Green Gold in the Land of Plenty

The Chilean Avocado and its Socioecological Encounters

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Preface

First, a big “abrazo” [hug] to Sonrisa and Miguel and their lovely family for sharing their home with me. Thank you to everyone involved as an informant in this research – without you, this project wouldn’t have been possible to achieve. I am forever grateful that I could learn so much from such a diverse group of people – you made this project meaningful. Hopefully, I will see many of you again soon.

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Abstract

In this study, I ethnographically investigate production zones of avocados (green gold) in semi-arid Central Chile generating socioecological dissatisfactions associated with water scarcities, the loss of biodiversity, and social dispossession. I examine the meanings of these claims through the perspectives of a varied arrange of activists, local farmers, residents, industrial producers, intermediaries, agronomists, and consumers. Through these relational variations of the topical representation, I discovered that water scarcities and biodiversity loss produce socioecological discontents associated with contradictory discourses regarding the cultural meanings of human and non-human welfare. Moreover, cultural meanings of human and non-human welfare affected by the lack of water link themselves to meanings regarding global warming, political involvement, and the existential dimension of dignity. By utilizing the theoretical power of agribiopolitics, hyperobjects, and temporality, I argue that the production of avocados actively contributes to the production of temporal disjunctions by highlighting the cultural contestations of freshwater resources.

Key terms: Avocado, water, agribiopolitics, hyperobjects, el estallido social, temporal disjunction, neoliberalism, extractivism, monocrops, human & non-human welfare, the Green Revolution, modernity, zones of sacrifice, dignity, megadrought, global warming

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Introduction - The Chilean Avocado and its socioecological encounters

Part 1 – The World of Avocados

Why the avocado?

"…what could be less "anthropological" than the historical examination of a food that graces every modern table?" (Mintz, 1986, p. xxv)

My Norwegian grandfather frequently talked about the idea that my millennial consumer "Norwegian" generation sat on a "green branch". He and his brothers repeatedly complained that many young people did not know the sources of the food "we" eat. "The green branch" was his way of saying that the luxuries I would be able to thrive from – or even pervasively take advantage of – were not a phenomenon to take for granted within the illusory comforts of "modernity". For example, he often reminded me that he and his brothers were lucky if they got to eat an orange during Christmas when he was my age. His intuitive insights were premised upon the realization that social welfare states such as Norway were materialized – concerning exotic food - in agricultural frontiers far removed from the comforts of the supermarket[1].

Norwegian supermarkets during the 90s and early 2000s did not provide a year-round supply of a varied array of exotic fruit – such as the Hass avocado[2] - my grandfather told me. This changed dramatically as I grew up, evident through the growing popularity of avocados. The rise of avocados in Norwegian supermarket thus showcase how: (1) less and less of our food is grown following seasonal variation, and (2) we are so detached from the life-cycle of food that many of us do not know where it comes from, (3) many of the food-products numerous mass-consumers now view as a necessity were unknown to them in the past, and (4) powers outside of our control more or less decide what we can eat since "they" actualize the consumption of "it" by the token of their concentrated politico-economic power[3].

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[1] "Supermarket chains…sell more than three-quarters of food eaten in most of Europe and North America." (Pratt, 2007, p. 286)

[2] Example from media in the US about the growing popularity of Hass avocados, accessed 02.01.21: https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/wonk/wp/2015/01/22/the-sudden-rise-of-the-avocado-americas-new-favorite-fruit/

[3] "While individual customers choose freely what they eat, they must do so in terms of what the food service offers" (Mintz, 1996, p. 119)

Anthropologically speaking, "food may be no more than a sign of yet larger, more fundamental processes" (Mintz, 1986, p. 213) of diets that are remade at population levels because the food-productive archetypes of societies have escaped normative human control (Counihan & Siniscalchi, 2014; MacRae, 2016; Nonini, 2013; Pratt & Luetchford, 2015). In other words, food that is bought from supermarket shelves is a surface phenomenon (the tip of the iceberg), concealing forms of agencies lurking and acting independently underneath (the rest of the iceberg) (Mintz, 1986; Pratt, 2007; Pratt & Luetchford, 2015). Food production has to a large degree, been handed over to technical experts (such as bankers, retailers, wall-street financiers, politicians, along with others.) to organize "human intent" (Mintz, 1986, p. 213) within the realm of food and drink - what Eric Wolf calls *structural power* (in Mintz, 1996, p. 29), and what Mintz (1996) labels *outside meaning*[4].

In 2017 Chilean avocado producers exported almost 177.000 tons of Hass avocados worth around 500 million USD (ODEPA, 2018). Nonetheless, on Chile's soils, about 35 varieties of avocados exist, where the Hass avocado[5] represents a staggering 90 percent of the total planted area (ODEPA, 2018). The popularity of Hass avocados has grown exponentially – globally speaking - during the last 30 years (Serrano & Brooks, 2019). Following this insight, Hass avocado orchards grow by 4 % every year globally (ODEPA, 2018). In Chile, though, the rate of avocado production has scaled down. Why? Chapter two and three shows that it is primarily because of water scarcities (ODEPA, 2018). The future production of avocados in Chile faces a monumental task regarding its hydrological potential to feed a growing "avocado-tooth" vibrating throughout the global and domestic consumer class.

The avocado is now cherished by eager consumers worldwide, everywhere from the US, China, India, South Korea, the Netherlands, Sweden, Norway, Great Britain, and so on (Serrano & Brooks, 2019). The same fruit is produced within geographies such as Mexico, Perú,

[4] "…power aligns the institutional frameworks that set the terms by which people get food, maintain or change their eating habits, and either perpetuate their eating arrangements and the associated meanings, or build new systems, with new meanings, into those arrangements" (Mintz, 1996, p. 29)

[5] According to my "campesino" [farmer] and agronomist informants the Hass avocado variety grows rapidly, gives relatively quick and abundant yields two times a year, it aligns perfectly with consumers' idealization of fruit size, it is well suited to cross-continental shipping because of its rugged skin, and it demands "minimal" amounts of pesticides.

Colombia, South Africa, Kenya, Indonesia, and Tanzania, to name a few (Serrano & Brooks, 2019). It suffices to state that the avocado operates within a whole swath of global and local processes bound together through the global food system (ODEPA, 2018). The *Hass avocado*[6] has become tremendously popular, posing in everything from McDonald's commercials to eager consumers posturing the avocado's esthetical charm on Instagram (Serrano & Brooks, 2019).

Expanding Consumption

"The long-term lessons of our economic and agricultural policies are there to be learned now. But we have to be willing to learn them" (Mintz, 1996, p. 124)

During my fieldwork in 2021, FAO (2020) [The Food and Agriculture Organization of The United Nations] initiated its official fruit and vegetable year, presenting spectators with the challenges and hopes of making fruits and vegetables available for as many people as possible- a minimum of 400 grams every day as part of a daily diet per person (FAO, 2020). They state that it is widely accepted that our "food systems" cause human and ecological suffering on a global scale (FAO, 2020). For example, FAO (2020) explains that the current supply chains and "food systemic" behaviors are not delivering healthy diets to people, leading to malnutrition, ecological devastation, social dispossession, and general food wasting. They also point out that a growing population and higher rates of urbanization shrink available fertile land and access to clean water (FAO, 2020). Global warming is also one of the main challenges to agriculture because it can lead to fatal food shortages around the globe through intensified droughts and flooding (FAO, 2020). A lot of food movements share the same "sentiments" (Pratt, 2007; Pratt & Luetchford, 2015)

Based upon these generic notions, this is a politically infused ethnographic narrative about the Age of Monocrops (Hetherington, 2020b) situated in the Anthropocene (Haraway, 2015; Irvine, 2020) as expressed in this case study of modern-day Central Chile analyzed through a fixed commodity: namely, the *avocado*. I intend to direct the reader from seemingly disconnected and faraway topics into the industrial fires of doom and destruction and the fresh, lifegiving, soothing spectacles of industrial potential. This narrative is a naïve

[6]Hass avocados in media, accessed 01.05.22: https://www.smithsonianmag.com/science-nature/holy-guacamole-how-hass-avocado-conquered-world-180964250/

anthropology student's attempt to contribute to an anthropology of food and agriculture within a global context of overheating (Eriksen, 2016).

Agricultural industry balances on a double-edged sword between the undeniable betterments of calory inputs and social convenience versus the eco-social destruction it underpins (Hetherington, 2020b). Because of this dual reason, this is a highly politicized thesis since the avocado highlights these tensions in unexpected ways. I am, to a large degree – more than *I care to admit,* in my day-to-day life, born and bred as a "…consumer of mass-produced food rather than the controller and cook of it" (Mintz, 1986, p. 211). As Mintz (1986) points out in Sweetness and Power - historically speaking, between the 1500s to the present - one can understand the global north as a consuming place. In contrast, the global south, the geography of earlier colonies, has come to be understood as a producing force (Mintz, 1986). Like sugar, export-oriented avocado producers would not have invested such a monumental organizational task – in the form of land, capital, labor, marketing, and so forth (Polanyi, 1962) – if there weren't a sizeable cash-rich consumer base to feed and sell it to (Mintz, 1986, 1996). The avocado only recently, during the last 20 to 30 years, has been "demanded" by the international middle-class (Serrano & Brooks, 2019). What constitutes the demand for avocados as something worth tasting and integrating into day-to-day life represents an interesting moment in the history of modern societies (Mintz, 1986, 1996).

The production and consumption of avocados made available through export are separated by space and time, where both sides of the equation are linked by a complex international structural pattern of politico-economic social relationships or a stratified structure of intermediary professional workers (everything from bankers, restaurants, retailers, agronomists, engineers, truck drivers, packagers, supermarket employers, fast-food chains, and so on) (Hetherington, 2020b). This is not a story and analysis that positions itself with "the primitives", the "socially dispossessed", "ethnic minorities", or any other "exoticized" social actor or group methodologically speaking (Nader, 2011, 2019). Instead, this is a story of "modern lives" (Mintz, 1996). Almost all the retrieved data comes from "middle-class" samples and above, marking a bound positionality of the fieldworker (Salverda & Abbink, 2012; Sherry, 2010; Souleles, 2018). Many voices are silenced through my methodological 'black boxes' (Czarniawska, 2012), such as Haitian and female tempereros [seasonal workers] that do the "dirty work" in contexts such as plantations and packaging facilities.

Embarking from these notions, I am hugely inspired by Mintz's (1986, p. 213) notion that "anthropologists for too long have paradoxically denied the way that the world has changed and continues changing…as well as our…responsibility…to contribute to a broad understanding of the changes" regarding food. In other words: this little multi-sited and "mini-Mintz" historical ethnographic piece highlights real problems partly conjured forth by a deeply stratified and connected chain of monocropping activities & supermarket consumption (Hetherington, 2020b; Nonini, 2013; Pratt & Luetchford, 2015). "Anthropology today deals with a world in which, more and more, people do not consume what they produce and do not produce what they consume" (Mintz, 1996, p. 10). Hence, "modern man" is the fieldworker's primary methodological agency and marked methodological positionality, directing this research like a water current.

Ethnographic Landmarks

"…how much more carbon we decide to emit, which is not a question for the natural sciences but the human ones" (Wallace-Wells, 2019, p. 43)

"Zonas de sacrificio" [zones of sacrifice] refers to an eco-social habitat that has been negatively affected after the introduction of industrial activity within a zone or a region (for example, a monocropping field of avocados). In this thesis, zones of sacrifice have been created after the introduction of monocultures of avocados. I.e., available water resources are conducted into the monocultures of avocados at the expense of other non-humans and humans. These zones are intertwined with *neoliberalism* and *extractivism* & the conjunction between the terms: *neoliberal extractivism*. Both terms represent a basic idea and a locally experienced intra-cultural meaning of Latin America being a region in which raw material – and riches in general – have been extracted from places such as Chile since the dawn of Spanish colonization passing into the contemporary world (Galeano, Belfrage, Allende, & Galeano, 1997). In other words, neoliberal extractivism refers to a colonial legacy passed down to the present characterized by the exportation of raw material, such as food, that manifests itself in the present through the global institutionalization of neoliberalism in the 1980s (Galeano et al., 1997; Hetherington, 2020b).

Modernity in this text follows the logic elaborated upon by Mignolo (2005): namely, that modernity can be conceptualized as a *colonial legacy* that places western countries at the final

step of social evolution – a stage a country such as Chile strives to reach. In other words, *modernity* is another word for *coloniality*, referring to the underlying ethnocentric cultural narration of Latin America (Mignolo, 2005). Modernity can also be conceptualized as the historical destiny of occidental culture that has become superimposed upon places such as Chile, following a linear model of social reality (Ingold, 2007) – or evolutionist timelines (Ferguson, 2006). The Green Revolution is an example of this linear-oriented perceptive logic (Hetherington, 2020b).

Agribiopolitics refers to a social scientific theory attempting to grasp a dichotomy between human and non-human welfare secured through either state or market practices that historically and contemporary speaking are underpinned by forms of violence (Hetherington, 2020b). *Hyperobject, or hyperobjects*, is an analytical way of categorizing and generalizing highly complex entities or phenomena such as global warming, the state, the market, and large-scale structures (Morton, 2013). These entities are closely tied to the production of avocados and the structural mechanisms fueling the avocados with "agency". "Hyperobjects are real whether or not someone is thinking of them" (Morton, 2013, p. 2). *The food system* is an example of a "hyperobject" that generalizes specialized transnational arrangements of trade agreements, food monopolies, and legal frameworks food operates within crystallized through the Green Revolution (Hetherington, 2020b; Morton, 2013). Temporal disjunctions refer to "the abstraction of human life from ecological and geological rhythms within which life occurs" (Irvine, 2020, p. 4).

Avocados have been, during recent times, attributed the status of *"oro verde" [green gold]* because of their perceived and concrete high monetary value, making the fruit an attractive crop to export or sell in the domestic market[7]. *"Rateros" [avocado robbers]*[8] and *"palteros" [avocado producers]*[9] are extensions of the concept of green gold, in that the high-end monetary value of avocados attracts social actors seeking to capitalize from the production of the fruit either legally or illegally. *Monocrops*, such as a field of Hass avocados, refer to one plant planted on a large area of land – representative expressions of capitalist (or industrial) agriculture

[7] Example from media, accessed 21.04.21: https://www.nytimes.com/2018/03/27/magazine/the-fruit-of-global-trade-in-one-fruit-the-avocado.html
[8] Ratero comes from the word "rata" [rat] and "ratear" [to filch]
[9] Palteros include everything from small, medium, to large scale avocado producers

(Hetherington, 2020b). *Water* is the vital essence concerning avocado production in this text and the eco-social dynamics (and effects) it underpins (Anand, 2017; Ballestero, 2019; Barnes, 2013; Budds, 2013). Finally, *"el estallido social" [social uprising]* is an element that the reader will notice that refers to a historical rupture, or a democratic reform, so to speak, in Chilean history that has large-scale national implications[10] (Márquez, 2020). When people at a population level question their cultural experience, and since my informants constantly referred to it, I feel ethically obliged to engage myself with them (Sluka & Robben, 2012).

Part 2 - Positionality, Agribiopolitics & Hyperobjects

COVID-19

"The reality of doing and writing ethnography has always been more complicated than simply assuming and even arguing the interrelatedness of cultural elements" (Nader, 2012, p. 211)

The pandemic meant that I had to make constant ethical considerations so as not to indirectly kill anyone by being a vassal of contamination (Sluka & Robben, 2012). Santiago went into a general lockdown between - I arrived in May – June, and July 2021 because the hospitals faced collapse. Additionally, I had to wait until the end of June to get vaccinated in Chile. Once vaccinated, I got my vaccine passport to travel more freely towards the final months of fieldwork. As such, much of the initial time I spent in Chile was dominated by the process of getting to grips with constant sanitary changes, tweaks, and re-designs of the local, regional, and national conclave of COVID-19 rules, procedures, and news about curfew.

On another level, a large part of the Chilean population since 'el estallido social' -a societal element I will get back to in chapter two- in 2019, together with the pandemic, meant that "everyone" had lived almost 500 days with curfews and sanitary measures. So, in general, I arrived within a context in which people barely had left their homes for two years. In late July, I met up with a woman in her early twenties, an educated geographer living in Santiago I'll call Isabel, working for an NGO – "Agua Vecinos" [water neighbors]. Agua Vecinos provides water for the local populace in Lamona, and Isabel immediately pointed out that it was strange to meet me in person since I was one of her first in-person encounters in such a long time.

[10] Example from media, accessed 03.05.22:
https://www.nytimes.com/es/2019/10/23/espanol/opinion/protestas-chile.html

Many of my pre-perceived plans had to be scrambled, as I learned that many avocado plantations only let essential personnel enter these places because of COVID measures. By the time I could access these plantations, it was too late since I had to return home from fieldwork. An intermediary professional named Arturo, whom I encountered through a snowball effect in September, working with certifications in an export firm, explained that many export companies had to dump large amounts of avocados since they could not enter markets such as China because of COVID-19 sanitary travel restrictions. Some of the quotas of avocados they needed to pick – and avocados are picked mainly by migrant & female hands, not by machines – became impossible to realize operationally because of a Chinese "covid blockade". It suffices to state that the pandemic severely limited the possibility of doing multi-sited ethnography (Marcus, 1995).

Base of Operations

"Matías, turn off the water. You waste too much of it" – Paula.

I lived together with Miguel and Sonrisa (a married couple both in their 60s) in addition to Rana (their daughter, in her late thirties), Patricia (Rana's daughter and Miguel's and Sonrisa's granddaughter), a dog named Homey, and the household's "nana" [housemaid] Paula (in her fifties) during my fieldwork. Miguel and Sonrisa have two other children working within the family company, both autonomous individuals since they live outside of the household. Their hospitality and helpful integration of the foreign fieldworker into the cultural fabric of high-end Chilean society were of indispensable help to me.

Sonrisa and Miguel met for the first time through their student network during the "road to socialism"[11] at the university – when the universities were free to attend - in Santiago. Miguel and Sonrisa were pioneers of their time since they became partly independent individuals selling fried fries outside their university. Later, they opened one of the first – according to Miguel, "*the first*" – bohemian-retro-styled bars in one of the wealthy neighborhoods in Santiago. Through sacrifice and hard work, as they put it, they got the business running that later gave fruition in the form of six newly opened bars.

[11] The road to Socialism in Chile is personified through former presidents Frei and Allende – presented in more detail in Chapter one.

They did not own any avocado plantations but ran a family business closely connected to the matters of food and drinks. One of Sonrisa's brothers runs a small avocado plantation in 'Palta Central' and one of Miguel's brothers works as an agronomist with intimate knowledge of agriculture and avocados. Both have networks, mainly situated in middle-class circles and above. Sonrisa's sister – Palamona - owned a good chunk of shares in a fruit-exporting firm – which I will call Fruit for Life – inherited from her diseased US American husband. As mentioned earlier, my positionality as a fieldworker was marked in that I followed the chains and connections through the middle-class and above positions of Chilean society (Marcus, 1983, 1995).

An Ethical Consideration

"…when yields drop and productivity fails, societies can falter, and when droughts and heat waves hit, the shocks can be felt even more deeply, electrifying political fault lines and producing or exposing others no one knew to worry over" (Wallace-Wells, 2019, p. 127)

Before carrying on with this story, I want to point out that every informant has been anonymized. NGOs, social movements, and even geographical places (except Santiago) are also anonymized and replaced with pseudonyms. People familiar with the events that are transpiring in Central Chile related to the object of study might recognize some places and social actors directly or indirectly involved in the process. My ethical decision rests upon the multiple political tensions that underpin the object of study – some extreme in the form of death threats (Sluka & Robben, 2012).

Moreover, many of the conversations with informants resulted in conversations infused with politically fueled meanings regarding the production of avocados. But also meanings regarding the state, the market, climate change, history, and the social uprising in 2019. I feel anonymization is a necessary ethical decision meant to keep my informants out of trouble (Sluka & Robben, 2012). Bear in mind that the characters within this text are intentionally presented in a chaotic manner, as they flow in and out of the sections, chapters, and overall textual structure. Many of them, though, are rooted in specific chapters.

Water is Life

"The familiar story of biopolitics remained largely blind to the way that northern welfare states were built in part on the violent extractive frontiers being opened in other parts of the world at the expense of other lifeforms" (Hetherington, 2020b, p. 14)

News about the ethics of avocado production and consumption spread through international media outlets in the global north, reporting about local water disputes in the local community of Lamona in Central Chile in 2017. Local activists in Lamona blamed big-firm avocado producers and the global middle class in northern hemispheres for water-grabbing. It was reported that rivers, streams, and groundwater had been depleted to produce export quantities of avocados in semi-arid Central Chile. Social movements and "campesinos" [farmers] blamed influential political figures for illegally tapping into groundwater in Lamona to support their monocrops. Lamona, at that time, became a national symbol of a sacrificial zone. For example, when I met up with Miguel and Sonrisa, the first object they mentioned when I presented my research purposes was: *water*. Indeed, practically everyone I met during fieldwork said the word *water* when they talked about avocados.

When the reported water scarcities held empirical ground, the Chilean government found itself trying to balance the welfare of the avocado-monocrops and the needs of rural citizens through the administration of water resources. The agribiopolitical dilemma (Hetherington, 2020b) was solved by providing the local population with a minimum of 50 to 200 liters of water per individual delivered by tankers covering essential household functions such as sanitation, dishwashing, and taking showers. Many small to medium-sized farms were consequently forced to abandon their homes because of the lack of water, according to my informants Sofía and Pablo. From this perspective, water is an invisible but essential force enabling the production of agricultural commodities (Arax, 2017; Taussig, 2010) – in this case, avocados. Other components such as labor, wealth, capital, land, consumers, producers, and large-scale global supply chains (state-market hybrids), understood from the 'perspectivism' (Viveiros De Castro, 1998) of water, ultimately depend on the surplus of this "scarce" resource (Arax, 2017). "Agua es vida" [water is life] was the message graffitied on walls in urban and rural areas.

Agribiopolitics & Hyperobjects

"…monocrops are emblematic landscapes of late capitalism, spaces of industrial killing that aim to simplify life into its most scalable, commodifiable forms…They are also failures of imagination, products of a seeming paralysis in the way we think with nature…" (Hetherington, 2020b, p. 15)

The Anthropocene personifies the age of human domination and the deliberate extermination of other lifeforms in the name of human welfare (Hetherington, 2020b). In other words, humans have unlocked the power to heavily shape our planet's geology, atmosphere, and molecular dimensions (Irvine, 2020) and kill living beings on an industrial scale (Hetherington, 2020b). As will be shown throughout this text, avocados grown in monocultures in Chile have become a symbol, and active process, of ecological and social destruction. The Chilean state, throughout the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, has been fixated on the modernization of agricultural production to secure human welfare (Bellisario, 2006; Bengoa Cabello, 2017; Bengoa, 2013; Robles-Ortiz, 2020; Robles, 2020), but also earlier within Chile's political history of settler-colonialism (Collier & Sater, 2004).

State violence manifests itself in many different shapes, and in Chile, the lack of water is one of these contemporary acts of violence (Bauer, 1998, 2004; Budds, 2013, 2020). Further to the south, a region rich in water, in the ancestral home of the Mapuche people, pine-tree and eucalyptus monocultures[12] have been planted in indigenous territory that still to this day is underscored by continual violence over territorial disputes, water issues, and ecological degradation (Giminiani, 2016). In Chile, the idea that "agua es vida" [water is life] has taken on a political meaning fitting our day and age, speaking directly against the industrialist ideals of monocropping practices.

This is a story about the local people, the local vegetation, the local soil, the avocado trees, the water that is flowing through privately controlled hands of power, and "ordinary" citizens standing up to the injustices of "neoliberal extractivism"(Galeano et al., 1997; Márquez, 2020). And to a more considerable degree, it is a global story of rage against the incoming climate catastrophe personified through the consequential practice of monocultures (Hetherington, 2020b; Irvine, 2020). Whole ecosystems are bulldozed and burned to satisfy our mass-consuming and mass-producing globalized social world (Hetherington, 2020b). Crops – such

[12] These non-indigenous biological agents cover around 2,5 million hectares (González, et al., 2018)

as the avocado – are "largely [an] invisible part of modern life in many other countries" (Hetherington, 2020b, p. 6).

Regulatory politics are being designed in the urban center of Santiago in Chile, far removed from the frontiers of modern food and resource extraction. Many activists from social movements, NGO personnel, professionals such as agronomists, and domestic consumers I talked to openly told the narrative of a global food exporting architecture that drains the water from the local population leading to general eco-social devastation in the name of national economic and political development[13]. Monocrops of avocados can be visualized as "an extractive frontier for wealth accumulated elsewhere" (Hetherington, 2020b, p. 6). The production of avocados showcases how consumers and producers are separated by time and space, and little is known between them (Taussig, 2010). What makes the "drainage of water" and time-space separations between consumers and producers gloomily engaging are the scales of avocado plantations attempting to meet the scales of global market-created needs. Human welfare, following this logic, is obtained through monocrops and the killing of anything else that is not considered an asset to human welfare (Hetherington, 2020b). But who's welfare am I talking about?

This story does not provide stable answers; it defies my ability to place the object of study within a singular framework because the avocado is distributed through streams of global and local scales and asymmetries of domestic and geopolitical power relations (Hetherington, 2020b). In other words, monocultures of avocados represent a case that stands both outside and inside of our human control since the object of study is uneven – geographically speaking - experienced for a Norwegian taco-lover picking avocados from a supermarket paradise and for a "poor" subsistence campesino [farmer] in Central-Chile (Hetherington, 2020b; Morton, 2013). This geographic tension is reflected through my informants' notions that quality avocados are exported outside of Chile, leading to low-level quality of avocados in the domestic market and importation from other avocado-producing countries.

Therefore, the object of study in this text is treated as a hyperobject (Morton, 2013). Meaning, as stated in the former paragraph, the avocado is an object that is difficult to know because it

[13] The Chilean Ministry of Agriculture also makes it explicit that water scarcities are challenging the country's agricultural potential (ODEPA, 2019)

is present and acts in a multiplicity of shapes and forms outside and inside of human control (Hetherington, 2020b; Morton, 2013). The state and the market are also treated as hyperobjects since these entities materialize the movement of avocados across borders at discursive and practical levels (Abrams, 1988; Hetherington, 2020b). Governments are supposed to protect people and other life forms from violence and provide political stability through economic growth – yet these assurances are also responsible for biological extermination and industrial killing practices casting a shadow upon the same abstract systems (Hetherington, 2020b).

I mention the state, the market, and the climate because they are everyday objects articulated by various informants when they talked about the monocropping of avocados and how this practice unleashes violence upon people and ecosystems. Therefore, the projected solution to agricultural mass-killing is to govern industry through a robust regulatory state apparatus. "The premise is based on the idea that the state is the only apparatus able to effectively know and intervene on behalf of the common good in a world beset by complexity and uncertainty" (Hetherington, 2020b, p. 8). Hence, "the government" is an hyperobject in the same way that the "earth" or the climate is an hyperobject, "…things are themselves, but we can't point to them directly" (Morton, 2013, p. 12) - and the objects are always relational in non-human or human terms.

In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, European governments intervened in people's lives to secure health and reproduction by promoting specific characteristics and suppressing unfavorable features (Hetherington, 2020b). Such as keeping sick people separated from healthy ones. According to Hetherington (2020b), the logic of social welfare also applied itself to regulating plant life within agriculture, where preferred racial characteristics – such as the Hass avocado – are nurtured at the expense of other lifeforms. The Green Revolution became institutionalized and implemented within two "separated" realms (World Health Organization versus Food and Agriculture Organization), meaning that human and non-human welfare were kept separate analytically and ontologically speaking (Hetherington, 2020b). A growing number of people in the global north needed higher yields of food to secure human welfare or to prevent hungry citizens from revolting against their political leaders by establishing "welfare states in the north while offering agricultural development schemes to states in the south" (Hetherington, 2020b, p. 172). The health of non-humans and humans within agriculture is thus premised upon the governing of life (Hetherington, 2020b).

Food (and water) are historically the most frequently used instruments of population control (Mintz, 1986), and monocrops, represented through the Green Revolution, made a "promise" of defeating hunger and poverty on a global scale (Hetherington, 2020b). The Green Revolution represented "the world's most ambitious public health project" (Hetherington, 2020b, p. 170). With the rise of dietary movements and health clinics, life was put at the center of political calculus in which governmental regulatory interventions permeated human populations (Hetherington, 2020a). In this regard, the idea and practice of social welfare grew out of the political will to organize human life and death and separate unfavorable characteristics from favorable ones (Hetherington, 2020b).

The need to govern plant life rose out of the need to modernization agriculture organized around monocrops to feed people around the world (Hetherington, 2020b). By disciplining biological life, certain organisms became promoted over other life forms, and many lifeforms thriving in monocultures needed to be eradicated with pesticides (Hetherington, 2020b). The monocultures designed to increase human welfare are thus linked to the extermination of undesirable biological agents and ecological annihilation through deforestation, water-grabbing, water contamination by dumping fertilizer remnants into water supplies, and other industrial by-effects (Hetherington, 2020b). Agribiopolitics combine the welfare of human and non-human life instead of keeping them separate since both domains are inherently two parts of the same coin. In other words, agribiopolitics is an analytical instrument "thinking the social and biological together" (Hetherington, 2020b, p. 182).

Monocrops – in general – are fragile creations because they are easily "attacked" by fungi, disease, and invading insects (Hetherington, 2020b). Consequently, sanitary agricultural agencies take care of the crops that humans crave and kill other living assemblages on an industrial scale deemed suboptimal (Hetherington, 2020b). The Green Revolution, as mentioned above, is a striking example of how this "biopolitical" logic got implemented and expanded into agricultural frontiers around distinct geographies *promising to feed the world's population through the homogenization of biological diversity* (Hetherington, 2020b). New agricultural frontiers – internationally prudent from the 1960s (Hetherington, 2020b) - were operationalized through a new wave of 'colonization', structural adjustment programs, and agricultural development schemes to make room for singular plants conquering large areas (Hetherington, 2020b). Latin American countries during the age of development in the

twentieth century – such as Chile – were encouraged by western powers to bet on agricultural production to produce social welfare states by exporting agrarian commodities (Hetherington, 2020b).

Drawing upon the thematic relationships presented in the former paragraphs, I take inspiration from Hetherington's (2020b) work on soybeans in Paraguay. I analyze the monocropping of avocados in Chile through the theoretical lens of "agribiopolitics" (Hetherington, 2020b). As Hetherington (2020b, p. 15) explains, "…the role of theory for the social sciences is to provide a coherent language to describe complex phenomena and in so doing transcend the phenomena themselves". It became clear to me during my fieldwork that my varied arrange of informants talked about the meaning of avocado monocropping in a way that did not provide stable answers. For example, through the variational representations of informants, the avocado became entangled around historical and contemporary meanings of the state, the market, global warming, neoliberalism, extractivism, water issues, and socio-ecological welfare issues. Because of the relational variation to the topical representation (Olika, 2019), the object of study remains an "Anthropocenic conspiracy" (Hetherington, 2020b, p. 80). In other words, the enormity of concepts such as "global warming" made it difficult to keep "ethnographic track".

Hence, we are dealing with a hyperobject taking this story into a creative ethnographic engagement with a specific expression (avocado production in semi-arid central Chile) and the process of globalization & climate change. Or, as Irvine (2020, p. 73) puts it, writing about the temporality of land: "The exertion of our sovereignty over the systems of which we are a part is a form of hubris that sets humans against the environment as their enemy, driving self-destructive feedback loops". The lack of water, and global warming experienced as a megadrought (González, Gómez-González, Lara, Garreaud, & Díaz-Hormazábal, 2018) in Central Chile, are examples of these feedback loops: hyperobjects doing their own thing even if "we" do not think about them in day-to-day life (Morton, 2013). For example, a Norwegian family buying Chilean Hass avocados to eat "Friday tacos", one can justifiably suspect, does not explicitly think about eco-social conflicts in Central Chile, yet the eco-social disputes (in

addition to megadrought[14] and global warming) happen independently of their perceptions (Morton, 2013). In the same way that a tree can fall independently of my perception.

[14] The fire-season during 2016-2017 burned approximately 600,000 hectares of vegetation in Chile. The local vegetation in Central Chile (and south Chile) has been steadily replaced with agricultural monocrops and commercial tree plantations – highly flammable biological materials (González et al., 2018)

Chapter One – Pedro de Valdivia's Agricultural Vision

"History is the fruit of power" (Trouillot, 2015, p. xxii)

"Do you know what? Outsiders
rob us of all that was ours
but have nothing but praise
for the apples we gave them.
Plant them as soon as you grow:
you will never regret it"

A verse from Gabriela Mistral's Manzanos [Apples] (Burns & Ortiz-Carboneres, 2006, p. 156)

There are many ways of engaging oneself ethnographically in the field. I engaged with informants' "lives on the ground", but I also immersed myself with archives, books, articles, texts, newspapers, cable news, social media, and graffiti written on walls in rural and urban areas. Informants such as Javiera, Alba, Martín, Arturo, and others frequently sent me things to read, listen to, and so on - information they felt was important that I engaged myself with. Furthermore, informants cited poems, political slogans, and historical interpretations related to the importance of agriculture in Chile – and life in general. In other words, avocado production in Central Chile is not an isolated event but a continuum of spatio-temporal processes bound to the past, present, and future (Uribe, 2017).

In Trouillot's (2015) *Silencing the Past,* he explained how the present is entangled with the past. But he also showcased how historical events that eventually become historical facts can produce a multiplicity of cultural meanings leaving behind deep-felt cultural fingerprints passing into the cultural fabric of people living in the contemporary world (Trouillot, 2015). That is not to say that social actors are trapped by their past. Many of these narratives "are made of silences" (Trouillot, 2015, p. 152), which is also true of the story I am about to tell. In this chapter, I will zoom into the *birth of the Chilean nation-state* and its intended *agricultural goal* personified through Pedro de Valdivia (2020). Moreover, the reader will be navigated through a generalized historical summary to provide context and connect the present with the past, to engage with *the European conquest of Chile* and the agricultural importance this conquest manifested.

As Miguel frequently told me – himself with Italian roots; "los raízes no se pierden se oculten" [roots don't disappear they hide]. Since the arrival of the Spaniards, agriculture has played a crucial role in Chile's political and economic outlook, and the avocado is a contemporary expression of the past manifesting itself in the present. In other words, the actual hunt for gold and monetary riches sought after by Spanish conquistadors personifies a meaning that has persisted into the present in the form of extracting natural resources, such as food, destined for export to generate monetary wealth (Polanyi, 1962). In today's Chilean economy, "agricultural exports now make up the second largest commodity after copper" (Winn, 2004, p. 78), secured through non-indigenous commodities like the avocado[15]. Furthermore, "environmental degradation kept pace with economic growth" (Winn, 2004, p. 55). I intend to show how this meaning of agricultural potential personified through Pedro de Valdivia's (2020) "vision" is reflected through the production of avocados in contemporary Chile.

I was recurrently told there is no better land to grow avocados during fieldwork. "When traveling abroad, the thing that one misses is the tastes of a Chilean-produced avocado, a marraqueta [bread], and a layer of thick butter that melts in one's mouth", Francesca, a childhood friend of Sonrisa, told me enthusiastically. "A todo el mundo le encanta la palta - es un elemento básico en la cultura chilena" [All the world loves the avocado - it is a basic element of the Chilean culture] Francesca elaborated. She continued stating that: "Requiere más para la fruta crecer aquí, por eso la palta chilena tiene el mejor sabor del mundo" [it requires more from the fruit to grow here, because of that the Chilean avocado has the best taste in the world]. Even if the "founder" of Chile, Pedro de Valdivia (2020), did not mention the presence of avocados in Chile, he also spoke warmly about the agricultural potential of this ecologically and culturally diverse territory.

Nuevo Toledo, the Empty Land of Plenty (1536-1550)

"Europe becomes the center of "what happened". Whatever else may have happened to other peoples in that process is already reduced to a natural fact: they were discovered…" (Trouillot, 2015, p. 114)

Through the letters written and sent by Pedro de Valdivia (2020) – the Spanish conqueror that materialized the European colonization in Chile - to the Spanish emperor Charles V we get a

[15] The *fruit* industry in Chile covers around 340,000 hectares with a permanent workforce of 73,000 and 383,000 seasonal workers (ODEPA, 2019)

glimpse into the earliest ethnocentric ideas that later came to mean something about "Chilean sovereignty" (Valdivia, 2020). After America was "discovered," Pedro de Valdivia (2020) served Francisco Pizarro in Perú – a newly established 'general captaincy' (administration region) of the Spanish Empire (Vernon, 1946). In gold-rich Perú, Pedro de Valdivia (2020) and his fellow conquistadors claimed ownership over the territories they made their way into through the political acts of pacification of the local populace & settler-colonialism (Valdivia, 2020). The Spaniards partly achieved this by utilizing the *encomienda*: centralized legislation designed by the Spanish imperial crown giving colonizers the authority to expropriate land, resources, labor, and convert natives into Catholicism (Góngora, 1951, 1970). In Chile, provincial governors – Pedro de Valdivia (2020), the first of this kind in Chile – ruled the colonies on behalf of the Spanish emperor in Spain (Vernon, 1946).

The territory of Chile was "unexplored" in 1535 and considered a "wasteland" without any riches to extract from the Spaniards' point of view (Vernon, 1946). In contrast to the wealthy Inca empire, the land of Chile was rumored to be populated by "backward" social groups (Vernon, 1946). In the Spanish imagination, Chile first became known as Nuevo Toledo (the southern part of the Inca empire). Diego de Almagro made his way into Chilean territory in 1536, and to his disappointment, no gold or precious metal, empire, cities to sack, and so on was to be stumbled upon in Nuevo Toledo (Feliú Cruz, Mellafe, & Villalobos Rivera, 1954; Vernon, 1946). Almagro ultimately abandoned his colonizing plans in modern-day Chile and returned to Perú (Vernon, 1946).

After Diego de Almagro lost a civil war against the "Pizarro brothers" – where Pedro de Valdivia (2020) sided with the Pizarros – Pedro de Valdivia (2020) was gifted a silver mine that helped him finance his colonizing quest into modern Central Chile (Vernon, 1946). Venturing forth from Cuzco in 1540, following the Inca Road, Pedro de Valdivia (2020) had to deal with the memorial consequences of the past actions of Almagro when he inevitably met local people paying tribute to the Incas before he finally came to the river of Aconcagua and later the Mapocho river situated in Central Chile (Vernon, 1946). The story of his road from Cuzco to Nuevo Toledo is brutal and epic in and of itself, as his little company of Imperial representatives moved their way through the perils of the harsh Atacama climate (Vernon, 1946).

The Incas, and other groups, in Perú probably spread the news of "El Dorado" and "Chili" [meaning 'better than something' in the Quichua language] (Vernon, 1946, p. 31), hoping for the Spaniard explorers to move out of their central territories in search of gold. With Pedro de Valdivia (2020), Nuevo Toledo (Chile) came to mean something else than the search for monetary wealth reflected through a character such as Almagro (Vernon, 1946). The wealth of Nuevo Toledo, in part, lay in its soils, rivers, forests, and natural resources. Pedro de Valdivia (2020) proclaimed in his letters to Emperor Charles V that it was a pleasant and healthy land, with endless amounts of timber, pastures & fields, *water*, and spaces to settle in. Pedro de Valdivia (2020) stated that no better land existed to settle in. As such, *a vision of agricultural potential* was born from the colonizing quest of Pedro de Valdivia (2020).

The Incas were also colonizers, industrialists, and farmers doing their imperial civilizing mission. Unlike conquistadors such as Almagro, the Incas, following the depiction of Garcilaso de la Vega (Vega & Barcia Carballido y Zuñiga, 1722), did not commit indiscriminate murders and subjected their newly assimilated groups to *the encomienda*. Instead, the Incas provided local cultural units with military protection, technologies, infrastructure, knowledge, seeds and crops, and other imperial comforts if the locals paid tribute to the Inca central authority. One group refused to be a part of the Imperial power of the Incas and took up arms against the invaders, namely what Europeans, through the Spaniards, have come to know as *"Los Araucanos"*.

"Los Araucanos" legendary resistance against two arriving empires, became the stuff of legend reflected in epic poems and national symbols. As such, the new agricultural frontier of the Spanish empire, perhaps, faced the most formidable indigenous resistance force encountered in "the new world" that has taken on new contemporary meanings on its own. These meanings are experienced not only through the cultural imagination of distinct people living in modern Chile but also through the state's (statesmen) "own" utilization of meaning in the construction of national identity – criollismo (Latcham, Montenegro, & Vega, 1956) [literature of national pride] - and the production of deep-felt cultural narratives.

Planting the European Seeds of Settler-Colonization

"…the welfare of one population is constructed at the expense of another…all the actors are enmeshed in longstanding struggles to control not only resources but the offices charged with redistribution…" (Hetherington, 2020b, p. 17)

Pedro de Valdivia (2020), together with the colonizers, brought with him food, seeds, and livestock that people from "his" cultural background enjoyed the tastes of. The Spaniards cherished everything from chickens, horses, wheat, grapes, and other commodities (Vernon, 1946). Pedro de Valdivia (2020) stated that in the name of his majesty and God almighty, he would feed New Spain & Perú from the land, the soil, *the water*, and the overall delightful ecological place he had "discovered". In other words, Pedro de Valdivia (2020) envisioned that the colonizers could feed the Spanish empire through export by producing food on the soils of Chile. Pedro de Valdivia's (2020) arrival became the first ethnocentric conceptual and practical birth of what many now experience as modern-day agricultural Chile.

It is reported when Pedro de Valdivia's (2020) companions reached the valley of Santiago, that the area was covered entirely in a lush-green plain screening the landscape's fertility, the plenty of trees, and the Mapocho river's *abundance of flowing water* that could be utilized in irrigated agriculture. Later, through a not-to-be-mentioned series of events, the Spaniards started to put "Los Mapochinos" [the local populace residing next to the river Mapocho] to work the mine that 'Los Mapochinos' themselves used to extract gold from paying tribute to the Incas (Vernon, 1946). The Spaniards in Chile made use of indigenous labor by implementing the *encomienda*, civilizing the natives through tribute, work, and religious conversions (Góngora, 1951, 1970).

The seeds of colonization were planted, and Chile's Spanish conquest started to spin into creation. Pedro de Valdivia's (2020) vision became culturally personified through the dream of creating Chile in an image resembling a modern nation-state where the colonizers applied life, agriculture, and urban centers in the new geographically isolated Spanish frontier (Vernon, 1946). The exotic landscape Pedro de Valdivia (2020) encountered in Chile greatly affected him and other Spaniard peers, often making romantic remarks regarding the local vegetation. The Spaniards' colonizing quest started to apply life by seizing property through the processes of exploration, pacification, and conquest.

Manifesting the Imagined

"What the word "colony" flags more than anything…is this movement, this project of expansion and propagation that necessarily came at the expense of other lives and life projects" (Hetherington, 2020b, p. 185)

The Spaniards faced a legendary military resistance provided by 'Los Araucanos'. Every nation-state creates its unique kind of myth based upon certain historical protagonists and the natural context to which the people are bound. Still, more importantly, the narration of these cultural meanings brings national myths to life (Trouillot, 2015). The epic 22.000 verse poem written by Ercilla (1840) was the first classic piece of literature coming from America in poetic form and Chile's first ethnocentric narration of Chilean "history". Ercilla (1840) served as a Spaniard soldier in the heroic war against "los Araucanos". In the poem, he tries to make sense of the Spaniards' unbeatable foe against a historical background, roughly speaking, in which Europeans attempted to classify the "Indians" (and the "others" encountered in other colonies) as animals or humans (Lévi-Strauss, 1963).

The legendary resistance produced an image in which Chile was kind of like a double-frontier: a backwater in the Spanish Empire isolated from the world at the same time as the Spanish colonizers & "Los Araucanos" chronically fought (Uribe, 2017). In a more profound sense, Ercilla (1840) tried to articulate a poetic justification for the horrors that the colonizing Spaniards inflicted upon the local population of Chile in the name of "righteous conquest". "Los Araucanos" became glorified because of their noble and courageous defense of their homeland, autonomy, sovereignty, and honor (Ercilla y Zúñiga, 1840). At the same time, Ercilla (1840) classified "Los Araucanos" as barbarians since they did not submit to the Imperial authority of the Spanish crown. This author named "Los Araucanos" into the ethnocentric imagination. The poem has had a long-lasting cultural effect passing into the contemporary cultural imagination of Chileans channeled through pieces of literature and statemen in general (Collier & Sater, 2004). "Once discovered by Europeans, the Other finally enters the human world" (Trouillot, 2015, p. 114).

The Mapuche's courage and fight for sovereignty marked the "origin of the Chilean national myth," leading to a celebration of the conjunction of two warrior races: "el mestizo", which connects itself to larger debates regarding the rise of nationalism in Latin American countries

(Anderson, 2016; Mignolo, 2005). Cultural notions regarding imagined communities (Anderson, 2016) have been echoed through romantic poems of Nobel Prize-winning poets and lyrical artists such as Pablo Neruda (1990). In any case, by naming "the others" Ercilla (1840) gave them an existence (Trouillot, 2015). "Los Araucanos" were introduced into European ethnocentrism, meaning *the European worldview was superimposed upon Chile's projected future* (Trouillot, 2015).

Chile's natural wonders - reflected through the literature of Gabriela Mistral (Burns & Ortiz-Carboneres, 2006) –isolate Chile from the rest of the world. Argentina is on the other side of la cordillera [the Andes], and in the middle – which is the focus of this thesis and where Pedro de Valdivia's (2020) colonizers laid the foundation of Santiago – we are faced with a Mediterranean biome sprawling with endemic vegetation only encountered in these parts of the world. Many living assemblages located in Central Chile today have to a large degree, been replaced by agricultural products meant for export (Winn, 2004) – such as avocado plantations – something that will be explored in more depth in chapter two.

As Ercilla (1840) showcased, Pedro de Valdivia's (2020) vision of establishing an agricultural powerhouse in Chile meant that the native population needed to be mollified through pacification and conquest. The vision came at the expense of other life projects – such as Chile's indigenous populations (Neruda, 1990). The Spanish started a manifestation of the imagined, i.e., extracting silver and natural resources by administrating their newly "discovered" territory (Anderson, 2016; Uribe, 2017). Pedro de Valdivia (2020) – and the colonial administrators that came to power after him – laid the institutional groundwork for "the formation of great estates ruled by a land-owning elite and worked by a semi-servile rural population" (Collier & Sater, 2004, p. 7).

These great estates are generally known as *haciendas* and *fundos* [meaning large real estate's] in post-colonial Chile (Balmaceda, 1875). Haciendas thus represent colonial institutions established by the encomienda that were "reproduced" in post-colonial Chile after the criollos - personified through the liberator of Chile, Bernardo O'Higgins (Amunátegui Aldunate, 1914) – declared independence in 1818 after driving the *peninsular* out of power (Correa Vergara, 1938). The formation and institutional solidification of the *hacienda* in Chile, thus, comes from the Spanish that had the habit of "meter su naríz adentro" [stick their noses into] others' affairs,

as “el patrón” [the boss] (more from him in chapter two) repeatedly told me during our evening conversations next to the warmth of the hearth.

Postcolonial Frameworks (1818 – 1925)

“Conditioned by history and society, the human eye assumes its perceptions to be real. It cannot, without great effort, contemplate its perception as a movement of thought that ratifies the signs through which history expresses itself” (Taussig, 2010, p. 10)

Mintz (1996) wrote that war is one of the most obvious explanations for dramatic structural changes in dietary patterns. Mintz (1996) elaborates that Coca-Cola became a symbol for many second world war “American” soldiers and families fighting for the freedom to drink the soda as they fought to defeat the Nazis. As such, Coca-Cola could buy up soda factories, facilities, land, and water in many parts around the globe, “shadowing” the US war machine. War, like settler-colonization, is a powerful *outside meaning* that imposes itself upon the lived world (Mintz, 1986, 1996; Uribe, 2017)

In Chile, as demonstrated through the vision of Pedro de Valdivia (2020), agricultural history is closely integrated into the process of settler-colonialism, implying a “liminality” in which “barbarism” meets “civilization”, and “civilization” meets “nature” (Uribe, 2017). Europeans brought alien species to Chile, transforming much of the vegetative flora of the country into contemporary commodities such as grapes, livestock, pine & eucalyptus trees, *avocados*, walnuts, and wheat (Winn, 2004). For example, French landowners planted French vines during the 1850s, and Italian bees were introduced in the 1840s (Collier & Sater, 2004). Commodities acted as gateways to other non-indigenous commodities (Hetherington, 2020b). Thus, one of the core agribiopolitical characteristics of Chile during its post-colonial history is that “specific crops are always linked to specific languages, nationalities, and ethnic identities” (Hetherington, 2020b, p. 28), as shown by Pedro de Valdivia’s (2020) applicability of life.

During the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, in post-colonial Chile, the political order of the day, roughly speaking, was rooted in authoritarian political leadership (Collier & Sater, 2004). The political order was underpinned by a great gulf between the country's wealthy aristocratic financial, political, and religious elite that dominated a landless, rural, and poor “mestizo” class (Collier & Sater, 2004; Mellafe Rojas, 1981). The Mapuche people, for example, still enjoyed autonomy until the final act of pacification unleashed by the Chilean government in

1883, leading to a new settler-colonialist wave (Collier & Sater, 2004; Robles-Ortiz, 2020). Many Germans and "mestizos" were "gifted" land by the Chilean state in the south, materializing this process (Collier & Sater, 2004; Correa Vergara, 1938).

The expansion of agriculture, and the propagation of mining industries, generated even more *social inequalities* throughout the century (Bellisario, 2006; Bengoa, 2013; Robles-Ortiz, 2020). The *Hacienda* system, as shown, was the general agricultural and political order of the colonial and post-colonial periods (Collier & Sater, 2004). The post-colonial constitutions that were produced after Chile's independence in 1818 (the "first" of its kind) "legally" protected the ruling class's economic interests – personified through Bernardo O'Higgins' supreme leadership status (Amunátegui Aldunate, 1914; Collier & Sater, 2004; Correa Vergara, 1938). Chile's political stability, in general, was characterized by a relatively strong social cohesion among its elites – ruling through "the weight of the night" as Diego Portales put it (Collier & Sater, 2004).

The weight of the night was a constitutional framework – the constitution of 1818 was reworked in 1833 - designed to protect the assets (in the form of land and titles) and politico-economic interests of elite members, such as the Hacienda landowners, facing "chaos" after independence (Collier & Sater, 2004). The 1833 constitution centralized political decision-making, and upper-class families commanded powers within a "closed" sphere of political influence (Collier & Sater, 2004). In other words, the constitution of 1833 – even though it limited presidential powers - valued order over liberal ideals (Collier & Sater, 2004). These constitutions have been changed and tweaked many times throughout history (Collier & Sater, 2004). This historical conduit is repeating itself in contemporary times, as shown later.

It was not until the liberal era (1879-1930), roughly put, that Pedro de Valdivia's (2020) dream of feeding regions outside of Chile started to materialize. Geopolitical factors – such as the Californian gold rush – and domestic infrastructure improvements (for example, establishing banks, roads, and railroads) encouraged the latifundistas to intensify and widen agricultural wheat production destined for export (Bellisario, 2006; Collier & Sater, 2004). Times of relative isolation from the rest of the world started to loosen up thanks to innovations in seafaring technologies (such as steam-driven sea vessels), better roads, and other types of infrastructure. The Liberal ethos of the Chilean ruling class during the early twentieth century started to put

Pedro Valdivia's (2020) vision into serious practice by integrating Chile into the global economy by exporting raw materials (such as nitrate and wheat) (Collier & Sater, 2004; Winn, 2004).

Liberal state-men in the early and late twentieth century desired to reach the status of a developed country by modernizing Chile's industrial potential - some pointing to England as an example to follow (Collier & Sater, 2004). During this epoch of national progress, the Chilean state welcomed foreign migrants to modernize the country through settler-colonization, reproducing the colonial application of life (Collier & Sater, 2004; Correa Vergara, 1938). In other words, European settlers came to bring civilization to the Chilean frontiers (Robles-Ortiz, 2020; Uribe, 2017). Englishmen and Germans, for example, contributed enormously to the construction of railroads, banks, and other forms of infrastructure (Collier & Sater, 2004).

Canal systems and irrigation systems were developed to expand agricultural production through the channeling of water. For example, an Englishman named Joshua Waddington, in the 1840s, built 120 kilometers of canals in the Aconcagua valley located in Central Chile - the colonial heartland (Collier & Sater, 2004). Fundamentally, the growth of the national economy depended upon the extraction and exportation of natural resources, such as wheat, copper, and nitrate (Collier & Sater, 2004). Now, let me direct the reader toward a historical example of environmental degradation caused by industrial activity – a model that resonates into the present with avocado production.

Early Ecological Extermination

"The contrast between forest and monocrop…are legacies of a man who believed simultaneously in the cathedral of nature and in nationalist agricultural development" (Hetherington, 2020b, p. 217)

Claudio Gay (1862) was a French naturalist hired and contracted by the Chilean government in 1830 to study the natural history of Chile, in addition to its industries, administration centers, and commercial underpinnings (Gay, 1862). In other words, Gay (1862) came to Chile not long after the country gained independence after the Spanish royalists were defeated and the constitution of 1833 was created (Collier & Sater, 2004). He traveled to many places to gather information (Gay, 1862). Essential for this thesis, he traveled throughout Central Chile,

documenting nature and society, many of the same places I visited during my fieldwork (Gay, 1862).

Claudio Gay (1862) produced numerous volumes regarding history, biology, and two books on agriculture. *He made no explicit mention of avocados* (Gay, 1862) in Central Chile, which is extremely interesting to contemplate considering the abundance of avocados spread across contemporary production areas. Avocados are highly cherished culturally speaking in modern Chile, so one would intuitively expect them to appear in older records regarding agriculture and food culture. "La palta Chilena" [the Chilean avocado], for example, is an avocado variety growing in everything from urban to rural locations - something Clara Han (2012) also observed in her monograph in the streets of Santiago. "El patrón" [the boss] and the agronomist brother of Miguel, claimed that this variety was only Chilean in name, and nobody knew its origins.

In one of the reports delivered to the newly formed Republic of Chile, we get a glimpse into *the ecological destruction of ancient forests* in the woodlands of Coquimbo, located a little bit further to the north of the contemporary monocropping fields of avocados (Gay, 1862). Gay (1862) describes the demolition of the area's forests caused by copper mining. In this period, Chile was the largest exporter of copper globally, making the country rich compared to its days of poverty when the country was a poor province of the Spanish Empire (Collier & Sater, 2004). *Natural beauty,* then, highlighted by Gabriela Mistral (Burns & Ortiz-Carboneres, 2006), went hand in hand with ecological destruction caused by industrial activities (Gay, 1862).

Charles Darwin (Darwin, King, & Fitzroy, 1839) – during the 1830s – also observed deforestation during his travels in Central Chile. After finishing off the forests, without enough wood, ore needed to be outsourced to Great Britain to be converted into metal. The processes of deforestation led to the Chilean government establishing environmental regulations (Collier & Sater, 2004). The extermination of these forests sped up the process of desertification Gay (1862) observed. Claudio Gay (1862) explained that "man" and government laws were responsible for the impending demolition of forests. Claudio Gay (1862) elaborated upon the ecological consequences of the destruction of forests, pointing out how everything in the area became warmer and drier, and precipitation became scarcer, leading to many of the rivers drying up (Gay, (1862). The social pressure of water management burdened the rivers and the

overall ecological processes within the region - a *temporal disjunction,* as Irvine (2020) puts it. In the name of national progress, the temporal rhythms of industrial humans interfered aggressively with the temporalities of the landscape (Irvine, 2020).

Gay's (1862) observations on the earlier forms of ecological destruction in the newly established Republic of Chile is an example of an early agribiopolitical project: in which the welfare of humans through industrial activity was realized through the diminishment of non-human welfare. Gay (1862) observed the destruction of forests resulting from extracting ore and converting it into metal by creating energy through the burning of wood. Hence, his observations showcase how human welfare is connected to non-human welfare and vice versa (Hetherington, 2020b)—indicating that industrial developments in the name of progress are underpinned by ecological degradations that, in the end, affect humans through "non-human" feedback loops (Hetherington, 2020b; Irvine, 2020).

The Chilean Miracle

"…economic science…viewed as the structuring principle for life itself, the market became the primary mode of governance…the social became a terrain in which economic rational actors made choices in their own self-interest" (Han, 2012, p. 7)

Almost a hundred years after Claudio Gay (1862) visited the colonial heartland of Chile, in 1925, the Chilean constitution was changed again (Collier & Sater, 2004). It was changed within a context of political turmoil – not long after the civil war in 1891 (Collier & Sater, 2004) - in which social movements and the growing Chilean middle class demanded political reforms to counteract the oligarchic elite that had dominated Chile throughout the colonial and post-colonial period (Collier & Sater, 2004). I mention this constitution because it paved the way for the Chilean welfare state that reached its peak when Allende came to power in 1970. Sonrisa and Miguel, for example, often reminded me and "the younger generation" (born after the dictatorship) - talking about politics in their home - that they grew up in a social welfare state. After the country stabilized itself economically after the great depression in the 1930s, it was renowned for being a stable democracy in Latin America – a region troubled by dictatorships, political instability, and general poverty (Collier & Sater, 2004). Political turmoil would return when the Chilean state started dismantling the traditional hacienda system (Collier & Sater, 2004).

The "neoliberal" enactment personified through Pinochet, historically speaking, unleashed a new era of prosperity in the form of consumer gadgets and non-deniable betterments such as thriving industries, privileged access to the global marketplace, and a domestic market resembling a European state (Winn, 2004). Joa, the boyfriend of Isabel, a sociologist, frequently told me how many "Argentineans" envied Chileans for their massive shopping malls and "la cultura de consumismo" [culture of consumerism][16]. Neoliberalism indicates a contemporary ideological principle based upon a reenactment of liberal values and principles that "failed" during the Great Depression (Collier & Sater, 2004; Winn, 2004). Pedro de Valdivia's (2020) agricultural vision would be more than realized during the "road to socialism" (1963-1973), "dictatorship rule" (1973-1990), and "the Chilean Miracle" (1990-present) (Collier & Sater, 2004; Winn, 2004). These historical temporalities paved the way for an agricultural export machinery, dwarfing the vision of Pedro de Valdivia (2020).

Pinochet and his interlocutors did not act within a political vacuum. Former presidents Frei (1964-1970) & Allende (1970-1973) strongly tilted the national political framework toward a socialist direction to modernize the state's role – the road toward socialism (Collier & Sater, 2004). Historically significant export sectors that were already enjoying traditional political influence, such as Chile's agricultural hacienda sector, were modernized through a political shock therapy (Collier & Sater, 2004). Frei was the one that started this therapy. Allende's government completed the Agrarian Reform in 1973 initiated by his predecessor – Frei – by expropriating approximately 4,400 land estates over 80 hectares, transforming them into "peasant cooperatives" (Collier & Sater, 2004; Winn, 2004). In other words, Frei and Allende personify another form of political shock therapy in which the hacendados, so to speak, needed to give up many of their real estates (Collier & Sater, 2004; Winn, 2004). Within this national and "cold-war" context, many landowners saw their properties confiscated legally by the state or occupied unlawfully by 'revolutionaries' (Collier & Sater, 2004; Winn, 2004). The hacienda system's old colonial and post-colonial power structure was replaced by nationalized capitalism (Collier & Sater, 2004; Winn, 2004).

The road toward socialism ended in violence and bloodshed within a social climate of commodity shortages and hyperinflation (Winn, 2004). By "Pinochean" standards, the socialist

[16] "In this view, consumer goods bring the poor into modernity" (Han, 2012, p. 64)

political state project was a Marxist menace that needed to be eradicated (Collier & Sater, 2004; Winn, 2004). Yet, the military rule and the socialists shared the desire to dismantle the old latifundista agricultural regimes, which the Socialists completed (Collier & Sater, 2004). In turn, this national modernization of agriculture transpired in parallel with the global "public health" project of the Green Revolution (Hetherington, 2020b). The socialist project shortly crumbled when the military regime initiated its crimes against humanity through torture, assassinations, and exile (Winn, 2004). Through these acts of malevolence in Chile, led by Pinochet, Pedro de Valdivia's (2020) vision would come to fruition: non-indigenous commodities extracted from farms and forests were to be exported to other places underpinned by state terror against the working class (Winn, 2004).

"El Milagro Chileno" [the Chilean Miracle] reached its classificatory significance after the principles of the "market", not the "state", became the regulator of the Chilean economy (Winn, 2004). Allende's Chile became a geopolitical & ideologically infused playground between the ideas of which type of hyperobject could biopolitically bring prosperity and increase the levels of human welfare (Winn, 2004). Pinochet's rise to power transformed a heavily socialist state into an extreme capitalist state[17] (Winn, 2004). This meant that social welfare issues secured by the state became replaced by free-market capitalism at the expense of public institutions: i.e., neoliberalism (Han, 2012; Winn, 2004).

Chicago Boys[18] economics - reflected through the visits made by Milton Friedman in Chile declaring the country as economically backward (Cárcamo-Huechante, 2006) - resulted in a cultural system in which, practically speaking, the whole financial market and almost every major institution became deregulated: everything from health, education, social security, pensions, agriculture, and so on - leading to a "totalized" privatization of the national culture (Collier & Sater, 2004; Han, 2012; Winn, 2004). Within this structural background, exports expanded heavily, meaning that non-traditional (or non-indigenous) commodities in the form of fruit and forestry, such as the avocado, became actors in an export-driven economic framework (Bellisario, 2006; Bengoa, 2013; Kay, 2016). This also attracted many foreign

[17] Many Chileans, such as Miguel, feel this transition was necessary to save the country from communism.

[18] "…in a democracy we could not have done one fifth off what we did" (Chicago Boys statement in Winn, 2004, p. 28)

investors establishing a foothold within Chile's agricultural industry – Palamona's US-American husband serving as an example.

Environmental destruction, as shown by Gay (1862), followed a parallel trajectory of state-ushered violence against Chilean workers (indigenous and non-indigenous) inhabiting many of the newly formed zones of production (Winn, 2004). Informants I spent time with, such as Amauri, Isabel, Sofía, Pablo, and others that the reader will notice as this story progresses, termed these zones as "zonas de sacrificio" [zones of sacrifice]. These zones represent the living and non-living assemblages that get exterminated or severely damaged in the name of human welfare. Ironically both humans and non-humans ultimately bear the weight of sacrifice (Hetherington, 2020b; Robles-Ortiz, 2020).

In a more contemporary context, Clara Han (2012) demonstrates how the neoliberal hegemony installed by Chicago Boys civilians reproduced social inequalities even though Chile later transitioned into a prospering democracy (Collier & Sater, 2004; Winn, 2004). Elements contributing to the maintenance of social inequalities resulted, in part, from irregular work patterns (seasonal work and part-time contracts to name two), credit-consumer indebtedness, military forces providing political stability, and a libertarian ethos in which political institutions refrained themselves from holding market forces responsible for their actions (Collier & Sater, 2004; Han, 2012; Winn, 2004). Objective economic mechanisms and market relations were meant to solve human and non-human welfare issues, following the economic philosophy of the neoliberal Chicago Boys (Giminiani, 2016; Han, 2012). The new hyperobject, the neoliberal market, became the new cultural reality in agriculture after the colonial & post-colonial hacienda system was effectively removed (Bellisario, 2006; Collier & Sater, 2004; Robles, 2020; Winn, 2004).

In 1980, the military junta drafted a new constitution – getting rid of the 1925 constitution - effectively reintroducing Diego Portales' weight of the night (Collier & Sater, 2004). According to many of my informants, such as Isabel, Pinochet's constitution is considered illegitimate because it protects the interests of "oligarchs" and foreign investors. This *neoliberal constitution* – Isabel told me - gave agricultural investors the framework to operate within and operationalize the agricultural export machinery one encounters in Chile today. During the 1980s, the production of Hass avocados in Chile started its massive growth. The exportation

of Hass avocados in Chile, thus, represents a *contemporary expression of the past manifesting itself in the present.* Pedro de Valdivia's (2020) hunt for gold and monetary riches personifies a meaning that has persisted into the present. Agriculture, in other words, has, since the arrival of the Spanish conquistadors, played a crucial role in Chile's political and economic development. And as shown by Ercilla (1840), Gay (1862), and Pedro de Valdivia (2020), this meaning is, to a large degree, premised upon *violence* and *ecological degradation* (Winn, 2004).

Greetings Avocado

"Right now, the earth is full of refugees, human and not, without refuge" (Haraway, 2015, p. 160)

It is unknown when avocados became introduced as an agricultural crop in Chile. It is safe to assume, though, that it existed in the country at least during the end of "La Guerra del Pacífico" [the war of the Pacific] (1879-1884), when Chilean military forces beat the combined armed forces of Perú and Bolivia, in the end annexing territories rich with copper, saltpeter, and lithium in the process (Collier & Sater, 2004; Sater, 2007). Just as easily, Spanish clerics or other colonizers could have brought avocado varieties to Chile as early as the 17th and 18th centuries, yet no document exists to tell the story.

After the successful dismantling of the colonial and post-colonial latifundista agriculture, the avocado industry in Chile experienced a productive boom – from 8,000 hectares in 1989, peaking with about 35,000 hectares in 2007 before declining to 30,000 hectares in 2017, with 90 percent of the total production area planted with Hass avocados (ODEPA, 2018). The Hass avocado was introduced by a man named Don Roger Magdahl (agronomist) in 1944, "el patrón" explained to me during one of our evening conversations. He owned a "fundo" [large real estate] in "Palta Central," situated in the colonial "heartland" of modern Central Chile – Magdahl brought it from California. Now let me direct the reader from the power of history to contemporary life.

Chapter Two – Life Heritage

"On Friday, October 18, 2019, the cities in Chile "burned". The streets were filled with rubble. Hundreds of people crowded into the streets banging pots and metal spoons, which saturated the nightscape like war drums. We still hear them today…Chile has awoken…The headless sculptures, the generals fallen from their horses…leave the ethnographer and the citizen dazzled…bodies of sculptures that we believed had been sacredly patrimonialized…" (Márquez, 2020, p. 667)

Newly elected president Boric was a strong activist during the student protests in 2011 (Larrabure & Torchia, 2015; Márquez, 2020). Old Allende chants, "El pueblo unido, jamás será vencido" [the people united will never be defeated] - lyrics that would become internationally famous through the Inti-Illimani song "La Nueva Canción de Chile" [the new song of Chile] (Collier & Sater, 2004) - from the 1970s moved through the air during one of his speeches. Boric promised somewhat stylistically that neoliberal market policies would face their grave during his tenure, rhetoric reflected on graffitied walls around "Plaza de Dignidad" [Plaza of Dignity] (Márquez, 2020). In other words, old political struggles are still permeating the contemporary lives of many in Chile.

The governmental legacy that the new "activist" professionals have inherited is what my informants, such as Isabel and Joa, classify as the *neoliberal constitution*. Boric promised his voters that his cabinet would work to establish an *ecological constitution*. This "constitutional" dichotomy represents the historical normalcy, as Joa explained to me, of "sacar de la tierra" [extract from the earth] in the process of creating zones of sacrifice. Unresponsible industrial practices, such as the mining industry Gay (1862) observed in Coquimbo, were anything other than ecological. From Joa's and Isabel's perspective, the neoliberal constitution paved the way for "los alimentos bacanes y las frutas de alta calidad" [cool foods and high-quality fruits], such as the splendid avocado. This was, according to them, a national economic strategy meant to diversify the export machinery to create as much monetary value as possible through the extraction of these "cool fruits". But, as has been the case throughout Chilean history - as shown in a simplified manner in chapter one - gaining access to the international market through the colonial & post-colonial narrative of economic growth through export has its costs – both in human and non-human terms (Winn, 2004).

Carla's Testimony

"…new political horizons have emerged out of the struggles against the capitalist ontology for rights to housing, health, transportation, dignified pensions, and education -struggles for the right to a dignified life" (Márquez 2020, p. 671)

One day I went to the beach with Sonrisa, her daughter Olga, and many of Olga's friends. After hanging out with them – drinking pisco sours, taking walks on the beach with facemasks on, and diving into the freezing pacific waves – on the beach, a spirited discussion unfolded around the dinner table back in the apartment. Sonrisa was the only person in the room that had experienced life during the Allende nightmare, the vicious dictatorship of Pinochet, and the transition into democracy from an upper-class perspective. But Sonrisa sat there in silence, keeping her wisdom to herself. The others were younger upper-class citizens that had marched in the streets in October 2019. Consequently, this sparked an emotional debate regarding the meaning of "el estallido social" [the social uprising]. In a sense, the verbal spectacle surmounted a difference in perception between two individuals – that knew each other well – regarding social inequality generated by the neoliberal constitution.

Sonrisa, and her daughter Olga, were the only ones in the room that did not take to the streets during the uprising. Carla – a journalist in her thirties that worked for the government promoting Chile as a tourist destination – told us, speaking a bit aggressively towards the foreigner (me), that she took to the streets because the whole cultural fabric in Chile made it impossible for "lower classes" to climb in society. Chile was sort of a neoliberal "caste" system (Han, 2012). Carla could only thrive – economically and socially speaking – because she came from a family with money. Even if she did poorly in high school, she got a place within the best universities in Chile because her family could pay the astronomical fees. More vulnerable persons could have better grades than her, but without the money, it was impossible to develop socially in any meaningful way - for example, gaining access to quality education.

Olga – sharing a similar sociological background with Carla – disagreed. For Olga, the only measure of relative success lay in the ability for people to work relentlessly hard as she had done herself (working her way up through the ranks within the family company established by Miguel and Sonrisa). Carla frowned upon the comments and blurted out in frustration, "por favor no me diga una vez más que son flojos" [please don't tell one more time that they

are lazy], revealing that they had discussed the same topic during previous conversations. A smile appeared on Olga's face before she said, "en verdad son flojos no más" [in truth they are just lazy], referring to people that were stuck inside their sociological and psychological world of everyday neoliberal struggles (Han, 2012). Indeed, these are more usual than unusual comments to hear hanging out within Chilean upper-class social circles and – roughly speaking - hint at the overwhelming historical stigma between the rich and the poor (Han, 2012).

The awkwardness of Olga's comments sparked a backlash from Carla demanding front-stage attention from everyone around the table. She aggressively pointed to these comments' underlying "othering" and the lack of "class empathy". In Chile, the neoliberal architecture was a thing adopted from Pinochet's political project that led to the "inevitable" social uprising. Carla's way of providing support was to march into the streets in solidarity and demand dignity for every Chilean in the country (Han, 2012). Carla said that every Chilean citizen should have the right to have the same opportunities that her upper-class status allowed. That meant, for example, fair access to dignified health care, education, well-paying jobs, and pensions (to cope economically with the pandemic, Chileans withdrew money from pension funds during my fieldwork). By the token of these virtues, things needed to change – in one way or another. Carla then smiled – and called me "Matthew", knowing fully well that I was Norwegian – and laughed ironically about the fact that she made "Chilean propaganda" for tourists at the same time as she sat here speaking about the silenced tragedies of Chile to a foreigner.

Olga and Carla did discursive "combat" that evening. The discursive battleground is probably as old as the country's history (Collier & Sater, 2004; Winn, 2004). It is as real as it is imagined. On a deeper level, it represents a struggle as old as the modern history of Chile, reflected through the general history of the cohesion between the elites (Balmaceda, 1875; Collier & Sater, 2004; Winn, 2004) (the owners of land and resources) & the imagined homogeneity of the mestizo race (the workers and laborers working the land and extracting resources on the owners' behalf) (Anderson, 2016; Balmaceda, 1875; Bengoa, 2013).

El Estallido Social & 'Oro Verde'

"…the claim that inequality and violence resulted primarily from the corruption and incompetence of past governments, vices to be solved by institutional reform…" (Hetherington, 2020b, p. 9)

"El estallido social" [the social uprising] challenges the underlying logic of the neoliberal spirit. A state practice that directly deals with a new vision and meaning regarding the hyperobjects of agribiopolitics (Hetherington, 2020b; Márquez, 2020). Meaning: the social uprising was "inevitable" because the promises of "The Chilean Miracle" enhanced by neoliberal economics did not produce the intended human prosperity originally envisioned by politicians from both sides of the ideological spectrum (Han, 2012; Márquez, 2020). It is hard to "climb" the class structure in Chilean society because everything costs a lot of money, such as healthcare, education, and the general cost of living, as Carla put it. Ironically speaking, the avocado has become one of these expensive luxuries many now can't afford to buy. Some days many of these casual Chilean consumers appeared on national cable news shaking their heads in confusion over the high prices of avocados - the green gold[19]. Through my random walks in day-to-day life, I overheard people in the streets talking about how avocados had become food for the rich. Carla represented these sentiments even through her privilege since she had boycotted the purchase of avocados because they had become so expensive.

Former President Piñera (2018-2022) publicly declared "war" on television against his people after metro stations were destroyed, and people took to the streets in the millions drumming kitchen tools[20]. This did not only happen in the capital of Santiago but practically in every city in one form or the other, among upper-class and working-class citizens alike. General Iturriaga (head of the Chilean army) spoke after Piñera's war declaration communicating to the Chilean people that he was a 'happy man' and consequently wasn't at war with anybody. He stated that the Chilean army was filling Santiago's streets, securing supermarkets, pharmacies, and other social services, to ensure people's working-day lives and capitalist consumer activities[21].

[19] Accessed 14.01.22 https://www.biobiochile.cl/noticias/economia/tu-bolsillo/2021/01/06/hasta-6-mil-por-un-kilo-de-paltas-las-razones-que-tienen-a-este-producto-una-vez-mas-por-las-nubes.shtml

[20]Accessed 18.05.21 https://www.elmostrador.cl/noticias/multimedia/2020/12/01/estamos-en-guerra-pinera-explica-su-controversial-declaracion-durante-el-estallido-social-y-acusa-que-lo-malinterpretaron/

[21]Accessed 10.05.22 https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TiH0wzENnw8

This was an extraordinary historical event considering the country's history of state violence and political leaders ruling "through the weight of the night".

Sometimes the clash between ordinary citizens and the state became violent. In the end, ordinary citizens "won" after the fact that many had lost their eyes and *dignity* through rubber bullets fired by "los carabineros" [law enforcement] (Márquez, 2020). Plaza de Italia – unofficially yet discursively – changed its name to Plaza de *Dignidad* [plaza of *dignity*]. It was like all the voices of discontent – environmental, social, and cultural causes – condensed together, unleashing the masses' social wrath upon the neoliberal policies of the Chilean state (Márquez, 2020). A popular chant among protesters represents the brutality as such: "¡Piñera! ¡C***** su madre! ¡Asesino! ¡Igual que Pinochet!" [Piñera! Son of a b**** Murderer! Just like Pinochet].

Many politicians and public discourse makers (such as columnist writers) condemned the looting and destruction of property and the attacks on the police. Even if it's not fair or accurate to put Piñera in the same category as Pinochet, it reveals many commonly held feelings and meanings several Chileans attach to their social situation (Han, 2012; Márquez, 2020). And believe it or not, the avocado and monocultures are entwined within many of the voices demanding *dignity* over their social lives and the ecological spaces created in the image of neoliberal extractivism (Han, 2012; Márquez, 2020). Social movements also took to the streets waving their flags, demanding the human right to have access to water, condemning the vast monocropping fields of avocados - the green gold – and their thirst for clean freshwater.

La Isla de Fantasía

"…Chile has consolidated an international reputation of economic stability and fiscal responsibility, making it an attractive country for transnational capital and the possibility of future wealth creation…it has the second-highest level of income inequality – after Brazil – in Latin America. The wealthiest 10 percent of the population earns thirty-four times more than the poorest 10 percent. The three largest private fortunes in Chile are equivalent to 10 percent of the nations GDP" (Han, 2012, p. 11)

During the days of lockdown, I met Sara in her early twenties working as a psychologist in one of the wealthy municipalities in Santiago. Sara also involved herself with local politics in her municipality. Sara talked about the socio-economic problems in Chilean society and the extractivist practices that made the rich wealthier. Like so many of my informants, she had

taken to the streets during “el estallido social” to demand a total reconfiguration of the Chilean constitution - to end the social & ecological injustices experienced in Chile (Márquez, 2020).

So much injustice had taken place within Chile, Sara told me, and the ones responsible for the predation were the traditional politico-economic elite of the country. Avocados were just one problem among many others. The thing about avocados that made the whole societal context noxious was how avocados had usurped local rural populations of water. But agribiopolitical arrangements were also connected to other societal disparities such as the access to dignified health care, education in general, and large-scale poverty exemplified through shantytowns, or “campallas” [mushroom neighborhoods]. Sara, in other words, wanted to articulate to me the many problems attached to the great gulf between rich and poor in Chile (Han, 2012; Márquez, 2020).

Sara presented the “normative” existence of a typical Chilean citizen in much the same way as Clara Han (2012) depicts in her monograph. Neoliberalism, according to Sara, was a biopolitical (Hetherington, 2020a) order that obeyed market-citizen social relationships as opposed to state-citizen ones. As such, wealthy Chilean citizens lived in what she labeled “la isla de fantasia” [the island of fantasy] because they were utterly blinded by the suffering. For example, the lack of water caused by the monocropping of Hass avocados in the island of fantasy was silenced by the token of their mass-consumer lifestyles (Han, 2012). The welfare promised by the neoliberal constitution portrayed through the Chilean miracle had not reached people outside of ‘la isla de fantasia’ Sara told me. On the other hand, consumer capitalism has introduced a whole swath of gadgets that people enjoy, such as smartphones, televisions, cheap clothes, and ultra-processed food (Han, 2012). Yet, as Sara explained, no matter the abundance of consumer goods, neoliberally designed inequality was the normalcy people lived with. What was the point in owning a brand new Panasonic flat screen without quality education? Sara asked me rhetorically.

Amauri, in his twenties, with whom I traveled together within coastal Central Chile, who loved to spend time in nature doing trekking, cycling, and so on, shared much of Carla’s and Sara’s sentiments. “Chile es de los ricos” [Chile is of the rich], he stated one time we came to a golf course situated in coastal Central Chile bought up by wealthy citizens, taking away the groundwater from the local population in the process. For Amauri, it did not make sense to

him that a small group of people could take the water from the local populace to play golf, feeding into the meaning that "los grandes empresarios pueden hacer lo que quieren" [big business can do what they want]. The irony of this, Amauri explained, was that many residents ended up working for the entities that destroyed their livelihoods. This sentiment was what he felt to be the meaning behind "el estallido social" Amauri remarked, who himself marched in the streets during the spectacle: namely, powerful social actors, politically or economically powerful, can't keep on reproducing human welfare that reinforces social differences (Han, 2012) and ecological degradation (Winn, 2004).

"El estallido social" symbolizes a totalizing biopolitical project of societal change, in which the constitution rewritten by the military regime in 1980 is now actively changed by a democratically designated group of 155 "constituyentes" [writers of the constitution]. It is the first time in history that all 17 indigenous groups of Chile are included in the process, in addition to activists, professionals, politicians, and "normal citizens". The "mestizos", historically speaking, are, in other words, included in the political process. It's also the first constitution globally with a 50-50 representative percentage between women and men[22]. The hope among Chileans that marched into the streets, such as Carla and Amauri, is that a new juridical framework 'los constituyentes' produce will serve the general populace's interest, not solely the financial and political elite of Chile. In other words, Carla, Amauri, Sara, and others claim *dignity*.

All in all, 'el estallido social' ruptures a historical generality that saturates the country's colonial, post-colonial, and modern historical eras - personified through decapitated colonial statues (Márquez, 2020). In other words, 'el estallido social' brought about an active processual change of national structural arrangements meant to reverse ecological degradation and reconfigure the production of social differences through a rearrangement of the legal framework in which hyperobjects (Morton, 2013) – such as the state and the market – operate within (Márquez, 2020). On another level, the new constitution is also envisioned to decolonize Chileans' imagined homogeneity (Anderson, 2016) through the jurisdiction of a multicultural

[22] Accessed 11.05.22 https://www.dw.com/en/chile-chooses-indigenous-woman-as-president-of-new-constitutional-assembly/a-58157983

and plurinational state: the historical victims[23] of settler-colonialism and industrial adventures (Márquez, 2020; Winn, 2004).

As shown in chapter one, the agricultural importance of Chile is so deeply attached to the politics of economic growth (Bellisario, 2006; Bengoa, 2013; Budds, 2020; Robles-Ortiz, 2020), but also the livelihoods of small to medium scale "campesinos" [farmers] – generalized as the mestizos in chapter one. Meaning: the historical legacy of Pedro Valdivia's (2020) agricultural dream, passed down through distinct personifications of this dream (Frei, Allende, Pinochet, and others), meet the limits to which these agricultural practices can be sustained in the disjunction between "social" and "natural" temporalities (Irvine, 2020). Now, let us look at how the neoliberal constitution operates in local agricultural zones situated outside of the island of fantasy.

Temporal Rhythms

"…fetishism of commodities in capitalist societies, which result from the split between persons and the things that they produce and exchange. The result of this split is the subordination of men to things they produce, which appear to be independent and self-empowered" (Taussig, 2010, p. 37)

"El emporio es el parte final del negocio" [the shop is the business's endpoint], Alba said to me as she sat down facing her computer. She explained that all the shop's products come directly from a source she has a direct social relationship. It felt like time raced, even in the calm and pop-music-filled 'emporio' [shop]. Everything from tea herbs, honey, cheese, beans, papayas, *avocados*, nuts, beans, to name eight, were neatly displayed throughout the shop. The name of her business, which she had created along with her father – el patrón [the boss] - and their neighboring farm, bore the name "AmoPalta" [I love avocado]. We soon said goodbye to the staff worker – a Venezuelan woman in her late twenties, who, together with her husband, both took care of the shop when Alba was absent.

I noticed about 20 kilos of avocados, coming directly from her farm, nicely packaged in her pick-up truck. A client, owning a "health shop" selling gluten-free products and plant-based food, had bought an avocado quota from Alba that she was about to deliver. These avocados were of the Edranol variety, which gives yields during winter. With my notebook and pen

[23] "…despite their resistance and hard work they paid a disproportionate share of the costs and received fewer benefits" (Winn, 2004, p. 12)

ready to roll, the car started to move through the mindboggling labyrinth of the capital's extensive road network populated by an unsynchronized army of vehicles contributing to the production of the grey-looking smog. She read my observations and thoughtful glances, commenting on the banality of watching the number of cars and the environmental and human consequences felt by the smog's eerie presence – but she also remarked that "el taco" [traffic] was much worse in Buenos Aires.

She did not mind me asking questions, and the content of our dialogue spread far and wide. The traffic was painstakingly heavy, and it felt like an eternity just to reach the main motorway from the center of the city. Many people who live in Santiago, work in Santiago, and so on spend much of their lives inside their cars waiting patiently to come home after a day's work, Alba observed. Alba herself also spent a lot of time in her car, fetching supplies directly from established farmer relationships in Central and South Chile. Her motivations for using a vehicle were strongly tied to the notion of integrating distinct temporal rhythms into her business practice, which means, for example, that the temporality of her avocado trees depended on the multiple temporalities of water, the soil, and human care. Following this logic, she fetched commodities she did not produce on her farm from other farmers she shared the same values of human and non-human temporalities. Supermarket and hypermarket consumption, in contrast, represented the human temporality of a timeless present characterized by quick and limitless satisfaction (Irvine, 2020).

We delivered the quota of 20 kilos of Edranol-avocados to the gluten-free health shop I mentioned. This shop was not "particular" in Santiago by any stretch of the imagination and hinted at how consumers distinguish themselves from one another by consuming certain products in particular places (Roseberry, 1996). Anyway, Alba ran with the idea of operating within "closed economies", hugely inspired by the "Slow-Food Movement", where the basic idea is to function autonomously, economically, and politically without other social actors from the "food system" sticking their noses into their farming affairs (Pratt & Luetchford, 2015). The core philosophy in operating within a "closed economy" was to reclaim both the producers' and consumers' autonomy over their food, making the avocado flow as directly as possible from the soil to the plate (Pratt & Luetchford, 2015). "Calidad tiene que comenzar por casa" [quality needs to start from the house], she told me, referring to staying true to one's core values in business practices and life in general.

This meant that the processes of business took more time to be realized, something that was difficult to do in the way that society had been constructed to abide by "easy" and "quick" solutions (Pratt & Luetchford, 2015). If she wanted to sell honey, something she did not produce on her farm, Alba said her business philosophy obliged her to seek out the honey directly from a production source personally. Her philosophy resembles the construction of a "closed economy" (Pratt & Luetchford, 2015) where the movement of food – such as her avocados – coming from the farm, and her purchases of commodities she did not produce herself, like the honey, move through long-term cooperative networks situated in a local-regional economy of direct social relationships that share many of the core agricultural philosophies regarding farming and more-than-human temporalities (Haraway, 2015; Pratt & Luetchford, 2015).

The "open economy" (Pratt & Luetchford, 2015), in contrast, is characterized by industrial farming practices and mass-consuming places such as supermarkets being manifestations of how food had become monopolized, sucking out monetary value and autonomy of the farmer and the consumer (Pratt & Luetchford, 2015). "No creo en Robin Hood" [I don't believe in Robin Hood] Alba explained to clarify that she was not doing this business practice as an activist but as an individual trying to distribute her farm's fruit to consumers through her values and ethical conduct. She did not hide her wish to establish business ties in Europe to export quantities of her avocados to European market niches. From this perspective, Alba did not mind that open economies existed. Still, avocado production had gone out of hand, reflected through the pressing concern of water shortages in her home region.

The farm she grew up on has given herself and her family a *dignified* life, modest compared to the gigantic monocropping fields surrounding the farm. It was the lifegiving properties of the soil, the trees, the water, their labor, and organizational skills that fueled her values. The energy invested in time, labor, and care for Alba, became silenced through the "open economy" (Pratt & Luetchford, 2015). Avocado consumers in urban settings or the global north are far removed from where the agricultural magic takes place (Hetherington, 2020b; Taussig, 2010). The Chilean day-to-day life since the years of Pinochet, on the other hand, according to Alba, was designed around the notion of high-velocity speed concerning the social architecture of production and consumption. Since the dawn of neoliberalism, mass

consumption had become a form of cultural habitus (Fowler, 1997), or social naturalization, in Chile – reflected through all the malls and hypermarkets, Alba explained.

Eating ultra-processed food in the car on the road to work was an object representing this societal disparity since it reveals a certain kind of relationship to time and space, Alba told me. Or, as Mintz (1996, p. 202) puts it, "The experience of time in modern society is often one of an insoluble shortage, and this perception may be essential to the smooth functioning of an economic system based on the principle of ever-expanding consumption". Contemporary lifestyles, in other words, "are abstracted from the formation of the resources upon which they depend and the cumulative impacts of their extraction, use, and disposal" (Irvine, p. 173) underpinning the consumed commodities[24]. For Alba, the modern social experience of time did not account for the temporality of other non-humans – as reflected through the monocrops of avocados on the mountain slopes.

Prepared food, such as a ready meal of salad with avocado, symbolized a "time-saving" practice supported by an assembly of specialized modes of production (Taussig, 2010). As Alba explained, an avocado destined for export entails producing and certifying plastic items, design, having a workforce of fruit pickers and packagers, retailers, land, credit, *water*, containerships, trucks, drivers, marketing, plus other components. These contemporary objects are "time-saving" components enabled by the extraction of things stemming from geologic and biological temporalities (Irvine, 2020). Demonstrating that exported Hass avocados serve a multiplicity of distinct functions, both through space and time, that at first glance can seem like totally unrelated factors: "humans may have agency in carrying out engineering work, but physical environments have its own temporality, its own rhythms" (Irvine, 2020, p. 76). Non-human temporalities within an open economic framework are thus standing in a disjunction with human temporalities (Irvine, 2020) – as reflected in contrast between green-looking jungles of Hass avocados standing next to soils where cactuses grow.

Ironically speaking, we stopped next to a gasoline station next to the motorway just after the traffic jam started to loosen up. We found an available parking slot among the swarming vehicles – luckily, we had escaped the reach of Santiago's smog. As we planted our feet on top

[24] For example: "Driving cars and eating meat are highly valued acts; though both involve the expenditure of unimaginably large quantities of water, soil, cereals, and fossil fuel…only sudden shortages reveal, as if in lightning flashes, how deeply held such consumption values are…" (Mintz, 1996, p. 123)

of the asphalt, pausing to do a little stretching, we calmly strode past the many eager consumers – mirrors of ourselves. By the entrance to the kiosk, a beggar with ragged clothes sat on an uncomfortable improvised chair, drinking wine and begging for money, like looking into the abyss of neoliberalism. We ignored the beggar through daily emotional discipline before entering the door hunting for Coca-Cola. In a region troubled by water shortage, the salvation found in the taste of Coca-Cola reveals, on an intuitive level, how middle-class consumers are linked to the societal structure of mass consumption & production (Pratt, 2007; Pratt & Luetchford, 2015). On another level, Coca-Cola shares something with the avocado: they are similar because they are locally and nonlocally situated through space and time (Morton, 2013). They are ways to understand how mass consumers (such as myself) are relationally bound to *water*.

Natural Consumption

"We do not understand at all well why it can be claimed both that people cling tenaciously to familiar old foods, yet readily replace some of them with others" (Mintz, 1996, p. 24)

Before I direct the reader to Alba's avocado farm, the Coca-Cola example posed above challenges a lot of "modern" behaviors that probably seem natural to the global consumer class – such as myself. It is an excellent example of how *outside meaning* (structural power) creates the playing ground for consumption (Mintz, 1996) - "…the extraordinary power of a handful of corporations in the food chain, undermining the livelihoods of small farmers and shaping food choices" (Pratt & Luetchford, 2015, p. 195). Coca-Cola is not something that a public health agency can recommend to secure individual health instead of drinking water (Nestle, 2013). To sell a product, such as a soda, a health authority can rhetorically state: drink (or eat) less of the bad stuff, cleverly justifying its consumption (Nestle, 2013). In Chile, this consumption health hazard is secured through health warnings portraying high in calories, high in sugar, plus others. On the other hand, avocados are marketed as healthy fruit (Serrano & Brooks, 2019) and thus do not need "warning labels" regarding human health.

From this perspective, comparing Coca-Cola & avocado highlights the inescapable context in which modern man and woman are entrenched within the scenery of mass consumption in day-to-day life (Mintz, 1996). Recall Isabel, who worked for "Agua Vecinos" [water neighbors] in the sacrificial zone of Lamona securing rural water supplies to the water dispossessed. An

interesting detail Isabel pointed out while conversing about the enormous quantities of water that avocados needed to be produced was that her kitchen was filled with Coca-Cola. She was addicted to Coca-Cola – as she put it - even though she mentioned that the Coca-Cola company was responsible for water disputes in distinct countries worldwide.

The act of buying and drinking Coca-Cola (and eating *avocados*) is thus a sign of a "corporate-driven" homogeneity or an "Americanization" of food habits that pushes the consumer towards "sameness" through homogenization of food commodities (Mintz, 1996). It also reflects the trend in which more and more middle-class consumers replace water with soda (Mintz, 1996). But most importantly, the soda Alba and I bought at the gasoline station and drank while driving reveals consumers' highly valued but invisible act of using large amounts of water, fossil fuel, soil, and so on to partake in the architecture of immediate satisfaction in the consumption-act of food, and invisible forms of food-industrial violence (Mintz, 1996). Like the vital component of labor (or land) in the production of a commodity (Hetherington, 2020b; Polanyi, 1962), natural resources such as water are abstracted from or invisible to the consuming subject (Irvine, 2020; Taussig, 2010).

The Land of Avocados

"A change in the mode of production is also a change in the mode of perception" (Taussig, 2010, p. 121)

After an hour's drive from the gasoline station, we arrived at her hometown. It seemed like practically every property encircling her hometown had a garden filled with avocado trees. Avocado logos popped up on everything from schools to the municipality. The town plaza had avocado statues and figures decorating the park, making it undeniable for a visitor that the avocado played a massive role within the local community. Small to medium-sized farms are mainly situated at the bottom of the valley floor, and the monocropping fields are located on the mountain slopes.

In Palta Central, 40 percent of the total cultivated area of 7.615 hectares comprises avocado farms smaller than 5 hectares (ODEPA, 2018). The region covers 26 percent of the national production area of avocados (ODEPA, 2018) totaling 29.289 hectares in 2017. Moreover, the region is situated in a broad valley with a river running through it. This is the river – in addition to groundwater – that supplies all the farmers and their crops with water. Other crops cultivated in the area include mandarins, walnuts, and lemons, to name three. Ninety-four

percent of the developed avocado areas use irrigation technologies like sprinkling systems (ODEPA, 2018). Production has declined during the last 5 to 10 years, primarily because of challenges regarding the region's hydrological capacity in the context of drought (ODEPA, 2018).

We crossed a bridge coming in from the highway and turned left into a long but straight street with avocado-trees hanging over both sides of the road as far as the eye could see. I later learned that many of the properties with extensive gardens with fruit trees were called *"casaquintas"*. Canals run in between these properties, and they co-exist with urban neighborhoods that dominate more and more of the spaces encountered at the bottom of the valley. Industrial monocropping of avocados roamed over my visual field as we approached Alba's farm, partially hidden by the passing twilight and a grey-looking stone wall.

Temporal Seasons

"…monocrops kill more than humans, and the more they become entrenched, the more they engender more killing" (Hetherington, 2020a, p. 692).

One day Alba took me on tour throughout the farm, immediately commenting on the varied arrange of garbage observed on top of the grass and next to avocado trees. Much of the trash had been cleaned and put into plastic bag bundles. She stated that she had begun cleaning it up and said that the "campesinos" [farmers] working on the farm, and her father, had not thought about the consequences of garbage disposal, an insight she had repeatedly lectured them about. Black tubes went in every direction, following the patterns in which the trees had become planted, connected to many groundwater pumps that the farm depended on.

These tubes were part of a drip technology that many Chilean farmers had used during the past 20 years to make agricultural water management more efficient (ODEPA, 2018). Her brother, Luís, an agronomist who had put up the irrigation system a few years ago, studied and lived in Spain. The water was connected to many "pozos" [pools] and "bombas" [pumps] that distributed the water through an automated system that activated itself algorithmically to provide the trees with even quantities of water. As she demonstrated the tubes for me, she also pointed out that they used a lot of energy to remove grass since it competed with the avocado trees for water. The most critical element of the water management on the farm was that the water came from underground, and the groundwater was refilled through a network

of canals operated by a private farmer organization dividing the valley into three "water sectors". Every Sunday, the DGA[25] [Dirección General de Aguas: General Water Directorate] released a water quota that flowed throughout the area's canal systems, covering one of three sectors. Alba told me that there was no guarantee that the water would show up.

Because of global warming, as Alba put it, farmers in Central Chile now had to learn to use the water more effectively, and drip technology was one of the tools to utilize. As Alba later would point out, avocados produced on a small-to-medium-sized farm did not need that much water compared to other crops. According to Arturo, a kilo of walnuts needs about 1000 liters of water compared to 200-300 liters to produce one kilo of avocados. The problem with the production of avocados in Central Chile, according to Alba, was that the monocropping fields were too large in terms of scale, requiring in sum a staggering amount of water and energy to pump the water up the mountain slopes. The trees on her farm could adapt themselves to the climate, but only to a certain degree. If the flowers on the trees became dry, that was a sign telling her that the tree would not yield the avocados she wanted. On the other hand, monocropping fields had advanced technical instruments to combat everything from cold temperatures (countered through noisemaking "aerogenerators" producing warmth) to drill equipment pumping up water from pockets deep inside the earth's crust and large-scale water pumps feeding their irrigation technology. But as Alba remarked, if something went wrong, like a fungi attack on Hass monocrops, that could lead to the mass death of trees. Pesticides would be needed to exterminate the fungi.

We wandered through the many avocado trees, mandarin trees, and other crops as she showed me the *cultural reproduction of biodiversity* on the farm. Indigenous trees such as the Peumo [Cryptocaria alba] that provides red edible berries held their ground. This tree, Alba told me, requires little water, and she demonstrated the fresh-smelling aroma the tree produced by dividing a leaf in two. Maitén [Maytenus boaria] was another tree she showed me, famous for being indigenous to Chile and Argentina, renowned for its characteristics because it grows slowly and is drought-resistant. Later she proudly demonstrated the Canelo [Drimys winteri] tree that withstands cold and arid climates, celebrated for being considered a holy tree by the

[25] Official webpage, accessed 14.11.21: https://dga.mop.gob.cl/Paginas/default.aspx

Mapuche people. Alba smiled when she told me of the biological diversity encountered on her farm.

She also presented me with various avocado trees planted on the farm. "La Negra de la Cruz" was one tree that had been cross-pollinated and culturally designed by blending the genetic material of the distinct avocado varieties. Other varieties such as the Edranol and the "Palta Chilena" [Chilean avocado] also existed on the farm. She told me that the utility of having many avocado varieties was that she could have year-round yields. A farmer or corporation that only planted Hass-avocados got finished yields in May and in October. Edranol, with its green skin and firm texture, for example, provided yields during the winter, so in this way, a farming unit such as Alba's could sell products year-round by the token of *the farm's biological diversity adapted to specific seasonal temporalities*. Monocrops, on the other hand, Alba remarked, were based on only one variety of avocados (Hass avocados), making them much more vulnerable if something went wrong during production. If a fungus attacked a variety of avocados on her farm, the probability of a general collapse of all other varieties diminished, making the biological variations resilient compared to monocrops.

Oro Verde – Green Gold

"The struggle lies not in grasping a world but in being receptive to it" (Han, 2012, p. 11)

I saw one of the cats sitting outside of the window, chilling in the shadow of the sun, as the dogs barked and ran freely on the ground among the many avocado trees, mandarin trees, patches with "habas" [broad beans], and a variety of other crops. "El patrón" [the boss] – the father of Alba in his 80s - saw me staring at the cat and commented that it was necessary to have cats hunting for rats since avocados because of their nutrient-dense qualities attracted many rats when they fell to the ground. On the other hand, the dogs protected the farm against intruders that came during the night to steal avocados. During the cover of darkness, gangs climbed the walls encircling the property to steal avocados to later sell them along the motorways and highways. Export fields usually protect their fields with three levels of parallel running fences topped with barbed wire and private security services. Avocados, in other words, are something worth protecting and stealing when seeking monetary profit[26].

[26] An informant in Santiago claimed that a friend of his had bought a smartphone in the hypermarket Líder with avocados

It was not only with el patrón that I heard about the importance of remaining attentive when gangs showed up to rob their avocados. One of the neighboring farms, managed by Pepe, his wife Serena, and their two daughters, Canela & Camila, confirmed their worries about "rateros" [avocado-robbers]. One evening we had a barbeque feast Pepe told us a story that happened not that long ago. He was outside hunting rabbits – they are considered a problem because they eat up crops - and suddenly stumbled upon some "rateros" [avocado robbers] lying in the grass, hoping Pepe would not notice them. Seeing them lying there in the grass, he had to fire his weapon to frighten them off. Pepe laughed out loud when he recalled the clumsy escape of the "rateros" [avocado robbers] jumping in a state of panic over the wall.

It was essential to be an active protector of the "assets" because avocados are worth a fair amount of money. The fruit was an attractive thing to steal and sell by the token of the avocado's high value. El patrón said that "rateros" [avocado robbers] rob "por necesidad" [out of necessity] and don't blame them for trying, but he had an obligation to protect his assets. In the past, people would just show up at the door and ask if they could receive some fruit, el patrón said with a smile. "Nosotros tenemos que convivir con los rateros porque la palta es la estrella pa robar" [we need to co-live with the rateros because the avocado is the star to rob], el patrón explained[27].

It was astonishing to listen to the "normalcy" in which Alba, el patrón, and Pepe & his family lived in a relationship with rateros. Alba, Pepe, and el patrón had all used their firearms numerous times, and it was reflected through their many stories, such as during the rabbit-hunt evening. As such, "los rateros" reflected why the avocado had gotten the nickname "oro verde" [green gold], referring to the fruit's high monetary value. El patrón felt that Central Chile would not have had such an intensive and extensive production of avocados without a clever marketing campaign in which food corporations highlighted the fruit's health benefits.

Memories of the Past

"…industrial lords are seen as dedicated…to a thing…and not to people" (Taussig, 2010, p. 117)

I woke up from a deep and dreamless night of sleep. After squabbling down some notes, I met el patrón and one of his farm workers – Oscar - sitting in the kitchen drinking coffee and

[27] I was lucky enough to meet and talk to some of these mysterious rateros during fieldwork, one of them stole avocados after work to redistribute them to family members and friends.

discussing the working tasks of the day. Oscar looked at me with curiosity and asked me in a friendly manner who I was and what I did as a guest at the farm; his voice sounded clear but deep. I told him I was in Central Chile to study the monocropping of avocados as el patrón prepared coffee and avocado for the visitor (me). Oscar had worked on this farm for about ten years. A typical day started at 08 in the morning and ended at 18 in the evening. It was usually less to do during winter so that the hours could vary.

In Chile we eat "desayuno" [breakfast], "almuerzo" [lunch], "cena" [dinner], and "tomamos once" [afternoon tea], el patrón explained. This dietary pattern came from the Spanish colonizers, afternoon tea from English influences, and the day was organized around these eating habits el patrón explained to me. On a typical day, Oscar explained, he went around the farm working with distinct tasks. Cutting grass was one of these essential tasks, especially next to and around the avocado trees, because both plant forms competed over the water. El patrón called it "el error de la palta" [the error of the avocado] that it needed a reasonable amount of water. After we had chatted for some time, el patrón reminded Oscar to finish his coffee since it was time to do some work on the farm. Oscar smiled merrily and started to drink a little faster.

El patrón's father established the farm in the 1940s. During this time, it was common to have domesticated animals feeding on the local grass and vegetation in the area. Slowly but steadily, domestic animals had been replaced with fruits and vegetables. Before the agrarian reform and Pinochet's neoliberal implementation, houses were separated by the scale of kilometers. Now urbanization had conquered more cultivated lands forcing people to abandon their farmsteads. As el patrón talked about the past, another worker arrived in the kitchen; an older man in his late 80s, using a walking stick, sat himself down. Don Carlos lived and worked on the farm together with his wife. During the daytime, he worked on the farm of Alba and el patrón, and while "off duty" he tended his little patch of soil - growing food for subsistence use, similar to the "inquilinos" [tenant farmer] that worked in the hacienda or fundos (Balmaceda, 1875).

Don Carlos came from further north in Chile, born into a family that practiced pastoralism. During his youth, he had traveled to Central Chile in search of a "pega" [job]. He reminded me that mules, horses, and trains transported commodities in Chile in those days, but now

everything was dominated by cars, trucks, and urbanized spaces. According to Don Carlos, the growth and modernization of society had unfolded rapidly. “Hemos perdido mucho” [we have lost a lot], he told me, recalling the days when grass was cut with muscle power - now the machines had taken over. The youth had lost the knowledge of planting and sowing; it had become easier to import food, Don Carlos explained. In the past, one collected the seeds from the sowed plants and vegetables before planting them anew. Now seeds were bought from multinational companies – and they (farmers) directly depend on them since many newly designed seeds were made to withstand droughts, Don Carlos explained.

Not that long ago, Don Carlos recalled that vegetables, fruits, and food and the surplus of food were usually sold in the local and regional market or traded through gift-economic exchanges. The avocado had become so expensive because it had become an export commodity. This, in turn, Don Carlos explained, meant that the high-quality fruit turned out to be exported, and the low-quality fruit sold in the domestic market – a reflection shared by many others such as Sonrisa. According to Don Carlos, the consumer preferences outside of Chile determined the agricultural practices of contemporary Chile. In turn, the commodities that Chile exported needed to be replaced through importation from other countries to satisfy the consumers situated in the domestic market. However, the megadrought – Don Carlos emphasized - made agricultural life extremely difficult.

Both Don Carlos and Oscar were two individuals representing the “traditional” within contemporary Chile, and they were difficult to come by these days. Neither had any formal higher education, and they represented the historical “inquilinos” [tenants] working in “los fundos” [largescale estates] (Balmaceda, 1875). Like their Chilean campesino [farmers] ancestors in general, Don Carlos and Oscar personified farmers that “viven y trabajan en el fondo” [they live and work at the estate] according to el patrón. Campesinos [farmers] had lived like this since the arrival of the Spanish conquistadors and settler colonialists (Balmaceda, 1875). A continuum of the colonial legacy passed down from the age of colonization and post-coloniality in Chile related to the latifundista system, as shown in chapter one.

“Somos gente humildes” [we are humble people], Oscar said – continuously smiling and chivalrous - finally finishing his cup of coffee, referring to the work he did on the farm and the

"traditional" style of life he had conducted. Then he went out into the sunshine to do his job. Don Carlos sat a bit longer as we drank our coffees. El patrón pointed toward the mountain slopes encircling the town and told us that an Englishman had bought up a giant piece of land in the late eighteenth century. El patrón's father had saved up some wealth and bought a piece of land from an Englishman who soon bathed in debt. Buying property from this Englishman, el patrón's father broke the "latifundista circle" within his kinship line. As such, the father of el patrón, and the grandfather of Alba, according to both, was "un hombre reflexivo" [a reflexive man] with a keen eye for doing business. After buying up the land, the grandfather of Alba started to plant avocado trees, flowers, vegetables and utilize livestock feeding on grass on the mountain slopes. Many of the avocado trees on the farm had thus been planted by Alba's grandfather, many of them 80 years old, still providing fresh and rich yields (avocado trees can easily become 500 years old). A street in town was also named after her grandfather, paying homage to his local status.

Pepe's Farm

"…livelihoods depend on the relations established by commodities…" (Taussig, 2010, p. 26)

Pepe's and Serena's farm was about the same size as Alba's farm, and they had known each other since they were children. I saw the historical relationship that bounded the two families together through family albums. In addition to running the farm, Pepe worked in the mining industry closer to "la cordillera" [the Andes]. Serena usually worked at home. Their two daughters studied at the university. While on a farm tour with Pepe, he showed me the vast biological diversity encountered on the farm. Many herbs were cultivated next to the house, standing in the middle of the farm, dogs ran around freely, hens and chickens wandered around looking for something to eat, and birds sang their melodies among the thick and curvy branches of the tall and old avocado-trees.

Chirimoyas were a popular fruit, Pepe proudly told me, and they are prevalent within the area and region. Papayas, fresh mandarins of distinct kinds, salad, - in addition to many other crops - stood nicely planted not that far from his avocado trees. Japanese mandarins occupied a tiny parcel of land - a fruit few consumers would buy because they did not have any prior classification of them, Pepe told me. I was about to try one of them, reflexively looking for water to clean off remnants of pesticides. Pepe laughed and said that no pesticides had been

utilized on ecological farms such as this one, making the Japanese mandarin perfectly safe to eat directly from the tree. All these living beings depend on water reaching the farm.

Before we reached the pool, Pepe's daughters wanted me to see the quantity of the garbage that people from "las poblaciones" [urban areas] had thrown over the wall encircling their property, creating problems of "contamination". Not far from the wall where garbage flew over, a canal ran in alignment with the farm's property, and big plastic bags had been filled up after the daughters had cleaned up the trash. Usually, they had to clean up from time to time since the "hail" happened chronically. Apart from its esthetic qualities, Garbage was generally problematic because it could clog up the canals. They showed me the pool on the east side of the property that contained no water. The pool was also connected to underground water guarded under the farm. Aquifers clean the water, prevent evaporation, and thus act as good magazines to store water.

Pepe explained that filling the pool with water was pointless since the water they received from nature had been affected by the megadrought, i.e., lack of precipitation and melted snow from the Andes. The water they got on the farm came from the canal system of the valley administered by the DGA on behalf of the "canal association" of local farmers. Alba's and Pepe's zone lay in "sector two" in a valley comprising three sectors providing water to farmers. Every Sunday, the DGA released water to fill the river with enough water to sustain all the farmers living in sector three. Pepe articulated how the water they received was marginally sufficient to tend the avocado trees and other crops.

Some weeks, the water did not reach his farm through the network of canals, usually because people dumped garbage into the canal, blocking the water flow. On other occasions, he did not have any explanations as to how the water did not reach his farm. Without water, one would have to abandon the farm, as he did with his last farm after all the avocado trees died after not receiving water. As such, the living assemblages of the farm and the commodities yielded from there depend on other commodities, such as water. Water, in this regard, is an element that the soil, the avocado tree, and humans depend on to produce and reproduce life and monetary wealth. In other words, access to water can mean the difference between life and death, literally speaking. Pepe later told me he was troubled by the thought that Palta

Central could soon become the new Lamona if nobody did anything to tackle the megadrought and reform the water management procedures.

Casaquintas

"…famines and water scarcities that already structure our present are effects of distributive practices and not production…[water scarcity] is not because of insufficient water." (Anand, 2017, p. 229)

Serena's father (Pancho) and mother (Norma), both in their early 70s, invited me during one of the cold evenings to "tomar once" [after-noon tea] with most of their family present. The dinner table was decorated with cakes, tea, guacamole, bread, jam, and other sweets served by Norma. Pancho had worked as a banker before he retired and was under constant secret police surveillance during the years of Allende because he helped politically prosecuted Chileans in the area to fetch supplies – primarily available through the illegal market because of landgrabs, hyperinflation, and domestic commodity shortages - and have a place to hide temporarily. Both Norma and Serena spoke of how scary it was to live in a climate of political chaos – indeed, I heard many stories of terror throughout my fieldwork. But now, the lack of water was almost scarier to contemplate, in addition to another invasive force, namely the power of urbanization.

As long as Pancho and Norma could remember, the village had been characterized by a mix of "fundos" [large estates] and "casa quintas" [houses with large gardens]. Their household had a garden facing the street, and on the backside, a reasonably huge patch of land filled with distinct avocado varieties projected they're visually pleasing and old stature. Subjectively speaking, avocado trees are beautiful creatures. Chirimoya trees were also present, in addition to other fruit trees. A small canal ran past the property, linking itself with neighboring casaquintas in a squared pattern, mirroring Pancho's and Norma's garden. Casaquintas were "traditional" constructions local people had designed and created their spaces around after many, generally speaking, had left behind the latifundista social existence.

Norma observed my curious eyes move left and right, trying to get to grips with her garden's wonder and the patterns of canals spreading themselves betwixt property lines and fruit trees like a semi-symmetrical blueprint of veins running down one's hands. Both Norma and Serena pointed towards the mountains encircling the small town, stating sharply that "los palteros" stole the water from the river, and they kept on stealing it; both Norma and Serena insisted.

During Serena's childhood, the canals on the property were filled with water, and she bathed in them; now, the water did not reach the casaquinta. They both claimed that the water now mostly flowed in the direction of the gigantic monocropping fields of avocados on "las laderas" [mountain-slopes].

During the 1970s and 80s, the area was a tourist attraction because the river's enormous quantity of water created natural pools and small lakes as the water escaped its riverbanks. This was indeed reflected through the "ghost tourist destination" I observed. Now, these parts were either covered with garbage or dry grass, deserted houses & shacks, and old ripples of water could be observed in the old pools. Norma wanted me to see the effects of urbanization next to the garden of her casaquinta. We stopped next to a newly built fence, passing under the branches of her avocado trees and their almost hybrid olive-green and lush-green smooth but firm leaves.

As we stood there, Norma demonstrated how the "traditional" avocado trees on small-to-medium-sized farms had been eradicated, making way for soon-to-be constructed "poblaciónes" [urban areas]. "Me da pena verlo así" [it leaves me sad seeing it like this], Serena commented. They showed me an enactment of urbanization that had accelerated during the past years. Some of the newly constructed houses were huge structures, architecturally speaking, minimalistic modern expressions of shape and form, looking much like squared mansions built by rich social actors. On the other hand, other "poblaciones" [urban areas] had been constructed in a standardized style, with every house and lawn looking identical to each other. Most of the smaller homes had been built with the help of government subsidies to give "poor" people housing, Alba explained to me one day. More than that, agribiopolitcally speaking, the water that did not reach the house of Norma and the fast-paced development of urbanization was a way of representing their disparity. In other words, the more monocrops, the more production of agricultural products, and the more urbanized areas being developed in the zone meant that more water needed to be distributed and redistributed.

Large real estate agencies – some of them advertising the importance of responsible water usage within a context of a megadrought - had bought up "casaquinta" properties, made possible by the growing difficulty of surviving as a small-scale farmer in an area troubled by monocropping, urbanization, and scarce water resources. As such, through their memories of

an earlier life filled with avocado trees, other tree crops, and abundant water, many of the old casaquintas and small to medium-sized avocado farms had been abolished to make way for new urban areas. Simultaneously, Hass avocado monocrops keep expanding on the mountain slopes. From Norma's and Serena's stories, the welfare of humans and the welfare of non-humans compete for water and spaces to live in.

Many of these urban areas, excluding the housing that the Chilean state subsidies, were advertised through the promise of providing authentical experiences of rural life for the customers, reflected through advertising boards flashing in front of exterminated "parcelas" [fields]. Some of these real estates were also placed next to, even in between, monocultures of avocados. Yet, this trend of urbanization, to a more considerable degree, showcased what Sonrisa, her friends, and many other urban residents meant when they stated that the pandemic had created a situation in which many wanted to move out to the countryside to get away from the smog, noise, and claustrophobic existence provided by the big city-life after the COVID pandemic hit Chile.

The Commodification of Death

"…through an agribiopolitical lens in which colonization produces a deep tangle of ecocide and genocide that targets not only species and populations but whole living assemblages…" (Hetherington, 2020b, p. 193)

Life has changed in Central Chile since the arrival of Pedro de Valdivia's (2020) colonizers. The *Pino Chileno* they made romantic remarks about and other forms of vegetation, especially trees, have to a large degree been eradicated in Central Chile to make room for alien species (Winn, 2004). The avocado is also an alien species that now dominate many areas. Not far from the farms of Pepe and Alba, one of Central Chile's national parks where Darwin (Darwin et al., 1839) once wandered is situated pretty close to the monocropping fields of Hass avocados. This image of human designs filling landscapes with non-indigenous preferred species with is very clear to behold in the journey from Pepe's farm to the national park. The contrast between monocultures of avocados and wild landscapes highlights the human capacity to kill living assemblages deemed excessive and nurture those considered to inhabit an economic potential (Gay, 1862; Hetherington, 2020b).

I did not hear my alarm, and I bounced up from the bed in a temporary state of panic, put on my contact lenses, and grabbed a banana as I ran out to meet Pepe and his family waiting patiently inside the car. Clouds blocked the sunshine, and it looked like the day would become rainy; at least, that was the hope among my informants. The town seemed silent as the standardized constructions of urbanized homes lined up in squared patterns, like the enormous fields of different fruit crops stretching throughout the flat but wide valley. The avocado plantations, as usual, were spotted on the mountain slopes covering large areas of land and planted on soils where cactus grows, as Isabel put it, making the contrasts between sub-tropical green and desert-looking brown mesh into an interesting postcard photograph.

After passing by a regional city that has experienced a population boom during the last 10 to 20 years, Pepe turned the car toward the coastal mountain chain separating inland and coastal central Chile. When traveling in Chile, it feels like passing consistently from one microclimate to another microclimate. We traversed the mountains to our left and ended up on the other side – passing into another valley - where vapor from the coast comes flying in from the Pacific Ocean, getting trapped by the foliage of the national park's forest. This makes the coastal part of central Chile much lusher than its inland counterpart Pepe explained. A mix of Chilean, Mapuche, and regional flags, waved in the wind of distinct properties. Before I knew it, we reached a vast forest - an old forest - guarded, maintained, and managed by CONAF[28], Corporación Nacional Forestal [National Corporation of Forestry]. CONAF, in other words, is the governmental shepherd of the Chilean forests.

Just like that, we had entered "el bosque esclerófilo" [the sclerophyll forest] that is encountered in only five climactic zones on earth (for example, in Australia and South Africa)[29]. The main characteristics of these forests are dry summers and winters abundant in precipitation. These forests are drought resistant, making these natural materials adapted to long periods without rainfall. Like el patrón often reminded me, droughts are not something unusual in these areas. The difference now is the megadrought. The forest consists of trees such as the Litre [Lithrea caustica], Quillay [Quillaja Saponaria], Boldo [Peumus boldus], and the Peumo [Cryptocarya

[28] Read more about CONAF, accessed 02.02.22: https://www.conaf.cl/

[29] In Central Chile sclerophyll forests "organically" transition into matorrales [shrubland] and "savanna-like" vegetative formations known as espinales - dominated by the thorny tree *Acacia Caven* (González et al., 2018)

alba]. These drought-resistant trees, every one of them endemic to Chilean territory, co-exist with "bosques húmedos" [temperate rainforest or hygrophylic forests][30]. Temperate species include the Canelo [Drimys winteri], Lingue [Persea lingue], and the Patagua [Crinondendron patagua][31]. Everyone except the Canelo – the sacred tree of the Mapuche people native to Argentina and Chile – are endemic species of Central Chile.

The smell of the forest is so aromatically delightful that it feels like wandering into a top-class perfume shop. Charles Darwin (Darwin et al., 1839) visited these forests, and I met him in the form of a statue, saddled up on a horse just outside of the park perimeter. Temperate trees, such as the Lingue, mainly grow near water-rich places such as streams, pools, or damp slopes. Drought-resistant trees such as the Boldo also thrive near water. The difference is that sclerophyll trees have thick and firm leaves that permanently capture humidity in leaves that are green all year long. In the south of Chile, temperate rainforests are actively exterminated – many of the trees situated in the south are thousands of years old - to make room for economically viable trees such as Pine and Eucalyptus trees[32] (González, et al., 2018; Winn, 2004). Throughout many parts of the landscape in Palta Central, I observed new avocado (and fruit) fields under construction – leading to more and more deforestation of the native vegetation[33].

Sclerophyll[34] vegetation in Central Chile, as a result of deforestation and intense water usage, are under high hydrological stress, something one could see while wandering under the aromatic greenery where streams, pools, and other moist areas barely contained a drop of water – and I did my fieldwork during winter and spring when it is expected to rain a lot. These ecosystems are part of a broader relation of living assemblages that are indirectly damaged by monocultures throughout the central regions of Chile and directly hurt by global warming (González, et al., 2018; Irvine, 2020). Concretely, the mountain slopes in which monocultures of Hass avocados are planted are also home to a swath of species that thrive in

[30] Hygro Greek for 'water' and Phylic Latin for 'to be friends with'
[31] Information about the trees and the ecology, in general, were retrieved from the field
[32] I mention temperate rainforests to show how deforestation is part of a larger national design (Winn, 2004)
[33] "Look how dry it is", were common comments to hear hanging out in these "landscapes".
[34] In addition to Espinales and Matorrals

xeric circumstances – meaning living beings that grow and reproduce in generally dry regions (González et al., 2018): the soils where cactus grow.

Signs like "ayúdanos a cuidar el agua" [help us take care of the water] around the area of Palta Central clash with market expectations of "sacar más agua donde no existe más agua" [extract more water where there doesn't exist more water] as Isabel put it. As such, the temporality of monocrops stands in disjuncture with the temporality of the landscape (Irvine, 2020): the economic triumph of green gold is entwined with ecological degradation – echoing the environmental destruction of forests Gay (1862) observed in the 1800s. Global warming, monocrops, urbanization, and hydrological stress, thus, are factors that many human and non-human beings inhabiting Central Chile have inherited in their contemporary lives. The extermination, *ecocide* as Isabel put it, of these forests and ecosystems in the name of human welfare thus leads us toward the enigma of water management and global warming.

Chapter Three – Water is Power

"In the valley of the White River,
where the Aconcagua is born,
I came to drink, I leapt to drink
in the whip of a waterfall
That fell long-maned and hard,
breaking stiff and white.
I pressed my mouth to the bubbling spring
and the holy water burned me,
and for three days my mouth bled
from that sip of the Aconcagua."

A verse from Gabriela Mistral's poem "Beber" [Drinking] (*Burns & Ortiz-Carboneres, 2006, p. 99)*

Water and the Agribiopolitics of Climate Change

"Accounts of climate change are now showing us how crucial it is to be aware of ecological variation. Ecology is not cyclical, repeating present, but has its own temporal depth; and this depth to which anthropologists should be attentive…our accounts of 'the field' will come to recognize in greater detail the ways that people encounter deep time in the phenomenal world" (Irvine, 2020, p. 169)

The monocropping of avocados is a structural and processual function of a global food system responsible for over a third of all greenhouse emissions globally (Wallace-Wells, 2019). These numerical indications speak to the environmentally formed footprints established from agricultural production that have befallen local ecosystems across the globe. Monocrops inevitably represent a powerful force driving global warming, making the global "food system" an indisputable agent of climatic acceleration of warming (Hetherington, 2020b). The avocado is just one expression of this, given that they are exported to meet the scale of global consumer demand. Yet, monocrops of avocados are examples of human activity that partakes in geologic, atmospheric, and environmentally global changes (Irvine, 2020)– exemplified through the extermination of sclerophyll forests (González et al., 2018).

Habitual mass-consumers – such as me - are entirely detached from the temporalities of avocados and farmers yet profoundly attached to it every time the fruit is bought and

consumed (Taussig, 2010). Agribiopolitical asymmetries betwixt geographies, places, and histories depending on the distribution and directing of water resources suggest that water acts much like capital, what economists label "virtual water" (Barnes, 2013). From this perspective, the relation between avocado monocultures in central Chile and avocado consumers in – let's say - Norway reveals the fetishized element of water (Taussig, 2010).

Global climate change is an overwhelmingly complex abstraction in and of itself - this is precisely why Morton (2013) termed it a hyperobject. People, plants, and animals must get nutrients and drink water to survive and thrive. Yet, many of the environmental feedback loops predicted by climate scientists are affecting various people around the globe right now, making empirical case studies investigating local climate challenges an essential task of social scientists[35]. The population of Central Chile has lived 15 years with a mega-drought, as el patrón put it.

Pablo, a geographer and self-proclaimed militant activist in his early 30s working in one of the most significant social movements in Chile – which I will call "Defensa Local" - told me during a zoom-interview how every local context – whatever the region in Chile - face distinct industrial challenges dealing with similar consequences. In every locality encountered on land, no matter the industrial practice unleashed upon different place-specific ecosystems, people faced similar problems in the form of soil erosion, ecological extermination, social dispossession, lack of political involvement, and, important for this thesis: *water issues*.

In avocado monocultures, water issues are written into the landscape and social architecture – again, as Isabel told me, Hass avocados grow on soils where cactuses grow. Anyone passing through Chile's many cultivated monocropping fields can observe particular "zonas de sacrificio" [zones of sacrifice] – a term I first heard talking to Pablo - showcasing green-looking jungles of avocado plantations surrounded by desert landscapes. Pablo further elaborated that no form of life could be sustained without access to water – superficial and groundwater. Defensa Local, in other words, fights for the human right of having access to water.

Defensa Local was established in 2010 after the river in the local community of Lamona – a sacrificial zone in Central Chile – dried up as early as 2006 after introducing large-scale

[35] "Twenty-nine countries face a situation that scholars term "absolute" or "chronic" water scarcity…" (Barnes, 2013, p. 372)

avocado monocrops. This led to a series of events affecting the local community in its totality. The local population could either organize and fight back politically against the monocropping practices of avocados- or move out of their homes. One of Pablo's colleagues, a woman in her fifties – Sofía – native to 'Lamona' articulated many of Chile's water management flaws. According to her, everything in Lamona changed after the government – led by INDAP[36] [Instituto de Desarrollo Agropecuario: Agricultural Development Institute] – encouraged farmers to bet on Hass-avocados simultaneously as ex-ministers from the Bachelet (2006-2010 & 2014-2018) and Piñera (2010-2014 & 2018-2022) administrations had installed monocrops of Hass avocados in the area. In Central Chile, in the region of Lamona, according to Sofía, the most widespread – both in a traditional and modern sense - economic activity in Lamona remained agriculture and horticulture.

Life in Lamona, in other words, had traditionally been characterized through a general 'campesino' [farmer] conduction of sociality – a campesino [farmer] life arranged through a regional economy, personified through Don Carlos. Lamona had replaced this traditional form of agricultural production with an export-driven agrarian logic. And, as Sofia explained, parts of the culture of Lamona had also become gravely wounded. Activists – many of them now have either started running for political positions or have won regional elections - within the social movement of Defensa Local faced death threats, harassment, and eerie types of attention, such as cars stopping outside the activist's homes to frighten them or waking up to graffitied walls stating, "Death to …".

After the introduction of avocado monocrops through governmental subsidies and largescale land purchases done by ex-ministers in parliament, the livelihoods in Lamona had rapidly been dreadfully wounded. Everything in Lamona changed when the area was integrated into the global entanglements of avocado export. In Lamona, the introduction of large-scale avocado plantations legally and illegally usurped the local population of water resources after government subsidies encouraged local farmers – both small-scale and large-scale farmers - to bet on avocado plantations, Pablo and Sofía showed me. This created bitter water rivalries between farming neighbors, Sofía told me.

[36]A governmental agency helping small scale farmers, read more: https://www.indap.gob.cl/que-es-indap

Many people living in Lamona eventually blamed big corporations and other powerful actors for illegally tapping groundwater. Big corporations were accused of playing a significant role in completely draining the rivers in the region. Top-level politicians and the economic elite led the usurpation of water, according to Sofía and Pablo, and the ones accountable had never faced any persecutions- at most a symbolic fine. Some of these consequences, Sofía said with a sense of anger in her voice, were that the men left their homes searching for jobs in the cities or the mining industry, leaving behind their women and children who had to take care of them the household. Isabel worked actively with women in the region in the hope of showcasing the heroic resilience the women faced in a context ravaged by the forces of a megadrought, monocrops, water shortages, and lack of "water infrastructure" (Anand, 2017). A horrific example Isabel told me about was girls attending rural schools that did not have access to water to clean themselves with during their menstruation.

Without access to water, the livestock in the area was also impossible to sustain, so the local population had constructed a pile of domesticated animal bones to remind everyone visiting Lamona of the loss of livestock. Deprived of water, the local community could not sustain their subsistence economy, leading to a general demolition of livestock (meaning no access to wool), vegetation (no water for the plants and trees, thus destroying the area's vegetation traditionally used for pasture or horticultural purposes), and the men leaving their homes to look for work elsewhere. The sum of these monocropping consequences led Sofía to boycott the avocado since, for her, the avocado was a synonym for ecological annihilation and cultural desolation.

As many as 1,5 million social actors in Chile receive a quota of 50 to 200 liters per day for private use delivered by tankers because of extensive industrial activities – such as avocado monocultures - Pablo explained to me. According to Pablo, it takes approximately 300-400 liters of water to produce a kilo of avocados. From this perspective, many Chileans I talked with (such as Pablo and Sofía), in general, repeatedly told me that "nosotros exportamos nuestra agua en forma de paltas" [we export our water in the form of avocados]. Yet again: "agua es vida" [water is life] reminds Chilean citizens of the essential importance of water in sustaining life.

The Hydrosocial Cycle

"Part of the challenge for socio-cultural anthropology's engagement with global climate change is the recognition that these processes cannot be understood on a purely human level; in understanding humans as geological agents, we need to locate anthropic activity not only in social terms but as part of a wider system of relations within a physical and biological environment" (Irvine, 2014, p. 198)

Specifically, 70 percent of our planet is covered with water, and about 2 % of the total water volume is freshwater, with about 1% of that freshwater trapped in ice and glaciers (Wallace-Wells, 2019). Approximately 70[37] to 80 percent of all freshwater resources are globally consumed within agriculture and food production (Wallace-Wells, 2019). Water shortages (and devastating floods) within the context of global heating are elements of chaos predicted to be unleashed upon many parts of the globe if global warming continues (Wallace-Wells, 2019; Wutich & Brewis, 2014). More bluntly, humans live through it right now (Anand, 2017). About 2,0 billion people do not have access to safe water for consumption during small parts of the year, and about 4 billion people do not have access to clean water for sanitary purposes (Wallace-Wells, 2019). A common symptom of monocropping thirst is the depletion of underground water, and wells are drilled deeper into the earth (Arax, 2017; Wallace-Wells, 2019). Droughts and monocrops also lead to a terrible loss of fertile soil, 75 million tons, every year (Wallace-Wells, 2019).

The hydrosocial cycle (Ballestero, 2019; Swyngedouw, 2009) is consequently under threat since Chile is facing one of the highest risks associated with "water stress" in the Latin American region (OECD, 2017). As stated above, industrial agriculture is one of the critical forces driving global climate change, represented by over a third of greenhouse emissions globally (Wallace-Wells, 2019). Food, and its relationship to water, are pressing components to analyze within a framework of overheating because it has transformed cultures *and environments* on a massive scale (Hetherington, 2020b). We are allegedly experiencing the sixth mass extinction event associated with human geo-forming activities (Irvine, 2020).

A hydrosocial cycle refers to a theoretical revelation in which water's natural circulation combines with the interference of human engineering (Ballestero, 2019; Swyngedouw, 2009).

[37]Accessed 15.12.21: https://www.ciperchile.cl/2021/05/01/en-chile-la-agricultura-tendria-que-funcionar-con-la-mitad-del-agua-que-usa-actualmente/

How water flows from a hydrosocial perspective depends upon the notion that society and nature are inseparable from one another. There is nothing "unnatural" about building dams, canals, and irrigation systems (Swyngedouw, 2005, 2009). In other words, water infrastructure (Anand, 2017). It is just that humans have to a lesser or more significant degree, interfered in the design of natural flows of water to serve distinct purposes, such as irrigated agriculture (Swyngedouw, 2009; Wutich & Beresford, 2019).

On the other hand, socially distributed water showcase how power enters the equation and how power is distributed within a particular society (Swyngedouw, 2009, 2013; Wutich & Beresford, 2019). Water management is a highly politicized process in which "the highest power" decides the outcome of the hydrosocial delivery of naturally occurring water. By controlling water, one is well positioned to control the effects of agribiopolitics. This is demonstrated in a National Geographic documentary – *Water & Power: A California Heist* (Arax, 2017) - about California's irrigated desert. New agricultural fields were materialized through private ownership of water (Arax, 2017). By controlling the flow of water, one can generate monetary wealth through exported commodities that depend on this water and, in the process, changing environments from desert to cultivated fields (Arax, 2017). The water needs to be directed to these agricultural fields from groundwater or sources absorbed elsewhere. In turn, redirected water creates all kinds of feedback loops coming from non-human temporalities (Irvine, 2020), such as soil erosion (making infrastructure collapse, such as roads), water scarcity, and other ecological tragedies (such as depleting rivers) (Arax, 2017).

Modern Agriculture

"In agriculture, this era is known…as the Green Revolution, a time when huge investments in agrarian technology and intensified land use contributed to a diminution of hunger and an increase in national economic growth, all the while destroying forests and other complex ecologies" (Hetherington, 2020b, p. 7)

If someone told the Spanish conquistador Pedro de Valdivia (2020) during his expedition into "Chilean" territory that Chile would become one of the global powerhouses of agricultural exports in the world (Winn, 2004), it would be understandable if he would have laughed in disapproval, even if he partly envisioned it as such. Maybe the colonial history of Latin America would come to represent different historical events if the Spanish conquistadors

arrived primarily for the love of food instead of the love for gold- or maybe food is more politically loaded than gold? In any case, the encounters between Amerindian peoples and European settler-colonialists instigated an intense commodity exchange between continents and a nasty process of enslavement of non-Europeans to work the plantations of cotton, sugar, rubber, etc. (Mintz, 1986). Europeans brought seeds and plants to America, and they shipped seeds and other exotic products back to the European continent, such as the potato (Mintz, 1986).

Today, specialized & genetically modified seeds can be bought with fertilizers and pesticides from a multinational corporation so crops can thrive following industrial ideals, as Don Carlos described. Furthermore, these seeds conjoin with pesticides and fertilizers that enable the industrial production of food to flourish by killing "suboptimal lifeforms" (Hetherington, 2020). Additionally, the global food system depends entirely on fossil fuels (Hetherington, 2020b). To access these corporate treasures, one needs access to credit to buy the necessary tools to produce and sell the finished product (Hetherington, 2020b). Food for Change: The Politics and Values of Social Movements (Pratt & Luetchford, 2015) is a mix of case studies dealing with "food movements" around the world that try to carve out new possibilities for food production and consumption as a way to become independent from the current corporate food monopolies (such as Bayer, Yara, Monsanto, Nestlé, etc.) that resemble the historically famous tea corporation "the East India Company" (Baba, 2005).

These inventions, which industrial agriculture has designed, have dramatically changed our human lives for better and for worse. For numerous food movements, many of the agro-industrial developments are questionable (Nonini, 2013; Pratt & Luetchford, 2015). In a deep yet superficial sense, supermarkets, fast-food chains, and shopping malls have become a normative cultural agency of modernity – and they are an essential part of urbanized spaces. The day before Santiago went into a general lockdown in June 2021, for example, people flocked to the shopping malls, hypermarkets, etc., to blow off some compulsive consumer steam. Practically every person privileged enough to be raised within reach of a supermarket, consciously or unconsciously, has learned the modern art of convenience and standardized beauty. These places of abundance are the foundations upon which we build many of our everyday lives because many of us access this marketplace daily out of the necessity to get

calories and nutrients. In many ways, we depend on these structures in the same way that the Nuer depend on their cattle (Irvine, 2020).

Many of the characteristics of modern agriculture, such as modern-day avocado production, can be traced back to the US, where a "Fordist" factory ideal was developed (Fitzgerald, 2003). It meant that farms should be run like factories, fulfilling the tasks of the standardization of a product, large-scale production areas, specialization of the workforce, speed, and efficiency (Fitzgerald, 2003), to name a few. Every farm was to "copy" a Fordist efficiency of rational management techniques together with a "Tayloristic" stratification and rationalization of organized farm production (Baba, 2005; Fitzgerald, 2003). During the 20th century, farming was shaped by technology and applied science – conjuring up inventions such as the tractor, pesticides, and patented seeds (Fitzgerald, 2003; Hetherington, 2020b). Furthermore, agents of industrialism (such as economists, engineers, banks, and so on) connected farming to credit systems and transportation systems, making agriculture dependent upon the globalized architecture of fossil fuels and finance (Fitzgerald, 2003).

Regarding food and agriculture, fewer people in post-industrial or industrial countries produce the consumed food (Mintz, 1986, 1996). Furthermore, farmers are now more dependent upon growing one crop (Hetherington, 2020a). Farmers are highly specialized in what they produce, and consumers (primarily middle-class) eat an increasing diversity of food (Mintz, 1996). Ironically, much of this diversity lingers on products made from monocultures (Hetherington, 2020b). Thanks to the technical mastery over nature (through engineering, financial credit systems, etc.), rural farmers could secure productivity, efficiency, and a better living standard. Simultaneously, consumers started exercising their free choice against a background of mass-produced commodities (Fitzgerald, 2003).

The Green Revolution rationalized agriculture through specialized experts that provided technical "assistance programs" to local social actors across the globe (Hetherington, 2020b). Many technical experts traveled to places in the global south and replaced their cultural food practices with Western tastes (Hetherington, 2020a). Chapter one shows that agricultural development was accomplished in Chile through settler-colonialism and top-down political engineering. Agricultural problems were thus understood to be technical instead of cultural (Hetherington, 2020b). From this perspective, cultural and historical contexts were not

conceptualized as relevant to the incoming salvation of industrial food production (Hetherington, 2020b). The industrial ideal within agriculture was designed and engineered to make agricultural production practices universal on a global scale no matter the "usefulness" of "the other's" knowledge systems and particular cultural histories and food preferences – in many places, agrarian expansion led to crimes against humanity (Hetherington, 2020b).

The standardized application of industrial agriculture consequently produced many unintended challenges and consequences in different local contexts boiled into a global agricultural expression of monocultures (Hetherington, 2020b). For example, the number of farms and rural families has, and still is, declining across the board, as expressed in Lamona. People willingly or unwillingly leave their farms and migrate to other places. Agricultural industrialization personified through the Green Revolution started an all-encompassing set of global changes that manifested and continues to manifest worldwide (Hetherington, 2020b). The benefits for human welfare that industrial agriculture has produced have come at a cost within political, economic, environmental, and health-related domains (Hetherington, 2020b). Successes that industrial agriculture has brought into the world are already backfiring, creating genuine and lethal challenges to our highly interconnected social world, as exemplified through the lack of water in Lamona and Central Chile.

Water is Power

"Agencies …are….managers in a global system of mass killing of insects, weeds, fungi, and crop species that global capitalism deems suboptimal. This puts such agencies at the center of a much larger conversation about the relations among agriculture, settler colonialism, ecocide, and genocide" (Hetherington, 2020b, p. 15)

Mana, a friend of Isabel, working in Lamona, told me something powerful when we chatted, even if it seemed implicitly obvious: "No es la culpa de los pobre árboles de palta" [it isn't the fault of the poor avocado trees] that we have all these issues regarding monocultures of avocados and their relation to water scarcities. Mana did her fieldwork as a geographer in one of the "sacrificial zones" in Central Chile during her graduate years and ended up moving there to work for a local NGO – organized by the locals themselves - that provided water to "sacrificed" rural people. Mana pointed to the human design of avocado monocultures as the

most significant challenge within the local area. Politically speaking, social actors in rural zones were sacrificed by influential figures and forces that sought to capitalize on the avocado-export model, according to Mana. The agricultural export actors consequently usurped the water from the local population.

During my fieldwork in Chile, former president Piñera (2018-2022) made national news headlines by declaring a national emergency regarding water consumption. It meant that everybody should be more conscious about their water consumption, leading Providencia (a municipality in Santiago) to stop the watering of grass, trees, and so forth in the municipality's green areas – such as parks or plazas. The news spread like wildfire on social media, and it showcased how casual consumers were attributed the responsibility. One of Serena's daughters – Canela - told me, "el Presidente dice que nosotros tenemos que limitar el uso del agua, pero los palteros pueden seguir con sus prácticas sin consecuencias" [the president says that we need to limit our use of water, but avocado producers can continue their practices without any consequences].

Concerning water, personal consumption amounts to a minimized fraction compared to the sheer quantities the agricultural industry consumes. Consequently, the Chilean food system (and the global channels its commodities flow through) is already under extreme water pressure. As global temperatures keep increasing and agricultural productivity keeps intensifying; droughts and tightened supplies intensify existing problems in the relation between agricultural yields and water supplies. Nonetheless, industrial avocado production has the political potential to expand and strengthen as long as there is available water to get. *Water is power.*

The Water Code of 1981

"…the state is not only the monopoly of force but also the condition of possibility for objectivity itself" (Hetherington, 2020b, p. 76)

The wine we drink, the orange we peel, the avocado we transform into guacamole, freedom-tasting Coca Cola, livestock we feed, and so on, are creations hugely enabled through the control and distribution of surface & groundwater (Arax, 2017; Mintz, 1996). In this regard, water is the "magical" channeling of capital. Thus, water and capital are inherently connected but experienced and conceptualized as separate, analogically like Descartes' separation

between body and mind. The power one wields when controlling water cannot be underestimated analytically in cases such as in Central Chile. Without excessive access to freshwater resources, industrial agriculture would not be able to produce the vast industrial abundance of exotic fruits and vegetables meant for export (Budds, 2013). Someone must control water sources and their distribution (Polanyi, 1962). As such, ownership of water-resources accounts for a peculiar – one could also say dramatic – form of "land-right".

In Chile, water can be bought and assigned to specific social actors with an invested interest (Bauer, 1998; Budds, 2013). This means that whoever got power, capital, and intent, can buy water from the planetary weather patterns flowing in rivers and streams – or groundwater. Therefore, property rights concerning water represent a peculiar form of "legitimized usurpation" considering water's fundamental dependence for practically all life on earth. This neoliberal legitimized form of water accumulation – creating institutional arrangements such as "water-banks" – is predicated upon the idea that the "free market" is the optimal socially responsible and politically effective configuration of water distribution (Budds, 2013, 2020). Privatization "de facto means taking away some control [if not all the control] from the public sector and transferring it into the private sector" (Swyngedouw, 2005, p. 92).

Whether or not water resources should be controlled through privately owned hands or the state is in a way beside the point because many "water-distribution-centers" are in practice hybrid systemic solutions (Swyngedouw, 2005, 2009). Water has become integrated into the global flow of capital, and political administration, in the form of agricultural commodities or industrial activities such as hydroelectric installations, artificially created lakes, desert agriculture, and so on (Ballestero, 2019; Barnes, 2013). Furthermore, "the state" – especially accurate in the Chilean case - is supporting and helping private actors to install market principles on scarce resources such as water (Bauer, 1998, 2004; Budds, 2013, 2020) even though the nation operates with a "pure" form of neoliberalism (Han, 2012).

In other words, governments provide "insurances" to private water entities that guarantee profitability and stability for these market-oriented social actors – such as the ex-ministers Sofía mentioned (Bauer, 1998, 2004; Budds, 2013, 2020). A newly created politico-economic dance blurts into existence in the form of water costumers and water monopolies – in this narrative in the form of exported fruits and vegetables that influential figures have claimed

ownership of (Bauer, 1998, 2004; Budds, 2013, 2020). Water resources, in this regard – however absurd it sounds for some and intelligent for others – become an economic objective in the form of profit and capital accumulation (Polanyi, 1962) or, to a large degree: *political power* (Bauer, 1998, 2004; Budds, 2013, 2020). From this perspective, water is channeled into avocados before the avocados are transformed into monetary wealth classified as green gold.

The Chilean case has spearheaded this global water privatization trend[38] (Bauer, 1998, 2004; Budds, 2013, 2020). Chile has a long history of water-management dating back to Waddington from chapter one. Water has been completely turned into a commodity (Polanyi, 1962) in Chile and is a striking example of how a neoliberal economic logic has wholly conquered the flowing resource (Bauer, 1998, 2004; Budds, 2020). Looking at the modern political history of Chile as a whole, it has tended to swing from one political extreme to the next (Bengoa, 2013; Budds, 2013). Allende's socialist vision tilted the pendulum strongly toward a solid regulatory state system succumbing water management to a social welfare issue. The "counter-reform" from the right-wing extreme – Pinochet and his interlocutors - completely detached the distribution of water from the public to the power of the market, protected by the neoliberal constitution (Bauer, 2004; Bengoa, 2013; Budds, 2013).

Agricultural land reforms, no matter the ideological beliefs, were always at center stage in Chile despite the clever silencing through the promises of prosperity both extremes would provide through the different ideals of water management (Bauer, 1998; Budds, 2013; Kay, 2016). In other words, the extractivist vision of Pedro de Valdivia (2020) was an agricultural line enforced upon the land that passed into the modern history of the twentieth century (Ingold, 2007). Modern agricultural Chile was born through a socialist dream and countered by a far-right military coup that led to the Water Code of 1981 being created from the ashes of political turmoil (Bauer, 1998; Budds, 2013; Kay, 2016).

The Water Code from 1981[39] separated water rights from land rights and could therefore be treated like any other real estate (Bauer, 1998, 2004; Budds, 2013, 2020). Even if water is legally stated to be public property, the government grants private rights for individual use[40].

[38] The Water Code of 1981 meant that water was turned into a commodity (Budds, 2013; Polanyi, 1962)
[39] Because of contemporary water-scarcities the Water Code has gone through some changes, accessed 15.04.22: https://snia.mop.gob.cl/codigo-de-aguas/ejes-ley
[40] For more detailed information about the Water Code see Bauer (1998, 2004) & Budds (2013, 2020)

Dirección General de Aguas [General Water Directorate] - or the DGA – is the governmental directory that gives permissions to interested water parties as long as there is available water to get from a source – a river or groundwater, for example. There is no need to fill out a juridical "justification form" since it rests upon the fundamental idea that "the market" resolves this in a zero-sum game. If there isn't enough water to satisfy two parties, the highest bidder claims the right to utilize the water (Bauer, 1998, 2004; Budds, 2013, 2020). Because of the water's "real estate legal status", it is protected as private property by the constitution that was "re-written" in 1980 (Bauer, 1998, 2004; Budds, 2013, 2020) – one of the fundamental reasons why Chileans revolted against their political leaders & aristocratic elite during 'el estallido social'.

Furthermore, private water owners in Chile are not obliged to pay taxes (Bauer, 1998, 2004). They're also not obliged to face legal prosecution leading to an unrestrictive economic playing field (Bauer, 1998, 2004). The DGA does not even have the authority to step into conflicts between different parties, and data is not shared in a transparent manner (Bauer, 1998, 2004). This leads to confusion and frustration among "ordinary" farmers who share water through a regional network of canals distributed by collective associations of canal users (Budds, 2013, 2020). Something as trivial as general waste blocking one part of a local canal system can mean that a farmer doesn't receive the weekly water quota, as exemplified on Pepe's farm. Roughly put, it suffices to state that Chilean water management is a global particularity riddled with historically polarized ideological currents that are detached from the hydrological and ecological conduits (Irvine, 2020) and the overall confusing ideologically infused abstractness of "who manages water resources in the best way" between the state and the market (Bauer, 1998, 2004; Budds, 2013, 2020).

Wasting Water

"…we live in a planetary hydrosphere marked by permanent drought and flooding" (Ballestro, 2019, p. 407)

Recall Don Carlos from Alba's farm; I was lucky enough to meet his son – Francisco – one day, I was documenting and exploring the farm. Francisco worked as an agronomist in one of the largest export companies of wine near Santiago. Don Carlos sat on a chair supported by his walking stick, as his dogs and chickens wandered between my legs, he listened intently to the conversation between his son and me. Francisco explained that the best fruits, grapes, and

agricultural products are produced in Chile. According to him, there was no better land to cultivate crops, further stating that expensive products such as grapes used to make wine, or pisco, said something about the land's fertility. Yet he echoed Pedro de Valdivia's (2020) rhetoric, as shown in chapter one.

Francisco used China to explain how valued Chile's fertile soils were in the international market. The Chinese have bought up a lot of land in Chile to secure a steady influx of commodities they culturally speaking cherish, such as cherries Francisco explained. More than that, Francisco elaborated upon the notion that Chile is one of the only fertile places on earth where it is possible to produce so many varieties of luxury crops enjoyed by other cultures around the world. Francisco explained how China had set its sight toward Chile because of this agrarian potential. Through this collaboration, all the commodities flowing in Chile's domestic market in the form of cars, clothes, and electronics came from China. As a form of global economic reciprocal relationship, Chilean companies gave back in the form of raw materials and fruits, Francisco pointed out.

Then he explained how the megadrought experienced in Chile resulted from poorly organized political water-management systems - that the government was responsible for. Much of the water is not captured when it rains or when the snow melts because the government has not invested its resources to capture every drop of water available in Chile's natural weather patterns. Israel was an example to follow, Francisco elaborated because they had transformed a desert into an agricultural powerhouse through a high-tech administration of water. Chilean agronomists and scientists went to Israel to gather information and expertise and apply it in Chile – the drip technology from Alba's farm is an example.

According to Francisco, monocultures of avocados were a positive thing to have in the landscape since they enabled agronomists and engineers to develop new forms of seeds and genetic variations that could manage water more effectively. Francisco pointed toward a soon-to-be newly formed monocropping field of avocados on the top of a mountain slope, explaining how the producers had engineered new kinds of roots that saved the humidity over long periods and added that the updated avocado variety needed less water. Furthermore, this new variant was also designed to resist droughts.

Freshwater running into the sea was a wasted resource because it could not be utilized for human consumption or industrial purposes, Francisco explained to me. As such, Francisco represented an interesting agribiopolitical idea in which the government wasted the available water by letting the resource flow into the ocean. Francisco's point was that there is a lot of water to utilize and use throughout Chile's stretched territory. Moreover, desalinization – even though it requires a lot of energy to filter and pump inland – was a technology already applied in Chile's mining industry. Francisco pointed to desalinization technologies as another alternative that could solve water shortages in Central Chile. But the most ambitious project regarding water management is something Francisco referred to as "la carretera hídrica" [hydrological highway].

Hydrological Highway

"…discursive and public renderings of water scarcity are productive of state institutions" (Anand, 2017, p. 39)

Chile's agricultural vastness needs water, and humans also need access to freshwater. Therefore, many politicians and professionals support a state-private-led hydrological project under development in Chile, Francisco told me. It seeks to transport water from the water-rich areas of the south to the water-poor north, filling up pools and dams placed next to agricultural and urban centers linked through a highly long tube[41]. The basic idea is that this megaproject, to a large degree, will solve a lot of problems connected to the mega-drought: giving people in urbanized areas access to water without the need to ration the water, filling up hydroelectrical dams, saving agricultural regions facing water shortages, restore ecosystems, and create new agricultural fields in the Atacama Desert - to name a few projected functions of this hydrological highway[42]. Isabel, for example, objected to this rhetoric because the hydrological route characterized a short-term solution. For her, realizing such a project would drain the south of water in the long term. Others, such as Francisco, disagree because there is a lot of precipitation, snow, and glaciers in the south.

[41] Accessed 15.01.22 https://www.ciperchile.cl/2021/09/15/carretera-hidrica-solidaridad-o-egoismo/
[42] Accessed 20.06.21 https://www.elmostrador.cl/noticias/opinion/2020/01/01/sobre-la-carretera-hidrica-y-la-desalacion/

Colonial Logic

"Like many other stories of the Anthropocene, it is about the difficulty of using government to mitigate the problems that government itself created during a quickly fading era when human well-being seemed to be achievable through the promises of limitless growth" (Hetherington, 2020b, p. 4)

In early August, I interviewed an engineer who had researched the water footprint of avocado production in the sacrificial zone of Lamona. His name was Martín, in his mid-twenties and he had a calm attitude toward water issues in the country. He had grown up in one of Santiago's "poor neighborhoods". From his perspective, the threat of not having water in large urban areas was a scary thought, but he was optimistic. He articulated that humans and Chileans would find a way to engineer themselves out of the drought, build up societal resilience against the megadrought, and find new ways to adapt to water shortages – a brave new world of a climate-changed Central Chile. Other places around the globe – Martín referred to North Africa, the Middle East, and India - lived with much scarcer water shortages than Chile; thus, "el ser humano se adopta" [humans adapt themselves].

Martín had tried to estimate the amount of water the avocado monocropping fields used during their production cycle. Martín elaborated that water consumption can be put into three categories: (1) blue, which meant water that came from underground, (2) green represented water that came from rainfall, ice melting, and other natural processes, (3) and grey were contaminated water sources that could not be put to agricultural or human use. He compared Colombia and Chile, using the green category, explaining that precipitation was frequent in Colombia and low in Central Chile. Thus, water in Central Chile needed to come from other sources (underground water). Martín pointed out that it did not help Central Chilean human and non-human residents that the water from rivers (coming primarily from snow melting and rainfall) - in places such as Lamona - had already been depleted. In other words, the green category in Colombia compromised 94 % of the total availability of water for irrigation use. In Chile, according to his estimates, about 8 % of the water came from superficial sources.

The large-scale production of avocados is troublesome, according to Martín, in that the producers need to get water from underground water sources, in a sense making the soils dryer and dryer, consequently leading to soil erosion. This, together with a megadrought enacted through global climate change, and the fact that agricultural products such as

avocados need a fair amount of water, meant that the natural replenishment of water availability produced "eco-social" conflicts within regions such as Lamona. Water resources in Central Chile are thus standing in a hydrological 'human and non-human' disequilibrium because the amount of water needed to produce avocados on an industrial scale depletes the water from categories "blue" and "green". For Martín, in other words, the hydrological cycle of central Chile, along with monocultures of avocados (and other fruits), in addition to global warming, meant that the social dimension ended up losing the guarantee of having available water. Hence, the need to engineer and design technical solutions were hard pressing.

Recall former President Piñera (2018-2022) calling for rationing of water for personal consumption leading to Providencia stopping the watering of green areas: Martín felt that water shortages were a rural problem that could sooner or later spread itself to cities, such as Santiago. This has already happened as I type these words: water shortages, water rationing, and other problems connected to the general lack of water have reached cities such as Santiago. Water rationing protocols are, in other words, ready to be implemented when necessary[43]. Water Martín went on to explain is a source of multiple territorial conflicts that need to be politically resolved. The main problem, according to Martín, and a big reason for his motivation to march into the streets during 'el estallido social' was based upon his notions that water resources had an owner, meaning that local people needed to buy water from the owner after the owner had acquired ownership over the resource – basically for free. Furthermore, governmental bodies did not involve residents in decisions on the use and distribution of water resources. These political restrictions, Martín explained, enforced through the legal framework passed down by Pinochet, produced a situation in which local people had next to no rights or any meaningful political involvement regarding the redistribution of water. Causes that Sofía, Pablo, Isabel, and others fight for.

The neoliberal model inevitably created these tensions and eco-social conflicts within the country, Martín told me. Neoliberal policies were synonymous with extractivist practices, where no manufacturing of goods took place. Extractivist practices created monetary wealth by exporting raw materials to rich countries, such as Norway, Martín explained. The only way

[43] Accessed 30.04.22 https://www.biobiochile.cl/especial/aqui-tierra/noticias/2022/04/11/racionamiento-de-agua-en-el-gran-santiago-gore-rm-presenta-protocolo-ante-eventual-crisis.shtml

to change the monocropping practices in Chile was to change the constitution and alter the playing rules and foster concrete solutions to complex problems. “Tenemos que abandonar la fantasía colonial” [we need to abandon the colonial fantasy] in which wealth is concentrated in the hands of a few, he stated. The avocado intended for domestic consumption had become expensive because of this “colonial logic”, politically stirred forth by the powerful Martín explained. Thus, Martín explained that many in his generation also wanted their own colonial power like Europe, “lo bueno está afuera del país en Europa” [the good exists outside of the country in Europe]. He told me that the changing constitution represents the hope of finally tiling the extractivist history toward a brighter future. According to Martín, hopefully, the new framework can provide dignity (Han, 2012; Márquez, 2020) through other means than the export of natural resources. And as shown throughout this chapter, ownership of water is a political expression of power “facilitating” the exportation of agricultural commodities.

Chapter Four – Exported Welfare

"European and American economic and political interests have historically preferred stable right-wing dictatorships to chaotic popular democracies" (Hetherington, 2020b, p. 75)

Alba repeatedly mentioned the importance of ProChile[44] concerning the growing popularity of avocado consumption worldwide. ProChile is the current configuration of international commodity conferences, or "trade events", where national representatives from around the world advocate their products to others. Under dictatorship rule, the governmental organ was established in 1974 to promote Chilean commodities in foreign markets (Collier & Sater, 2004). Palamona – sister of Sonrisa – owns shares in the export company "Fruit for Life" she got me in touch with the company's CEO so that I could interview staff members. The boss – Pancho, a man in his 60s – sat on the national "Hass-avocado" board, an independent organization representing farmers and exporters of Hass avocados grown in Chile. As such, ProChile was the government's branding agency, so to speak, that enabled the collaboration between the "state" (ProChile) and "the market" (Fruit for Life) to promote Chilean avocados to the international public in the hope of securing trade-agreements to export the delicious fruit[45]. It rests upon the idea that the best way for a developing country to grow economically is to open its economy to the outside world (Hetherington, 2020b; Polanyi, 1962; Winn, 2004).

From a business point of view, Chile is considered a leader within the Latin American region because of its solid democratic institutions and political & economic stability, reflected through its membership in the OECD (Han, 2012; OECD, 2021). It is also a strong trading partner due to low levels of corruption, open market policies, zero tariffs, and well-established bilateral trading agreements, many of which were established during the 1990s government of 'La Concertación'[46] under the Chilean Miracle (Han, 2012; Winn, 2004). Since then, Chile has endured a long period of macroeconomic stability (OECD, 2021). But, as demonstrated in previous chapters, this has been challenged domestically by 'el estallido social' and the changing constitution. How this reimagination and redesign of the constitution will affect

[44] ProChile is an institution within the Ministry of Foreign Relations supporting Chilean businesses to promote and stimulate export of services and goods. Accessed 11.09.21 https://www.prochile.gob.cl/
[45] "Helped by a new export promotion office (Pro-Chile, 1974)…the growth of "non-traditional" exports (those of farms and forests) was especially impressive" (Collier & Sater, 2004, p. 369)
[46] "…the first democratic government headed by Patricio Aylwin" (Winn, 2004, p. 74)

"foreign" investment and agricultural exports, such as avocados, remains to be revealed through the drama of future history (Polanyi, 1962). Nonetheless, to a large degree, human welfare in Chile is premised upon the idea that the exportation of exotic fruits and vegetables operationalizes this welfare (Polanyi, 1962; Winn, 2004).

Certifications – the Agribiopolitical Control Mechanism

"Campesinos, neither pioneers nor regulators nor really subjects of rights at all…now the foreign element from which [avocados] needed to be protected" (Hetherington, 2020b, p. 153)

Arturo explained that practical control over the supply chain is enacted and practiced through privatized legal standards of certifications. GLOBALGAP[47] is the most used private certification Arturo (and Alba) elaborated. The GLOBALGAP certification intends to create systematic control in the supply chain. For example, according to Arturo, this legal control meant that he needed to secure working environments (for instance, having clean toilets), pesticide use (using the correct brand), security for workers (during the pandemic, he secured hand sanitizer dispensaries needed to be available for workers), safety for the consumer (for example washing the fruit), securing responsible environmental footprints (responsible use of water and ensuring biological diversity), using "green" energy (placing a windmill generating electricity next to the farms), and more. According to Arturo, certifications have produced positive results compared to the past, "antes era muy desorganizado" [before a lot was disorganized], referring to child labor, bad sanitary working conditions, and undignified salaries.

On the other hand, Arturo elaborated, European clients, give Chilean producers a list of requirements – for example utilizing the GLOBALGAP certification - that needs to be fulfilled on the ground. This is where Arturo steps in. His role within this "food system" is to make sure the requirements made by GLOBALGAP are met by the Chilean farmers he represents. Certifications are thus agribiopolitical control mechanisms (Hetherington, 2020b). Even if Arturo explicitly stated the requirements worked – for example, having clean toilets in production facilities - clients can utilize the certification to "lavándose sus imágenes para ellos mismos" [cleaning their images for their own sake], as Arturo put it.

[47]Accessed 15.08.21 https://www.globalgap.org/uk_en/

The playing field is not even; the power – financially or politically speaking – a post-industrial country commands over an aspiring industrial country means that the most powerful entity buys a quota of fruit regardless of the shadows, for example, the production of avocados cast (Polanyi, 1962). Arturo explained that European clients buy allocations of fruit, demanding that producers utilize GLOBALGAP certifications so that clients make the quotas seem like they have been produced under total ethical control through the regulatory magic of certificates. Empirically, Arturo elaborated, many foreign clients "ignore" what happens on the ground within the realm of production sites (such as the extermination of sclerophyll forests and Lamona's water tragedy) - even though representatives from European companies visit their trading partners in Chile. For example, in Fruit for Life, visits frequently happened pre-pandemically, the professionals I interviewed explained to me. Moreover, I was assured that the farmers contracted with Fruit for Life handled water-recourses responsibly - referring to certifications and professional workers such as "Arturo" making sure the requirements are met.

With global, regional, and domestic demand for avocados increasing, the need to construct new production areas in the form of more Hass avocados is pressing. Yet, as shown in chapters two and three, access to water imposes pressure upon this agricultural industry. Consequently, Arturo questioned the nature of this growing demand. Especially in countries that can't produce the avocado and other countries that do not have the potential to be an agricultural powerhouse like Chile – referring to geographies such as Norway. The situation of drought and excessive water usage puts a limit to the extent to which Chilean farmers (big and small) can provide yields of the avocados – and fruits, nuts, and vegetables in general - consumers outside of Chile thrive on and awaits to fill their kitchens with according to Arturo.

Presidential Debates

"…agroecology is…not scalable in the same way as a monocrop, and can only be accomplished through emplaced commitments to long-term more-than-human relations. Beyond that, it tends to fall out of phase with governmental logics and international industrial imperatives" (Hetherington, 2020b, p. 217)

To get a glimpse into the ethics of agribiopolitical meanings of avocado production, but also the political forces that actively shape the discursive and practical configuration (Polanyi,

1962) between crops, water, and humans, a little observation related to a presidential debate that occurred on national television on the twenty-first of October 2021 shed light upon the discursive spectacle. Specifically, the presidential debate was about Chile's underlying challenges related to water shortages and the future prosperity of agricultural production. As we shall come to see, some of these candidates partly reflect the meaning behind the agrarian vision of Pedro de Valdivia (2020), and the cultural roots of the export-driven discourse of agricultural production, like the "ghost" of the conquistador are still walking among Chilean agribiopoltical welfare projects.

Parisi, an independent politician, running for president, known as the economist of the people, tried to rhetorically balance how the management of water is a global problem and tied that to global heating. This meant, for him, that drought produced by global climate change was not something that could be resolved solely in Chile. Instead, Parisi pointed toward "la guerra agrícola de agua" [the agricultural war of water], implying how the big agricultural players abused the more minor players by illegally tapping into water resources to feed their export crops, using avocados produced in Lamona as an example. Instead of making more and more laws, Parisi felt that the state should use its money and resources to actively control agricultural actors' use of water, expanding the state's regulatory body. In other words, Parisi's rhetoric implied that the state needed to discipline the market through active control of its practices.

On the other hand, Sichel, representing the political right-wing, wanted a state-market hybrid solution that further developed the hydrological infrastructure of agricultural Chile to advance access to water both for human and plant usage. One of these solutions was the desalinization of ocean water and securing a state-market financed configuration of "water-capture" – echoing Francisco - enacted and secured through governmental legislation or the construction of new laws and rules. Furthermore, Sichel, in many ways reflecting the agricultural vision of Pedro de Valdivia (2020), the government needed to secure both human consumption & non-human access to water (commodities meant for export) through technological mastery over the hydrological cycle. "La agricultura es el futuro del país" [agriculture is the country's future] Sichel confessed before stating that technology and newly applied laws were the agribiopolitical solutions to be sought in maintaining export agriculture and providing water for human consumption.

Boric, now the newly elected president of the republic, made his case by speaking about "agua como un derecho humano" [water as a human right] pointing out that rural social actors had next to no access to "agua potable" [spring water]. Furthermore, he emphasized the need for Chileans to adapt themselves to global climate change by developing ecological and social resilience. Boric stated that the human right to have access to water also implied the human duty of restoring ecosystems by prioritizing unthirsty crops. Boric implied how "virtual water" flowed to water-thirsty crops consumed by the global middle-class at the expense of Chile's citizens. Furthermore, Boric rhetorically presented how local social actors did not want their ecosystems to be privatized, yet they became privatized: such as the access to water. Boric and his rhetoric personify a new vision in which the agribiopolitical ideals are grounded in socio-ecological values that focus on reclaiming alternative forms of wealth – such as protecting sclerophyll and temperate forests – from the extractivist practices that are dominating the agribiopolitical landscape of Chile.

Law and Hyperobjects

"Law produces no new knowledge … It has better things to do than to know: it maintains the fabric of imputations and obligations" (Bruno Latour in Hetherington, 2020b, p. 124)

As a trained lawyer, Alba, with loads of experience working for the regional municipality under the Piñera administration, told me something powerful: i.e., "lo legal no siempre es lo justo" [the legal is not always fair]. For example, the Water Code of 1981 is considered illegitimate by many that marched during el estallido social. But as Alba points out, social actors acquiring water rights – such as the ex-ministers shown in chapter three - operate within legal frameworks. She added that legal processes and politico-economic systems as currently practiced in Chile lacked integration of "una ética economica" [an economic ethic]. For Alba, the ethics of economy implied the realization that "la tierra es vida" [the earth is life], not the economy in and of itself (Polany, 1962), demonstrating the complexity of integrating more than human life into rationalized politico-economic structural reasoning within an open economic framework (Irvine, 2020).

In an interview with Nova, an independent researcher, a trained lawyer, and social activist in her late 40s living in Lamona, I became aware in more detail of powerful political actors involved with monocrops of avocados in Central Chile. "Principalmente los políticos

instalaron las plantaciones" [principally politicians installed the plantations], Nova told me. She explained that Edmundo Pérez Yoma, an ex-minister under the Michelle Bachelet (2006-2010 & 2014-2018) administration, was one of these powerful actors establishing monocrops of avocados in Central Chile. Osvaldo Junemann, ex-minister under the Piñera (2010-2014 & 2018-2022) administration, was also involved she explained. The DGA had fined both for breaching "el código de agua" [the water code] by illegally tapping groundwater from the local area Nova lived in. Both ex-ministers had done this illegally because the DGA had classified the region of Lamona as an area of restriction – a region in which water levels are at an emergency stage, Nova told me.

What both ex-ministers had in common in Lamona, according to Nova, was that 4000 hectares of properties operated by farmers had been effectively abandoned after monocrops had been introduced into the area by the corporate "agency" of these ex-ministers. Guess because of what? Yes, water scarcities. Hass avocados now surrounded Nova's property. The women and children who stayed behind received their water from the tankers provided by the Chilean government that I have mentioned in chapter three. Nova told me that the water they obtain from these tankers is not guaranteed to be clean, and ironically, these water quotas came from groundwater in the region she showed me. In this regard, Nova condemned this practice and took legal matters into her own hands – with the help of her neighbors and urban activists - denouncing the government for not being present to resolve these water issues. In the end, Nova and others established a rural water supply without help from the state. "Nosotros luchamos contra los palteros" [we fight against the avocado producers], Nova explained. As such, "palteros" [avocado producers] were her organization's common enemy.

Twelve years ago, a legal fight arose in Lamona when small-scale farms faced water drought due to the ex-ministers' installation of avocado monocrops. According to Nova, she and other victims of avocado monocrops quickly lost in court. She told me she expected to lose against such influential figures, but Nova explained that she wanted to give them a legal fight. After these processes, Nova denied herself, her children, and everyone in their family eating avocados. Nova explained that the soil was rich before, full of grass, local vegetation, and livestock. Upon "las laderas" [hillsides] and "los cerros" [mountain slopes], the original vegetation had been burned or bulldozed to the ground to make way for the famous Hass avocado. In turn, water needed to be directed toward "los cerros" [mountain slopes] to "feed"

the monocrops of avocados, inevitably resulting in the death of livestock, grass, and vegetation. The river inevitably ran dry as early as 2006. Nova told me that most men left after their livelihoods had been eradicated by the loss of the river, searching for jobs in "las zonas de minería" [mining zones]. The Water Code of 1981, the DGA, and the whole legal framework permitted this corporate behavior, Nova claimed, making it difficult to fight back directly against the hyperobjects: the state and the market (Hetherington, 2020b; Morton, 2013). The hope lay in the changing constitution Nova stated in the end to stand a chance in future water conflicts.

Projected Chaos

"…first-person narrative is important because it appears in a context in where information coming from media is confusing and negates social reality" (Márquez, 2020, p. 668)

On the sixth of July 2021, the process of "los constituyentes" [writers of the constitution] rewriting the neoliberal constitution started for real. The day prior – on July the 5th - the Piñera government was ridiculed by "los constituyentes" because COVID-19 sanitary restrictions were not secured in the building. This was only the first bump on the road toward a better legal future for Chile's citizens. Throughout the process, minor inconveniences such as not adjusting "covid" distancing measures between the microphones and leaving them unconnected to speakers made "los constituyentes" feel betrayed by a government not taking the process seriously enough. Social movements, indigenous groups, and other groups – a mix of people, so to speak - from society waved their flags and logos in front of the building to mark the day.

Fast forward to the eighteenth of October 2021, I took a walk into the city center of Santiago, following the thin brownish strip of the Mapocho river – a shadow of its former self - until reaching "la Plaza de Dignidad". Many people gathered in the city center to celebrate the second anniversary of "el estallido social". Curfew had been lifted by the government even though COVID-19 cases were skyrocketing. The sun was shining, people had set up many mobile street food wagons, flags from every conceivable social movement waved in the soothing spring breeze, key-metro stations had been closed to prevent destruction, and many people had prepared piscos and drinks to celebrate in the streets.

After a while, I started walking back home toward "la isla de fantasia". Twilight loomed over me as I arrived. Back home, Miguel sat glued to his black chair, watching the news. The news showcased destruction on the streets, looted "negocios" [shops], ravaged police stations, and both public and private demolitions of property. The camera crews filmed anarchistic symbols graffitied on the walls next to the broken police stations. Politicians and "opinion-makers" started to appear on the news condemning the looting, and it seemed by the newsfeed that Santiago had descended into a temporal form of anarchy. However, everything was calm, like a silent meadow in "la isla de fantasia".

Later that evening, I listened to a public panel discussion between newly elected "activist bureaucrats" speaking about the nature of the protests, among them Sofía and other high-profiled water activists. First and foremost, they talked about the fact that they could not participate in the anniversary because they had a lot of work on their hands – stressing the need to secure water for local populations in Central Chile. Reports of "saqueos" [looting] had reached their consciousness, remarking that none of them had seen this, only noise had been heard. "La pelea es con los pacos" [the fight is with the police], Sofía stated before another activist explained how the police allowed people to steal from "negocios" [businesses] as a strategy to delegitimize and criminalize people marching in the streets. "Hay violencia en el sistema, nos tortura, nos viola, nos contamina, todo está privatizado" [there is violence in the system, they torture us, they violate us, they contaminate us, everything is privatized] the "other" activist remarked. "Por eso tenemos que entrar el congreso" [because of that we need to enter congress], Sofía proclaimed.

Activist Bureaucracy

"The history in Latin America…is a history of strong, centralized governments trading away national resources to northern buyers in return for the resources needed to build authoritarian versions of the welfare state" (Hetherington, 2020b, p. 75)

Hetherington (2020b, p. 78-80) speaks of the notion that "agency panic", or "diminished human agency", kicks in when complexity permeates social life and social actors' subjective perception of this same complexity. Ultimately, agency panic motivates people to seek out the responsible agency enacted by an entity producing or reproducing a certain kind of agency of complexity. In monocultures, such as avocado production, the diminished agency can be

experienced by humans as standing outside of their own power of action and behavior because enormous social organizations (for example, government agencies, international organizations such as the World Trade Center, and the market) act within a contradictory framework of liberal freedom and practices that contradict this liberal ethos (Hetherington, 2020b; Polanyi, 1962). Such as intended or unintended consequences of the creation of "zonas de sacrificio" [zones of sacrifice].

Joa and Isabel often defined a zone of sacrifice as an area in which the state could not protect its citizens and ecology from the ravages of industrial activity. "Un discurso de la necesidad para desarrollar el país" [a discourse of necessity to develop the country] was frequently utilized rhetorically by the agents of industry "cuando en realidad destruyen el lugar" [when they in reality destroy the place], Isabel reflected. Her boyfriend Joa jumped into the conversation and mentioned the need to have "sistemas de regulación" [systems of regulation], reflecting the former presidential candidate Parisi's rhetoric. In the end, the concentration of monetary wealth attributed to the channeling of water, raw material, and natural resources extraction are manifestations of the past, Joa told me, referring to the Chilean civil war in 1891, where political affiliations fought over which ideological tool (the battle between traditional order and liberal values) to apply in statecraft.

Isabel positioned herself as critical to activists who wanted agribiopolitical power reigns. For example, the social movement of Pablo and Sofía, Defensa Local, has five representatives, democratically elected, partaking in the constitutional draft. Furthermore, the movement has a democratically elected regional governor of the agriculturally intense and avocado-rich areas of Central Chile that promised to fix the issues of water shortages experienced in many rural areas through the rhetoric of decentralization during his campaign, Isabel explained. Since colonial times, the country's centralized political agency has been concentrated in urban areas, Joa pointed out. Isabel was skeptical - to use one example - of the promises of decentralization. Because, for Isabel, in practice, the organization of Defensa Local had taken on a centralized shape, meaning that their internal power structure had now moved into urban centers.

The thing Isabel did agree on, at least on a discursive level, was that "la constitución no permite que la gente en contextos locales están participando con decisiones" [the constitution does not allow people in local contexts to participate in (political) decisions]. The neoliberal constitution

was a legal framework designed to regulate potential social conflicts through the deregulation of industrial activity, such as what happened in Lamona. "Tenemos que cambiar la constitución" [we need to change the constitution] to start regulating industrial activities, Isabel explained. These meanings of local participation in "state-projects" are observed by Hetherington (2020b) to possess an aura of conspiracy attached. Newly formed promises of social justice, stability, and welfare made by inspiring politicians or activists – Hetherington (2020b) shows – tend to become violent as soon as the changes seem to be within the realm of possibility.

Consequently, Hetherington (2020b) observes how activists with *good intentions*, given that "they" gain positions of power within a government, need to locate ways in which to build alliances between administrators, politicians, wealthy owners of industry and agriculture, and the voting base that enabled "them" to seize, maintain, and utilize the power of democratic rule. Hetherington's (2020b) study of Soy in Paraguay shows how "activist bureaucrats" seizing governmental power ended up protecting the monocrops of soy that they initially wanted to protect people from partly because of the legal frameworks they operated under. Embarking from these notions, informants such as Isabel and Joa told me that they were worried that the new constitution and newly elected "activist bureaucrats" would not bring about any meaningful change concerning the production of avocados and water shortages. In other words, Isabel and Joa were worried that the new constitution would not deliver the changes that they envisioned themselves – such as reversing the production of zones of sacrifice.

Difficulties of Change

"Justice does not exist! Human Rights do not exist. What matters is jurisprudence. This is the invention of law" (Gilles Deleuze in Hetherington, 2020b, p. 113-114)

In late June, back in my base of operations, I tried to productively channel the frustration of lockdown procedures into the positivity of doing "digital ethnography". I interviewed Javiera, who worked within an influential NGO – which I will call "Energía Limpia" [clean energy]. Javiera and Energía Limpia worked actively on a parliamentary level, trying to influence politicians and the like, to change the legal frameworks so that industrial activities were more attuned to the processes of nature. For example, under the Bachelet administration (2014-2018),

Energía Limpia advocated for a reform of the Water Code of 1981 that ultimately led to nothing Javiera told me. Javiera used this example to showcase that the laws were practically speaking impossible – or difficult and slow – to change.

"Todo pasa por ley, ¿cachay?" [everything happens by law, you know?], Javiera stated. Javiera said the neoliberal constitution was designed to benefit big corporations and powerful politico-economic social actors. This meaning is reflected through much of the post-colonial history in Chile, as shown in chapter one. Chile and Latin American countries were places where the extraction of resources enriched a political and financial elite with monetary wealth, Javiera explained. The usurpation of water resources was an example of this. The neoliberal constitution provided extractivist activities with legal justification: "Mira Matías, este sistema se hizo por diseño" [Look Matías, this system was created by design] she told me, referring to the Water Code of 1981 as an example of this legal design.

According to Javiera, these extractivist practices were not created in a political vacuum during the military regime of Pinochet. Since the birth of Chile, colonizers pushed people out of their land and utilized indigenous labor to extract resources, Javiera told me. The extractivist adventure started as soon as the Spanish conquistadors made their way to Chile and manifested itself in the present by creating welfare through the exportation of natural resources, Javiera explained. The large-scale production of avocados in Central Chile was an expression of old colonial practices in which financial and political power is concentrated in the hands of a few, she elaborated. According to Javiera, the Spanish colonizers could justify the conquest of Chile through the power of the king and God, and contemporary personalities justified the practices through legal frameworks – such as the neoliberal constitution. Drawing upon these notions, the industrial production of avocados is premised upon the meaning that human welfare is guaranteed through the exportation of resources (Polanyi, 1962). In the end, Javiera told me that this export narrative was so deeply ingrained into the story of national progress – and secured through the neoliberal constitution – that it was challenging to change these industrial practices.

No es Sequía es Saqueo

"As with other environmental processes, the speed and violence of these changes is geographically uneven: they accrue first in frontiers of extraction…while in other parts of the world they are felt mainly as a form of inexplicable market abundance in cheap…goods" (Hetherington, 2020b, p. 7)

In July 2021, I talked to María, who worked as a professor in ecology, influencing politicians at a parliamentary level. She had a lot of first-hand knowledge about plants and non-human life in Chile. She told me that much of her work was to advocate for a new kind of "ethical economy" in which the temporality of plants and natural cycles were integrated into political decision-making processes. María told me that monocultures were industrial disasters. A monoculture, per definition, María elaborated, destroyed the ecological balance within and between ecosystems to produce monetary wealth. She told me that singular plants are the dominant lifeforms in such industrially designed ecosystems. These particular plants act like invaders through their introduction: in Chile, avocados are alien, she insisted. María referred to the destruction of sclerophyll vegetation as an example.

According to María, the ones responsible for the environmental and social devastations produced in places like Lamona saw soils "where cactus grows" as barren landscapes waiting to be transformed into financial potentialities. "Cuando veo esta vegetación, veo la vida y los ciclos de la naturaleza" [when I see this vegetation, I see life and the cycles of nature], she explained before adding; "Ellos [palteros] ven nada" [they (avocado producers) see nothing]. María maintained that social actors investing in monocropping activities in Chile did not acknowledge that the ecosystems that monocultures violently replace were complex more-than-human systems that stored carbon and water. The installations and practice of monocultures – such as avocados – led to predation of water resources, soil erosion, salinization of the soil, landslides, and vegetative death - that ultimately affected humans through nature's own feedback loops, María explained. One of the most evident environmental footprints of these industrial activities, María described, was the avocado monoculture's predation of water resources. "Somos un país que falta agua" [we are a country that lacks water], María stated.

Water is the force that enables life to thrive in the soil, the vegetation, animals, and humans, María told me. She gave me an example of this meaning – a general one resonating with Sofía's

and Nova's examples from Lamona. First, an extractive actor buys up an area of land and kills the local vegetation by bulldozing and burning the area to the ground. She explained that it does not matter what is killed when non-humans are not perceived as economic assets. After being planted, the avocado trees start to drink up all the surrounding water making everything drier and more problematic for other species to co-live – this also includes humans, María told me.

With time all kinds of feedback loops (hyperobjects doing their own thing) are conjured forth (Irvine, 2020; Morton, 2013): soil erosion, soil salinization, and the death of non-human living assemblages María described. New feedback loops, such as droughts, are produced that ultimately affect humans – like what happened in Lamona. María – like Mana from chapter three – pointed to the human design of avocado monocrops creating these new feedback loops. The human design of water scarcities and drought that María and Mana articulated were reflected through another commonly "graffitied" meaning – encountered in everything from urban walls to Twitter feeds – pointing toward the usurpation of water resources: "no es sequía, es saqueo" [it's not drought, it's looting].

Neo-colonialism

"One wave replaces another and reorganizes economy, territory, and violence in a way that is incommensurate with but dependent on those that came before" (Hetherington, 2020b, p. 212)

According to María, singular entities – such as avocados – planted in large areas are the "pawns" of the Chilean state's developmental narrative. The political elite in Chile, according to María, throughout its modern history has solidified an idea in which the exportation of raw materials such as plants, vegetables, fruits, and minerals are sure ways to secure social welfare for its citizens. Promises of wealth creation and job production silences the eco-social problematics such as water scarcities, María explained. "Neo-colonization" was the term María utilized to explain the tensions produced between "modernizing" forces applying life that local people – such as Nova and Sofía in Lamona - resisted.

The practice of modernizing local contexts by establishing large-scale extractivist operations – such as avocado monocultures – ultimately led to social dispossession or the "forceful" integration of local actors into the established industrial organization María told me. As such, the colonization of Chile was still transpiring in the present, María elaborated. María stated

that she had seen these processes happen with the Mapuche people during her research trips further to the south in Chile – with distinct foreign and domestic interests applying industries such as forestry, hydroelectric plants, and more, bringing promises of uplifted social welfare to the table. According to María, the tragedies of Lamona moved through this logic of colonization: i.e., neo-colonization.

In other words, the promised welfare through the extraction of resources and the exportation of these resources symbolized "dominating" forces applicating specific non-indigenous forms of life at the expense of indigenous non-human lives in local contexts – the path toward modernity (Hetherington, 2020b; Polanyi, 1962). According to María, social actors resisting these modernizing projects were labeled terrorists or "backward". María's perspectives on the exportation of natural resources reflected the 'colonial' personifications of Pedro Valdivia (2020) (outsiders applicating life and extracting resources), Ercilla (1840) (securing the administration of resources through conquest and violence), and Gay (1862) (ecological destruction underpinning the extraction of resources).

Conclusion

"What's at stake in…agrarian neovitalism is not therefore just a difference in political ideology, or in the ethical calculus around violence and profit, but an ontological disagreement about what counts as life" (Hetherington, 2020b, p. 206)

When I spent time on the farm with Alba and her family, they made me go out on the farm to fetch fruit to make "postre" [dessert]. One time when I went out to bring some mandarins, she reminded me that the act of taking the fruit from the tree is in and of itself an act of extractivism. In a sense, however banal it sounds, I participated in a form of extractivist practice or an act of killing. The difference between Alba's farm and a monoculture of avocados is that Alba's farming practice requires a minimum amount of killing through a more modest utilization of water and a nominal amount of killing of other non-humans (Hetherington, 2020b). In addition, the farming practice took more time and care in the long term, exemplified through their 80-year-old avocado trees. No matter if it is avocados, mandarins, cattle, or soy, eating is impossible to separate from the act of taking life (Hetherington, 2020b). Or, in the words of Hetherington (2020b, p. 218), "eating well is an excessive ethics that necessarily entails killing well". And as shown throughout the text, water is an essential element bridging living assemblages in spatio-temporal existence (Anand, 2017; Haraway, 2015).

Throughout this text, an anthropological engagement with the fetishized (Taussig, 2010) or silenced (Trouillot, 2015) importance of water to sustain luxury crops such as the avocado showcase how anthropically infused changes to the world are indeed very real, "extinction is not just a metaphor" (Haraway, 2015, p. 161). The absence of or the permeation of water thus implies the difference between life and death for distinct living assemblages. The temporalities of avocado trees are entangled with the temporalities of desertification, global warming, hydrological networks, local vegetation, and human (state-market) interferences that, as shown throughout this text, stand in a *temporal disjunction* (Irvine, 2020). "Agua es vida" [water is life].

Every living assemblage in Central Chile needs water to live. However ridiculous it sounds. Like Pablo, Sofía, Isabel, and others communicated, water is a human right. But, as Alba points out, the totality of natural and cultural landscapes also need water to thrive. The lack of water

materialized through large-scale avocado production affects non-humans and humans sharing a particular space. María's articulations showcase how space is not bound and isolated. A zone of sacrifice materialized through desertification can, through its own temporal agency (Irvine, 2020), slowly or rapidly bring doom to eco-social spaces, as shown in Lamona. The chronic lack of water conjured rapidly into being by industrial activity – such as avocado monocultures – is an expression of what Haraway (2015, p. 159) observes as "…extraordinary burdens of toxic chemistry, mining, depletion of lakes and rivers under and above ground, ecosystem simplification…". In other words, "…apocalypse is already a mundane part of everyday life for millions of people around the world" (Anand, 2017, p. 227) concerning the lack of water.

The agricultural vision of Pedro de Valdivia (2020) is still vibrating throughout contemporary Chile, except that now many of the water-rich rivers he encountered have dried up. The worries of Isabel, Joa - and others living in rural areas of Chile - have arrived in urban areas such as Santiago, where water rationing procedures for human consumption are being established. Maybe the salvation, as Francisco and Martín elaborated on, will come from the human ability to engineer itself out of trouble or develop better infrastructures – circumventing desertification through the acts of desalinating ocean water, developing water capture technologies, and finding alternative ways of refilling underground water such as the hydrological highway channeling water from the water-rich south. There is *a lot of water* in Chile, especially in the South. Still, as shown throughout this text, political motivations (Polanyi, 1962) - vibrating through distinct scales and historical events such as the Water Code of 1981 - prioritize water-thirsty non-indigenous living assemblages, viewed as economic assets, at the expense of indigenous drought-resistant species, before they are exported through the channeling of water (Budds, 2013, 2020).

The Anthropocene - the Age of Monocrops - is one of the most material parts of how anthropologists can engage themselves creatively with the cultural production of biological homogenization in agricultural production (Haraway, 2015; Hetherington, 2020b). On another level, the Anthropocene speaks to a homogenization of the consumer-based lifestyles, and middle-class welfare, which requires an unprecedented effort of speed and efficiency that stands in discordance with the rate of natural circulations (Irvine, 2020; Mintz, 1996). Governmental logics of economic growth (Polanyi, 1962) and neoliberal constitutions (such as the one Pinochet and his interlocutors wrote), as expressed through monocrops of avocados

enabled through the political management of water, are not committed to "long-term more-than-human relations" (Hetherington, 2020b, p. 217) as shown with what happened in Lamona. Temporal disjunctions (Irvine, 2020) are clear to behold when both humans and non-humans sharing the same space die or must migrate because *water is absent* or channeled into agricultural commodities at the expense of others. These notions resonate with the socio-ecological meanings of 'el estallido social' and a fundamental question regarding what constitutes a *dignified life* (Han, 2012; Márquez, 2020) in human and non-human linkages?

State-market apparatuses thus face "an impossible balance between killing and protecting life" (Hetherington, 2020b, p. 143). With new agents of power filling up governmental positions, such as activists and independent professionals, promises of an uplifted rural social welfare – through a reimagined administration of water – stand in direct conflict with not only the monocrops meeting international demand but also small-scale "palteros" [avocado producers] such as Alba and Pepe that depend on water to grow their avocados, and variety of other crops, to keep living on their farms. In this regard, agribiopolitically speaking, the welfare of humans is deeply associated with extractivist practices and the welfare of non-humans that are entangled with human activity (Hetherington, 2020b). The newly elected majority of 'activist' political leaders, and writers of the constitution, personify a new "experimental possibility" (Hetherington, 2020b, p. 221), without guarantees, seeking to carve out new ways of protecting and killing life.

My informants and non-humans I met living with water shortages in Central Chile showcase how the political management of water (Anand, 2017) is a crucial analytical category looking at agricultural production – such as avocados. More broadly, *water is power*, and water within agriculture, as shown throughout this text, is the medium that enables living fruits, vegetables, and berries to be converted into "gold", i.e., monetary wealth (Polanyi, 1962). Without water, *nothing* can happen - everything depends on the surplus of this resource, like most of my informants point out. Most of us take it for granted (Anand, 2017). It is invisible to the majority of "modern man and woman" (trapped in a glacier far away, underground in aquifers, stored behind a dam construction, etc.) yet "visible" through the commodities that many of us now cherish – such as the avocado (Anand, 2017; Taussig, 2010).

Hence, drawing attention to how the administration and channeling of water in industrial agriculture (Polanyi, 1962) operate and manifest itself within distinct agricultural frontiers can provide analytical insights situated in larger anthropological debates dealing with the dichotomy regarding human and non-human welfare within a context of global warming (Haraway, 2015; Hetherington, 2020b). How these kinds of industrial activities partake in the extermination of living assemblages, such as what happens with sclerophyll forests in Central Chile, accelerates the hyperobject of climate change that eventually affects humans (Irvine, 2020; Morton, 2013).

More ethnographic studies on the frontiers of avocado monocrops, not only in Chile but also in Tanzania, Colombia, Indonesia, South Africa, Mexico, etc., wait to be discovered by the anthropological gaze. The story I have told from Central Chile is far from over and far from "completed" - all the stories and characters that directly or indirectly link themselves to the story I have told are emerging from their own temporal depths (Irvine, 2020). Thus, I encourage other ethnographers to investigate in more detail the horrors and hopes that "I" discovered in Chile from other methodological positionalities and theoretical filters.

What, culturally speaking, constitutes a dignified life in human and non-human terms? Why is it that human and non-human welfare is important to study anthropologically – and how does the welfare of one affect the other? What are forms of life worth caring for and killing? To what degree are human temporalities standing in a temporal disjunction with non-human temporalities in distinct local contexts around the globe? And how are these temporal disjunctions experienced, handled, contested, designed, and culturally understood within the Age of Monocrops? What counts as life? I think these questions can be explored in more depth ethnographically by using water as a more-than-human relational concept.

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