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Interview



Collective Action, Organisation and the Struggle for an Alternative Food System: an Interview with Pocho, Union Trabajadores de la Tierra, Argentina

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Introduction

The following is an interview with Pocho, Union Trabajadores de la Tierra (UTT) activist from the Argentinean province of Chubut.¹ UTT is among the most interesting examples of how, in the relatively short span of a decade, a small organisation defending the rights of migrant agricultural workers in the green belt of La Plata has become an organisationally structured social movement with a nationwide presence, able to propose plans for the construction of an alternative food system. This growth and expansion have been the result

¹ Translated by Maurizio Atzeni.

not of a strategy planned at headquarters level but rather a consensus-based social struggle driven by the immediate interests of the agricultural workers involved. Echoing what Pocho says in the interview, the economic dimension of the struggle has been and continues to be at the core of UTT struggles, despite the national relevance and impact of mobilisation events such as the *verdurazo*.² In a similar way, the alternative system of food production and distribution put into practice by UTT with the agro-toxin-free *colonias agrícolas*, or the network of popular fruit and vegetable shops (*almacenes populares*), while addressing the interests of the working class as a whole and directly intervening in the sphere of public policies, emerged initially as political tools and proposals around which to articulate the everyday struggles of agricultural producers to improve their lives. This bottom-up, workers-based construction of a social movement, and thus the way in which labour-related conditions of exploitation, rather than just ecological motives, have structured the organisational building process of UTT, are important considerations when reflecting on broader issues of working-class organisation around the world.

I Think it would be Interesting for Readers to know the History of the Movement. How did it Start? How did it Develop?

UTT was born a little more than ten years ago in the horticultural belt of La Plata, within the small agricultural producers' community,³ which is generally composed of immigrant families in our country: the first were the Italian immigrants, then the Portuguese families, and the Japanese families, these particularly in relation to floriculture. Later on, when neoliberalism entered our country in such an open and deep way from the 1990s onwards, a large input of plastic was introduced in the production, for instance with the use of greenhouses, and a lot of toxic agro-chemicals. Along with this change in the production process also came a new wave of *quintera* immigration (*inmigración quintera*) with the arrival of Bolivians.

Our organisation is the product of these changes in the horticultural production process. We see ourselves as a union organisation, a trade union organisation. We recognise ourselves as workers because of the side of the world

2 *Verdurazo* are mobilisation events in which agricultural producers occupy the central squares of cities (normally Plaza de Mayo in Buenos Aires for its symbolic nature) with the aim of distributing fruit and vegetables for free to citizens in an act which is both a solidarity gesture towards society and a protest act to denounce the exploitative working conditions of agricultural workers and demonstrate how these could be changed by following UTT proposals.

3 These producers are known as '*quinteros*' and their community as the '*comunidad quintera*'.

on which we stand, but we also build our unionism by promoting community purchases and buying machinery for collective use. However, we built all this by fighting in the street with a methodology of struggle that has become the defining trademark of UTT. As these first groups in La Plata grew stronger, one of the first things that happened, which gave us a more regional dimension, was a *verdurazo* in Plaza de Mayo where all the claims about the problems of work in our territories were brought together with a gesture towards the broader community. With the *verdurazo*, the product of our work, in this case food, is shown and made available to people who have a lot of other problems, and in the face of this measure, which creates a little more empathy with other workers in the city, a bridge of solidarity is created. By putting part of our work on the table of a neighbouring family without asking for anything in return, we make a gesture towards the community. This gave us national visibility, and from our organisational basis in the horticultural community, we started to have links with the peri-urban sector ... in San Vicente, in Brandsen, areas in which producers are more pig farmers, farm producers, so to speak. From that first *verdurazo* we became known at national level, starting to build relationships with other provinces and other kinds of food production.

When was the Verdurazo you Mentioned?

The first *verdurazo* must have been in 2014/2015, I do not remember the date exactly. The *verdurazo* is what most people know today, right? But we did countless actions before this: road blocking, camping on the Bs As-La Plata highway, land seizures; we did a lot of activities. The *verdurazo* was what put on the public scene a strategic sector that up to that moment was invisibilised by the media; this was the political significance of the *verdurazo*.

Something I forgot to mention, but that is since the beginning also part of our identity, is the dairy sector. Particularly the area of San Vicente is historically a dairy supply basin and was a sector that was hit hard by the enormous concentration of the agro-industry, by the big dairy companies that have been hurting enormously all that economic fabric that worked for so many years.

I Suppose Workers' Representation Changes According to the Type of Worker you are Representing. One Thing is the Horticultural Producer and Another Thing is the Pig Producer. Is this Correct?

Yes ... let's put this in the bigger context. Over the years, rural trade unionism has been concentrated in four or five unions, which are employers' unions (the Sociedad Rural, Coninagro); and up until now, what has been happening is that the countryside as a sector, as a political world, has been mediatised by the employers, so they have been speaking for themselves, but also for the

workers. So, what we are proposing is: they do not have the same interests, we do not have the same agenda of demands, so we need our own representation that has to do with the workers of the land, because otherwise the bosses or the employers come and say, 'this is what is left for you'. So, in the face of this, what UTT proposes is an agenda of demands, a trade union agenda, an economic struggle from end to end, but built and decided by the workers.

This means that we are starting to build a transversal axis between the different value chains, be it dairy, horticulture or the small agro-industry that has to do with canning, with jams, with the world of wool and lamb production. It is transversal: all the value chains have spaces where workers continue to produce – in recent years, in ever smaller proportions – on increasingly marginal lands, with ever higher self-exploitation regimes. In order to be able to reach a sufficient income to support the rural family and rural communities, what has been happening lately is more working hours and family self-exploitation; that is one of the problems that we also have. Comrades work ten to twelve hours a day; and several times a week, as is the case with horticulture, they upload trucks for the markets, so they get up at 3 o'clock in the morning.

All this becomes unsustainable. In order to get sufficient income, the workers exploit themselves more and more; that is what happens in general terms, let's say.

On Top of this, They Can't Make Demands to Their Employer Because They Don't Formally Have One.

Exactly. The entire sector of small producers supplies more than 60 per cent of what 45 million Argentinian men and women eat every day. All this is done on 13 per cent of the productive land, 36 per cent of which is in the hands of only 1 per cent of the population.⁴ This is enormously unfair; the matrix of the land ownership structure is enormously unequal. We are in one of the moments in which there is the greatest concentration in the hands of a few and where different renting strategies start to appear, as with the *pooles de siembra* (capital-intensive sowing groups). There is a whole technological and economic scaffolding, which also comes with new ways of approaching production processes, which makes this an enormously complex web. But yes, what we can say in general terms is that it is very concentrated. The discussion between food and commodity production ends up on the side of the commodity due to the lack of promotion and public policy with regard to food supply. As a consequence, we end up paying for food that is pegged to the dollar due to real

⁴ *Quinteros* producers normally rent the land.

estate speculation in relation to what it means to produce on that surface area. There is also another very big problem with regard to production inputs. Seeds and the technological package linked to transgenic and agro-toxic production processes, which in general depend on multinationals' patents, are imported, and this means that the production process as a whole is pegged to the dollar. So, the cocktail is explosive; it doesn't work. The neighbouring working family pays for food in dollars and the small producer family buys dollarised inputs but sells them in pesos.

Of course, It is Totally Unsustainable. And does this also Apply to the Meat and Milk Chain?

To all the chains, exactly. Yes, in the case of milk, you sell to two big companies that control almost 90 per cent of the production chain, and either you sell to one or you sell to the other. So, if you don't produce added value, for instance if I don't make cheese or if I don't make any other type of derivative – milk is very perishable, you have to sell it.

And Even if you Produce Cheese, you must Market it Afterwards.

Yes, there is a whole process. In general, it is very difficult for the producers' families not only to produce, but also to sell. That's why, as UTT, we as a union focus on commercialisation as a response to the problems of our comrades. In addition to building a sovereign bridge that reaches the neighbouring family at a fair price, commercialisation was seen as a way to solve income generation problems of the workers, a typical economic trade union struggle.

When we started out, we produced agro-ecological vegetables but sold them to the conventional market, where no such differentiation was paid. Now, with our own marketing channel, the producer ends up receiving more money for the same product, the cost of production is lower and the neighbouring family pays less. It works from every angle.

Do You Think it is Possible to Sustain this Alternative Commercialisation?

Yes, these are models that are useful, that work, but if the state doesn't come along and scale up these processes, even if there are thousands of us in UTT, it's not enough. We need public policy that allows us to scale up what we do. But it works; the commercial and technological device works; there is no longer any discussion about that. We produce our own seeds, we have bio-factories – we did these things many times. But if the state doesn't appear, if it doesn't intervene to strengthen the sector with funding, with projects, with state purchases,

let's say with something strong, we are going to continue doing this and we are going to do everything we can, but it's not going to be enough. In reality, our strongest demand is that the state stop governing for the interests of capital, on the landowners' side, and rather look at the small producer, which, despite the fact that it produces food for the table, is rarely the subject of public policy.

The Problem is that Small Producers Produce Food but Not Dollars ...

It produces food, not dollars, it's true. But you need both. In an Argentina where half of the population is poor, not thinking about food is a tragedy. It seems to us that it's not enough to think about the dollar as an equilibrium factor in the trade balance and then have those dollars redistributed to the population. The problem is that the 50 per cent poverty rate is very high ... it is half of all of us with problems, with no guaranteed food day by day. It is a very significant number; sometimes we get used to seeing these numbers, though we should not get used to it and we have to do things to change it. The state has to look at our sector too and provide public policies that transcend organisations and question the whole system of food production.

*But Concretely, are you Asking Something Specific from the State?
Are there Examples of One State Being more Present than Another?
Considering also that the State is Not Only National but Local and
Provincial.*

While we are saying all this, we are doing things all day long, making mistakes and getting things right. We understand that if the factors of production are in the hands of the workers, we can have a stronger discussion in relation to the bases of this agro-food model, which is a model of hunger and death, an unequal model. Given this, what we are proposing is that access to land is the first significant discussion we have to initiate: we cannot think of a change in the agro-food model in our country if we do not discuss access to land, if we do not democratise this factor of production. This is the discussion that we are putting forward.

What are you Proposing?

The bill 'Access to Land'. This has been in parliament since 2016. We had a *verduraso* to support this and we have been proposing it again and again since 2016. Basically, the bill is a rural version of Procrear,⁵ the same thing that was done for the housing problem – the same proposal is used to buy a piece of

5 Procrear was introduced in 2012 during Cristina Fernandez's second presidential mandate as a line of low-interest credits to give access to home ownership and boost the construction industry.

land. A trust fund carried out by the Banco Nación, soft credit to be able to buy land, twenty years with a differentiated rate – that is why we are asking for public policy – to buy a plot of land to produce, but also to live. Encouraging the rooting of rural communities together with the productive process. This is obviously framed within the guidelines of agro-ecology, fair trade, supply of the local market. And then there is also a proposal that goes hand in hand with it: the agro-ecological colonies. The agricultural colonies proposal has been put forward to resolve the issue of land access in a collective way – which is in line with what we have been working on so far – to use machinery in an associative way, having family spaces but also collective production spaces, organising the productive process within the colony in a co-operative way. But we want to make use of the thousands of idle unproductive hectares that are under public domain. In an Argentina with hunger, we propose to use these hectares to produce sovereign, quality food, at a fair price, supplying local markets. This is the proposal of the agro-ecological colonies, which goes hand in hand with the law on access to land, all of which are aimed at encouraging and promoting access to land as a factor of production in the hands of small producers' families.

So, When you Talk about this Proposal that Has to Do with Access to Land, it is One of the Forms of Intervention That you are Asking the State for, isn't it?

Exactly, one with soft credits to be able to buy land and the other a distribution of idle land, the thousands and thousands of hectares that are under public domain at the municipal, provincial and national level, to put them at the service of food production in agreement with the organisation and oriented towards agro-ecological production, promoting food sovereignty. This is what we are proposing, in one case following a logic of profit and in the other by accessing what already exists but is idle. We believe that there is no reason to say no to us.

Of course, and on the Commercialisation Side, are you also Asking for Some form of State Intervention?

Well, hand in hand with commercialisation, while we ask for large sectoral public policies, we are doing things. I think it is important to insist on this. As I told you, there are more than ten agro-ecological colonies in the country today: some of them were the outcome of territorial struggles, others were the result of agreements with municipalities, others were part of agreements with the national state. I mean, we are not waiting for public policy to appear; we are building solutions and proposals from below to show that what we are asking for, it already exists and works. It is a way, as we were saying today, of scaling up the process to be able to give a sectoral response, not a general response.

And it Seems to me that you are also Showing how markets could be Organised Differently, Because UTT has its Own Market Spaces.

Yes, in relation to marketing, we responded initially to a problem our producers were facing from a trade union perspective. But given that we consider ourselves an organisation that has an empathetic, community and solidarity-based approach, what we did was not only to resolve our own issue but also to lend a hand to the food provisioning of the neighbouring family, especially those in the most neglected, excluded and oppressed sectors, and to build marketing channels that are fair not only for the producer but also for the neighbouring family. By this we mean top-quality food, healthy food, at a fair, accessible and popular price. We must reach the pockets of exclusion with a premium product produced by the workers. Until now, we have found no other way to do this than to do it ourselves.

This is the way in which we are organised: we have nodes where a neighbour is in charge of collecting orders and distributing fruit, vegetables, pulses and so on in his or her neighbourhood, in his or her town, in his or her rural area. Then we have the general stores that are the commercial structures of our organisation: they are spaces of co-operative work where there is an assembly of workers that carry out the commercialisation process. Obviously, there is a political and strategic choice behind the decision to open this general store and where to open it. In the store we have a permanent office, a presence with a commercial structure that is specific to the organisation or the territory – there must be fourteen or fifteen of these stores – and there are more than 200 nodes in the AMBA area (Greater Buenos Aires area), and then we also have stores in the provinces. In the case of Chubut, where I live, we also have a general store. And then, following another organising strategy, we have a kind of popular franchise called sovereign stores (*almacenes soberanos*), not general stores. Sovereign stores do not have a cost for the franchise, which is why we call them popular franchises (*franquicias populares*), and they are run by a neighbour, who is encouraged and supported to open a commercial space or, often, reconvert an existing one. There are more than twenty of these, many of them in the AMBA.

When you Talk About Franchising, would it be a UTT Franchise for the Neighbour?

Exactly. You set up the premises, you take care of the whole commercial process; we supply the food and the merchandising. We don't charge anything for the franchise, that's why we say it's popular. This is another strategy we use, but as in the other cases we never sat down and planned it, it was rather a way to provide answers to problems.

Sure. You know that when I met Nahuel and Rosalía (Currently Both UTT National Leaders) They were Just Starting out. Nahuel used to Distribute the Bags in La Plata and I was One of his Clients. So, I Understand what you mean by 'Providing Answers to Problems'.

Yes, yes, it was like that. The most recent thing we have experienced and learned has come from Patagonia. There, all the organisations belonging to UTT but also other co-operative structures that are not UTTs are mostly composed of sheep- and goat-breeding family producers. The hair is sold in the case of goats, the wool in the case of sheep, and then the lamb for meat consumption. So, after the sale of wool or the sale of hair, the organisations make a large purchase of food for the whole year – basically yerba mate, flour, oil, noodles, rice and something else – in order to stock up after the sale of wool. So the co-operative receives the money from the sale of wool or hair, makes the purchase of this food and deducts it directly from the income generated by the selling of wool or hair. This is a common practice in Patagonia. When we started to build in Patagonia five years ago, we started to intervene in this mechanism, we started to propose something different: we won't buy from the big commercial structures, which are generally the ones with the best prices due to logistics, supply, scale and for a lot of other reasons, but we'll buy from other co-operative and community organisations. We stopped buying from the big commercial structures in Patagonia: it is the co-operative world supplying the co-operative world.

This is the other line of work we have been developing and from which we've learned, which is also very large-scale, which is very important, and which makes it possible to buy more food with the same amount of money. I insist on this: these are all actions that in an Argentina with hunger are fundamental to provide a solution.

How do you Manage an Organisation that is Federal but which is also Diversified in Terms of Types of Production? The Needs of People Living in AMBA or of the Producers of the Horticultural Belt of La Plata and Buenos Aires are Different from those of Patagonia, and in Turn from those of Mendoza; so, From an Organisational Point of View, when you Have to Make a Decision that may be in the Interest of all those Involved, doesn't this Create Some Kind of Friction? Or How do you Organise Yourselves?

Let's see, we always have problems of all sorts ... but the union structure helps us to sort this out a bit. So, to tell you something a bit classic, but which

organises the discussion, because it's true what you say. To begin with, the core unit of UTT is the co-operative, made up in a formal or informal way by the producers themselves. Every month or every two months an assembly takes place in the territory, the heart of UTT. So, what happens is that this base, this nucleus of producers – which we call an assembly – comes together with other assemblies in regional or provincial plenary meetings, depending on the scale. In general, if there is a large volume of work, a regional assembly is set up and that regional assembly goes to a national plenary of delegates, like any classic trade union in any branch of production – that is the structure.

And in the last few years, when we started to have these problems that you say, when you start to have more scale, when you start to become more massive, we started to respond with different proposals regarding the structure: we started to have secretariats. We started to have a gender secretariat, a huge response to the amount of violence suffered by women – these secretariats are cross-cutting for all the grassroots groups; a commercialisation secretariat that is also cross-cutting for all the organisations; a production secretariat that is being created, the same thing. So, nothing works autonomously, but they are responding to this problem, trying, for example, to build a production secretariat that has to do with the supply of inputs – ‘hey, we all need bottles and lids’ – which is generally critical in all the provinces because of the scales that we manage. The production secretariat begins to buy items directly from the factory and we distribute them and we begin to supply ourselves. Instead of going to buy in the territory, we make a centralised purchase and buy at a lower cost. This example can be applied to anything, to sales, to anything. These are the answers we are giving in relation to the organisation's structure.

If I am Not Wrong, I Have Read that the Law of Access to Land is Not in the Package of Laws that the Congress will Discuss this Year, is that Right?

Yes, it lost its parliamentary status last December, and now, a few days ago, Cecilia Morau, who is a member of parliament from the Frente de todos (Peronist coalition supporting Alberto Fernández's presidency), reintroduced the bill, but beyond this presentation we need these things to happen; if that little piece of paper falls, then we will put it back for reconsideration. This whole process is not in the package of laws that were going to be dealt with in the extraordinary session; as well as the wetlands law, there were a lot of laws that had to do with protectionism, against extractivism, that were not considered in general terms, particularly with the law on access to land that was resubmitted. But, well, we will continue to promote the struggle; in particular,

we will do everything in our power to be able to advance in the direction of a law regulating access to land.

What Sort of Political Interests were Against this? Because it Seems to Me, From What you were Saying, that it is not Only with this Law but More Generally with Laws that are Against Extractivism, more of an Ecological Nature.

It's a bit difficult to make an analysis, but, well, you are what you do and what you don't do, so if laws are promoted for the agro-industrial sector, it's clear that the political class is building laws that are tailored to the extractivist polluting agriculture. We do not have any particular data on this, though the process speaks for itself ...

But you are Now a Little Bit Inside the Institutional World, aren't you? Because with the Appointment of Nahuel to the Presidency of the Central Market, that Step was Taken, you were Always a More Street-Based Organisation and you Won a Lot in the Street, as you were Saying Before.

It was a challenge for all of us, basically. We saw in this something positive from a learning point of view. However, even if we have the support of the government, we are always going to do what we have to do, we are going to camp in the streets, in the congress. All this is in UTT's nature, whether Nahuel is in the central market or not. We took over the presidency of the central market on 24 March 2020. It was the beginning of the pandemic; it was a time of enormous speculation, food prices were skyrocketing – a complicated time that challenged all of us. Now, we can say that we have been able to set some basic rules for the operation of the central market; for example, by publishing the wholesale prices every week, we made the retail price chain transparent. We also work with hundreds of popular canteens that get unsold food for free. These are historic events for the central market. A space is being recovered where people can visit and remember the sites of repression by the last military dictatorship. We could advance the historical demands of workers that have never been made before. The other important thing we want to do, using our presence in the central market, is to establish a public food company to intervene in this scenario of enormous speculation. We are elaborating an institutional proposal on this that would allow the state to intervene with its own produced food to stabilise prices and prevent speculation when there is a shortage of food.

Earlier you said that, As an Organisation, You Feel and See Yourself as a Union, But you Have a Lot of Co-operatives and Co-operative Networks; How do you Live this Double Dimension?

We all experience what is happening to us or what we are doing as a dream. UTT is becoming more and more like the organisation we dreamed of being at some point. With comings and goings, but also solutions, it is being built with a lot of love.

What was that Dream Like?

It was a bit like what is happening today: of being able to discuss public policy, of being able to generate proposals for general solutions, not only for UTT, particularly in a context in which half the country is going hungry. Being able to say something about that and to bring a solution seems to me to be one of the most generous human gestures of solidarity that we can have as people, as individuals, and this collective articulation is very much like a dream.

In Relation to Your Political Position, Do you Recognise Yourself in any Party? Do you Support Certain Alliances? How do you Manage That?

UTT has no political affiliation. We don't obey any political party; we obey the grassroots assemblies. The heart of UTT is in the territory, as I told you, and what we are trying to do now is to identify mechanisms to centralise decisions taken at the local level into a unified decision. This is the political exercise in which we are involved now. Beyond that, it is also clear that we are never going to have any of us as the organisation representative in an institutional setting in a neoliberal government, like the one run by Macri, which is tightening and shrinking the state. We do not think that the solution can come from such an approach. So, in the context of a government such as the one now in power, that at least in principle presented itself as a popular government, we considered the political context was creating an opportunity for us to advance with our project. I can say we have no political affiliation, but clearly the presence of Alberto Fernández is not the same as that of Mauricio Macri.

What about Relations with Other Social Movements? How do you See Yourself? Similar? Different?

Well ... It seems to me that all the organisations have the same objectives and there are searches for alliances, building up processes at territorial level which are, more or less, similar. It seems to me that we are part of this sea of organisations that are looking for a fairer society; we are all fighting against inequality and looking for solutions around these problems. The truth is that we don't

believe that there is only one way to do it; we know that the solution is political and that's why we are fighting in the streets. What we are very clear about is that if they don't solve a problem for us, it is because they solve it for another sector, so we need them to solve it for our sector, for the small producers sector. Because it is not that nothing is happening in the other spaces – they are providing an enormous number of solutions; in fact, there is a food matrix that is being discussed, because they are solving the problems of extractivism. That is the tension that we have to resolve and that makes us increasingly protagonists of our own solutions.

But let's Say, Don't you have an Ideological Difference or a Higher Political Objective, an Alternative to the System, Compared with other Movements? Compared with the Great Majority of Social Movements that have a Close Relationship with Peronism, of Different Kinds, you Seem much More Independent, but at the Same Time you don't have a Revolutionary or Alternative Vision of Society Either, or am I wrong?

No, you're right. That's why I say we have the limits of the economic struggle, the trade union struggle, the struggle for demands. Of course, we dream of a popular sovereign future, with an agrarian reform carried out by the workers. But no, so far, we haven't put this in tension, which doesn't mean that at another time we won't, but for the moment our organisation has a trade union approach with a horizon in the agrarian reform. It is a very political proposal to think that the means of production should be in the hands of workers – it is very political. It is not only about modifying living conditions, but we also want to carry out the productive processes ourselves, in this case food production. If that is not revolutionary, to put it in more theoretical terms, the means of production in the hands of those who work has an enormous political perspective.

Yes, Absolutely. But there is a Dimension in Relation to Everyday Economics that is Very much Tied to the Need to Resolve Everyday Issues.

Yes, that's why I was saying that we are essentially a trade union organisation that fights for economic demands. We want our own land to produce the food that is lacking on poor people's tables.

Do you Recognise Yourself in any Other Historical Organisation in Argentina or in the World?

I think we all have an identification with the struggles of MST in Brazil. However, the peasant struggles in our country have been enormous as well. We

take examples from these struggles all the time, we try to recognise ourselves in those experiences; obviously each space and time has its own form, but we are learning from that too.

Do you Collaborate with Universities on More Technical Matters or in Terms of Training in the Broader Sense?

Yes, yes, we always collaborate. This is more direct with INTA [National Institute for Agricultural Technology] or with the Ministry of Agriculture. But we are also in contact with universities for both the social and technological aspects of what we do. On the issue of organic production and the agricultural colonies, we built relations with the state's public policy institutions that operate at territorial level. This is also important.

Well, as a Final Question I Wanted to Ask you if you can identify Some Achievements and some Big Challenges by Looking Back at the Journey you have Made. Where do you see the Biggest Achievement and the Biggest Challenge?

In historical terms, we are a young organisation, we are just over ten years old. It seems to me that the experience we have accumulated is enormous in relation to our own journey. We understood that it is possible, that what we have done so far has been to convince ourselves that everything we thought we could do, we can actually do it – by struggling in the streets, by political independence. The challenge now is to scale up what we do, to give it scale, to give it massiveness. We have already learned, the commercial channels already exist, the production processes exist. We have been able to resolve the logistics, the administrative scaffolding – all this is working.

The next stage is to greatly expand all that we are doing, and the proposals will be enriched and improved. I understand that the collective dream is to defeat hunger and inequality, that access to food is a right and that this right should be exercised. Eating is not the same as not eating; eating badly is not the same as eating well. This transforms people's lives. By having access to land and machinery and setting up equal distribution, workers can become the owners of their own future. This is what we are struggling for. It is not going to be easy: powerful interests are going to block us. There are bad guys and good guys; we believe that we are part of the good guys, we build from that place and I hope that the political class that governs us will stop holding out the phone to the bad guys so that we can solve the problems for the good guys and find concrete and real solutions, not just expressions of desire – which are great, but if things don't happen then they are just a dead letter on paper.

AUTHOR QUERIES

AUTHOR PLEASE ANSWER ALL QUERIES

AQ1— Please provide the Abstract for the article.