

My PhD research proposes to examine the relationship between gender and geography in the struggle for environmental and social justice, specifically focusing on the expansion of genetically modified soybean production in Argentina. Although soybean has become a lucrative export crop, the expansion of industrial production has serious implications for rural communities, such as Los Toldos in the province of Buenos Aires. Activist groups are calling for sound production practices, fair opportunities for small-scale farmers, and reductions in chemical use. However, gender and geography influence the objectives and approaches of the anti-soy movements. El Foro, a rural group based in Los Toldos and mainly composed of women, demands specific but limited changes to local soybean production, while Grupo Reflexión Rural, a Buenos Aires-based group mainly directed by men, oppose the entire industrial agriculture model. How does gender and geography shape the differences between these groups? Specifically, how do gender constructions articulate with gendered experiences of place to frame their justice claims and practices? And how does this case inform the struggle for gender justice in the context of social movements?

I will conduct preliminary research for eight weeks during the months of June and August of 2012. The objective is to collect necessary information to develop my research proposal. Preliminary fieldwork will help me further shape my research questions, the methods I will need to answer these questions, and the type of analysis I will employ to draw my final conclusions.

The following questions will be explored: 1) What have been the environmental and social impacts of the expansion of soybean at the local level? 2) How and why have people organized against this expansion? 3) In what ways have gender and geography influenced activists groups' framing of the problem, their objectives, and their actions against the agricultural expansion? 4) How does the gendering of activist groups define and re-define meanings and actions of justice?

To further refine these research questions, my preliminary fieldwork period will be divided in two: the first four weeks I will spend in Los Toldos, a rural community in the province of Buenos Aires (BsAs), northwest of BsAs city. I will conduct interviews with leaders and members of Foro Ambiental, the environmental group that fights against the production of soybean in the town, and which is directed mainly by local women. The interviews will help develop a better understanding of the origins of the group, their activities, their perceptions of impacts and justice, and the roles of gender in shaping their actions (questions 2 to 4, above). I will also test a preliminary survey in Los Toldos to gain a broader understanding of how local residents view the impacts of the industrial-agricultural expansion (question 1). I will meet with local government officials (Office of the Environment and the Planning Office), to gather data on the expansion of soybean production within the municipality and any concerns officially reported concerning the impact of soybean production. I will seek to acquire maps, aerial images and GIS data, which will provide a foundation for further spatial analysis during my dissertation research.

The following four weeks I will spend in BsAs city, where the Grupo Reflexión Rural (GRR) is located. I will conduct interviews with leaders and members of the group, as well as attend their weekly meetings. Information obtained from the interviews and the meetings will further my understanding of the group's origins, their objectives, and their perceptions of justice,

all contributing to refining research questions 2-4. I will arrange meetings with professors who have been working on the topic of soybean expansion and its social and environmental impacts. This will assist me in contextualizing the struggle against soybean at the local and national level and help further refine my approach to investigate question 1.

My summer research plans are feasible in part because of my well-established working relationships with both El Foro and GRR, built during previous, exploratory research trips to Argentina beginning in 2008. Furthermore, I have chosen to work with El Foro and GRR because they are representative of a broader movement against industrialized agriculture, and these two groups are reflective of the tensions associated with gendered construction of justice and action in social movements. El Foro is mainly composed of women living in a rural agricultural town and GRR is an urban-based group mainly composed of and directed by men. They both fight against the expansion of soybean in the country and used to work together in rural communities as well as in BsAs city raising awareness about the local and national impacts of Argentina's agricultural industrialization. Recently these two groups have cut ties because of differences regarding objectives and forms of actions against soy. Because of this, I believe these two groups present a great opportunity to analyze how gender and geography shape the framing of justice and their strategies for action.

Upon conclusion of this preliminary fieldwork, I will transcribe and code the interviews in order to identify central themes, which in turn will allow me to further refine my research questions and research design. I will also explore any aerial data, GIS files or maps in order to evaluate the feasibility of conducting a quantitative analysis of landscape change caused by agricultural expansion, including the challenges and appropriate field research methods to obtain and analyze quantitative land-use and environmental data. Ultimately, my preliminary research will enable me to hone my research design and research questions, and thus allow me to better contribute to our understanding of the role of gender in social and environmental justice activism associated with industrial agriculture.

The amount requested (US\$4,075) will cover all the expenses during my pre-dissertation fieldwork period in Argentina for 8 weeks from June to August of 2012. The amount can be broken-down as follows: airfare (Austin, TX – Buenos Aires, Arg; ~US\$1,700); 4 weeks stay in Los Toldos (US\$400); 4 weeks stay in Buenos Aires city (~US\$700, through ByTArgentina.com); land transportation Buenos Aires city to Los Toldos (US\$150); food allowance for 8 weeks (US\$450); books, photocopies, maps, aerial photographs (US\$300); land transportation in Los Toldos (US\$125); land transportation in Buenos Aires city (US\$250).