographic studies of urban smallholder behavior in cities across the world will establish a broader base of data and improve our ability to generalize about

urban agricultural and livestock production behaviors in an array of contexts and land tenure arrangements.

As first indicated by Rhoades and others more than three decades ago, findings made in agricultural anthropology can provide decisive insights into the needs and dynamics of populations which in turn enhance the opportunity for development agencies and governments to implement effective strategies to food and livestock production—this dissertation concludes that this point is true in the urban setting, soon to be home to two thirds of the world’s population, not just in rural, traditionally agricultural areas. Lessons learned from Montevideo can help development agencies and municipalities across the globe better understand how their populations will react to economic stress in growing urban areas. Clearly shown in the examples of the three distinct groups profiled from Montevideo in this research, urban agriculture manifests in ways which can both be viewed as a positive or negative, and sometimes both depending on many factors in the weave of a society’s fabric. Data and cultural understanding fostered by the study of urban agriculture in the anthropology field, also arms institutions with knowledge otherwise unobtainable that can aid in establishing policy ahead of the curve of full blown crisis which can create a smoother transition to urban agriculture with fewer negative by-products, thereby providing the many benefits provided by it, such as increased access to healthy foods for large numbers of urban poor, land tenure security for marginalized populations, and creating jobs and income for the most vulnerable parts of the population.

Currently, 2009/2010, the global economic crisis teeters on the edge of a modern Great Depression--one with a world population exponentially larger than that of the 1930s--meaning we face unprecedented rates (and sheer numbers) of urbanization, displacement, and unemployment. Uruguay’s economic collapse in 2002 was exactly the precursor to this larger

economic catastrophe in which we currently find ourselves. The lessons displayed and reported by Montevideo's dynamic urban population, as a microcosm to the recent global macrocosm, both in the aftermath of that acute crisis and in the more long term experience of their urban poor of generations, show clear basic agricultural means that will be implemented around the world by many populations under severe economic stress. It is critically important to understand the many practical, political, and productive strategies cleverly constructed by Montevideans, both of necessity and by hopeful design, to avoid re-inventing the wheel in terms of what works, or falling head long into avoidable trouble.

Agriculture at the urban margin provides opportunity and self-reliance for families and communities. "New-rural" farmers, "new-poor" community gardeners, and *clasificadores* that raise hogs, all ended up developing unique productive strategies and brought agriculture to the urban environment. Efforts to relocate agricultural and livestock enterprises to the country have been unsuccessful. All of urban agriculturalists were, and still are, people with deep connections to the city. Montevideo remains their cultural and social nexus. Attempts to transplant urban agriculture and livestock practices to rural areas have failed to address these social and cultural concerns.

From an anthropological perspective, viewing how urban poor organize themselves and create productive agricultural and livestock strategies while responding to an array of challenges and opportunities is vital to improving lives, finding equilibrium between governments and their governed, getting NGOs and relief agencies maximum traction in terms of providing assistance especially when seeking to maximize the effectiveness of very limited resources, and is clearly a very cornerstone to the coming global urban phenomenon.

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