The Crucible of Resistance: Transformations in Agency and Consciousness through Collective Action Experiences Against Water Grabbing in Mexicali

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in partial fulfillment of the requirements for obtaining the degree of
MASTER OF ARTS IN DEVELOPMENT STUDIES

Major:
Agrarian, Food, and Environmental Studies (AFES)

Specialization:
Environment and Sustainable Development

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The Hague, The Netherlands
October 2023

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1.1 Introduction and Research Problem

On January 16, 2018, hundreds of riot police surrounded 'Rancho Mena' on the outskirts of the city of Mexicali, Baja California, Mexico. Within the cordoned-off area, dozens of protestors made up of agricultural producers, teachers, construction workers, factory workers, stay at home mothers, artists, healthcare workers, public employees – to name a few – yelled and chanted at approaching machinery commissioned by the Comisión Estatal de Servicios Públicos de Mexicali (CESPM). In the road next to the ranch, CESPM was excavating in order to install pipes to transport municipal water to the construction site of what is promised to be the largest beer brewery in Mexico, being built by US-based transnational beverage company, Constellation Brands, in order to export the Mexican beer brands exclusively to the US market. This came at a time of drought in the region and the valley's aquifer declared overexploited by the federal water commission, known as CONAGUA.

On at least three occasions, police crossed the private property line of the Mena family, using batons and rocks to beat back the protestors and occasionally dragging and arresting away those they could isolate. A journalist who was present snapped a photo young woman of 27 years, who was struck on the head with a rock thrown from behind the police line, bleeding, enraged, and preparing to throw the rock that hit her back towards the police, which quickly became the image circulated around Mexico and the world to make visible the resistance against Constellation Brands. What the photo didn't show was that up until a few hours before, she had 'left' the movement for good, and it was a worried call from a movement member she grew close to that brought her back to physically confront the Mexican state facilitating international capital.

She was not the only one who found herself in a position that at an earlier time would have seemed unlikely. The majority of those participating – those battling armed police, risking their physical safety and threats of arrest – had never so much as participated in a peaceful political rally barely a year ago. It wasn't until January of the previous year that many of those who had overtly resisted Constellation Brands in confrontations like that at Rancho Mena participated in their first act of collective political action. They joined tens of thousands of people in the streets of Mexicali's Civic Center to protest a recent hike in gas prices and a bill that would pave the way to privatize Baja California's water supply. Of those thousands, hundreds would stay in the center to make camps blocking the entrances of state and local government buildings, engage police, and participate in 'people's assemblies' around the clock.

Much is understood about the structural causes of "control grabbing" and its direct effects upon class structures in relation to control over resources There exists significant literature, both under contemporary definitions of 'control grabbing' as well as older environmental justice accounts, addressing the various political reactions toward this restructuring—be it complacency, contention, or a slew of complicated positions in between (Hall et al. 2018).

The literature on and surrounding water and resource conflict is deep and expansive, both in terms of its treatment of the global socioeconomic, political, and ecological structures in which they are embedded as well as the examination of the multiple forms of reactions of those social actors 'from below.' However, in its treatment of particularly contentious forms of reactions, the focus is primarily aimed at calculating social actors' locations within larger structures and the implications and outcomes of these reactions. Analysis tends to take a bird's eye view of the broader 'cause' and 'effects' of both external power (re)arrangements (like water grabbing) and collective action (or inaction). While these are crucial elements to understand, the evolving dynamics of the collective action itself is treated almost as a 'black box,' where pre-conditioned, fixed agency and structures interact and then produce a result (be it a failure, victory, change in resource distribution, etc.). When this interaction is discussed, it primarily takes the form of a straightforward historical recounting of events, where the characteristics of those involved and those they oppose remain static descriptors.

Yet, a deeper dive into the evolving events, reactions, and lived experiences of those immersed in water grabbing conflicts reveals a vibrant tapestry. These rich narratives shed light not only on how social relations transform and new social actors emerge — rooted in objective relations to resource control and production — but also on the nuanced ways these actors perceive themselves, both as individuals and as collective entities, within their class and the broader societal context. Far from being a purely subjective phenomena, these experiences and their consequential transformations are deeply intertwined with tangible structures and power dynamics. They possess the potential to reshape class narratives, foster a newfound class consciousness (birthing a 'class for itself'), and cultivate alliances. Such shifts not only redefine the landscape of specific water grabbing conflicts but also impact the wider realms of political, class, and resource battles. The ripples from these crucibles of resistance can resonate well beyond the immediate concerns, influencing other, seemingly unrelated, struggles and 'reactions from below.'

Through my research in Mexicali and conversations with those who have been involved in collective action against various forms of water grabbing, I have gained powerful insight into the way in which collective action experiences of various social actors, both over time or in 'bursts,' resulted from preconfigured structure-agency constellations, but also, throughout the unfolding of these experiences, social relations and the actors themselves were transformed – and thus the social terrain of struggle.

In my fieldwork in Mexicali, engaging with experiences of individuals involved in collective actions against water grabbing, I gained insight into the intricacies of how their actions and experiences both emerged from and also impacted existing structure-agency dynamics – even when they were not 'successful' in achieving their objectives. Through these interactions, I observed that not only do pre-existing social structures influence the nature of collective responses, but the very process of collective action dynamically reshapes social relations, the actors themselves, and subsequently the broader terrain and possibilities of political contention and resistance. The experiences of struggle against water grabbing projects can be themselves transformative in that they provide a site for the articulation of collective grievances by various class actors. Through this process, whether or not initial campaigns are successful, the experience of resistance itself impacts the capability of newly produced class subjects to engage in collective action, frame issues, and make demands. None of this is static, mechanistic, or smooth, but is a continual and dialectic process which also produces its own contradictions. Additionally, while the examination of local dynamics is crucial, these dynamics should not be seen as existing separately – they take place within national and global contexts and are related materially and discursively to other collective reactions.

This study in many respects is not new—rich debates around class consciousness, struggle, agency, and social movements have been and continue to be covered by a multitude of scholars in varied theoretical traditions, expanded upon below. Likewise, analyzing the central role that controlling the access to, distribution and use of natural resources has to the dynamics of capital accumulation has been extensively covered, most recently in the 'grabbing' literature rush. What I am seeking to do is to begin to fill in a small but crucial gap between these two conversations—that is to understand the transformation that takes place during periods of reactions to water grabbing, where collective agents dynamically engage in collective action. I argue, while it is crucial to look at the structural origins and effects of both water grabbing projects and social movements against them, the site of struggle between the two themselves are worthy of specific inspection in and of itself, as its dynamics reveal how agency is (re)produced within larger structures. With a limited amount of empirical data within a relatively small segment of the social relations within Mexicali, I am not attempting to make generalizable claims to capture every contour of contentious politics within Mexicali, however my hope is by engaging in this analysis I will add to an ongoing body of knowledge that can illuminate further inquiry into these questions.

1.2 Research Question

Given these gaps in scholarship around political reactions to watergrabbing, I will seek to answer the primary question of: "How do collective action experiences of various social actors in Mexicali emerge from and subsequently influence structure-agency dynamics, and how does this transformation reshape the agency of those involved and broader terrain of political contention and resistance?" While there are an infinite amount of categories and lenses worthy of exploring to answer this question, I will analyze various 'key' collective action experiences observed or relayed to me by those involved in the struggle against Constellation Brands, and discuss the way those experiences transformed collective efficacy, issue framing and diffusion, and cultures of solidarity.

1.3 Thesis

I argue that the various forms of 'classed' experiences in resisting water grabbing in Mexico, even when there was a lack of a clear overall victory (at the time of research), was ultimately transformative of social-relations in Mexicali and developed a class consciousness among a diverse range of actors with profound effects. Three ways that class consciousness, or collective agency, broadly defined as the ability of a group of actors to make sense of the world in which they are situated and to change it, was transformed through collective action experiences: elevated an enduring sense of collective efficacy among participants, turning bystanders or otherwise apolitical actors into long-term advocates for their perceived class interests, broadly defined; coalesced effective issue framing, which diffused between classes and shifted onto struggles beyond water, refining their capacity for articulating demands which, while originating from the immediate issue of water grabbing, expanded to encompass broader socio-political struggles; and the development of organizational forms, institutions, and practices that constructed an enduring, impactful solidarity amongst participants, which expanded their resilience and resolve. This not only redefined their role as active agents within Mexicali's social and political landscapes but also paved the way for future collaborations and coalitions among varied groups with shared concerns. By actively engaging in collective action against water grabbing, these actors not only challenged the external forces that threatened their perceived interests, but also underwent a personal and collective metamorphosis.

However, contours and forms of these collective action experiences and events were conditioned by larger and longer-term political, economic, and hydrosocial structures and transformations taking place in the Mexicali Valley, as well as the relationship of these actors to class structures – but did not place rigid bounds on the actors nor predetermine an outcome. Class consciousness, a crucial element of class as a social relation, itself was being (re)constructed through resistance to water grabbing.

These transformative struggles, underscored by their experiences, have implications beyond the immediate context of Mexicali, suggesting that the experience of resistance in some cases can be as significant as the immediate outcomes or objectives of such endeavors – and are worthy as a subject of academic analysis when contemplating the totality of factors in the dynamics of 'control grabbing' and reaction to it.

The narratives of collective action presented in my research provide rich insight into teasing out a small part in the intricate, and dynamic relationship between structure, agency, and class consciousness, allowing us to transcend dichotomous analysis of social movements and 'reactions from below' that either overemphasizes static, overdetermined structures and objective relations or individual-focussed voluntaristic moral agency. Rather, the experiences documented and analyzed in this paper support a dialectic analysis of structure and agency.

1.4 Theoretical Discussion and Analytical Framework

1.4.1 Water grabbing and control grabbing

The academic discourse on resource grabbing, particularly land and water, underscores the appropriation of natural resources by powerful actors, often at the expense of marginalized communities (Mehta, Veldwisch, and Franco 2012: 195). Rooted in political economy and Marxist traditions, contemporary analyses often invoke Harvey's "accumulation by dispossession," emphasizing three salient features of modern land grabbing: its nature as 'control grabbing' which extends beyond mere ownership to encompass power over resource use; the significance of scale, both in terms of physical size and capital involved, cautioning against a narrow land-centric view that might overlook the broader dynamics of capital; and its occurrence within the nexus of converging global crises, including food, energy, climate change, and financial shifts, with the emerging resource demands (Borras et al., 2012 in Mehta, Veldwisch, and Franco 2012: 195-196). 'Water grabbing,' then, denotes the expropriation of water resources by capital, often to the detriment of local communities, transforming water from a public good into a commodity, thereby shifting risks and profits between the public and private sectors (Veldwisch, Franco and Mehta, 2018: 60). This phenomenon manifests in various forms, from privatizing water infrastructure to commodifying water for diverse uses, and often involves state-backed capitalist accumulation strategies. However, these actions often spark resistance from diverse groups and class backgrounds, including farmers, environmentalists, and indigenous communities (ibid).

Veldwisch, Franco, and Mehta (2018), citing the growing literature of 'water grabbing' have noted how water's unique, "fluid" characteristics interact with ambiguous and often unequal power dynamics, legal ambiguities, and administrative complexities (60) This, along with water's "powerful material, discursive, and symbolic characteristics," make "water grabbing a site for conflicts with potential drastic impacts on current and future uses and benefits of water" (ibid).

1.4.2 Water Grabbing and The State

In terms of the State's role in control over resources, Parenti (2014) argues that "the modern capitalist state" is itself a "relationship with nature" and an "environment making institution" with a core, fundamental role of "[m]anaging, mediating, delivering, and producing the environment" (2). Indeed in the case of the Mexicali Valley, as with others, the state has been fundamental in facilitating land and water grabbing for capital, in various manifestations depending on the particular phase in its relationship to global capitalist accumulation cycles. McCulligh and Tretreault (2018), in analyzing water grabbing specific to the Mexican context, provides a helpful shorthand of "institutionalized corruption" to elevate the conversation of the state's role in facilitating control grabbing above notions of isolated, individual acts of 'corruption,' and embedding it in the systematic, patterned "preference in crafting and implementing environmental regulations that lean towards benefiting private entities at the expense of public welfare" (578). This involves bypassing environmental regulations to grant access to valuable natural resources, such as water, to capital-driven extractive industries. In Mexico, water regulatory bodies consistently display this form of 'institutionalized corruption' by overlooking and permitting violations related to groundwater extraction by private sectors, and by endorsing projects that pave the way for capital gains via rent acquisition (ibid.). As detailed in the below chapters, the grievances against "institutionalized corruption" vis-a-vis water grabbing made state institutions a major target for collective action in Mexicali. However, while some may frame the legal, illegal, and legally ambiguous actions in facilitating control-grabbing as 'corruption,' this could also be seen as the state's intrinsic functions under neoliberal capitalism.

1.4.3 Beyond a static application of class: agency, struggle, and transformational experience

Control grabbing literature, whether it centers primarily on land or water, has documented countless instances of conflicts and struggles 'from below' over the distribution of these resources – or, in many cases as well, incorporation or acquiescence (Edelman et al. 2017). There is also extensive literature specifically covering water conflicts, 'water justice' movements, or as Boelens et al. (2018)

describe, constestations within "hydrosocial territories." As a whole, this literature does detailed work in mapping out actors 'from below' and 'from above' involved in contests over the control, use, and knowledge production of water (12). This includes descriptions of class actors, embedded in larger global and historical dynamics of capitalism (ibid).

However, there is an apparent gap in integrating the study of these conflicts with relational or dialectic theories of class and class struggle, and social movement theory. This oversight potentially limits our understanding of the diverse actors and motivations involved in water-related conflicts, the agentic potential and relationship of these actors vis-a-vis structures, and emergent transformations in and among the actors participating in these struggles and movements. Additionally, class analysis and mainstream social movement theory themselves seldom overlap in a productive way. While social movement studies have delved deep into forms of collective contestation, they often operate without a comprehensive theory of capital, and class relations (Melucci 1995, Snow et al. 2000). This results in an inadequate exploration of the relationship between these movements, the state, and broader power relations within the capitalist context, although some social movement theorists provide very useful analytical tools, described more below (Engelhardt & Moore, 2017: 1). Furthermore, analytical gaps tend to exist between the concepts of class and struggle. Critical political economy, with its emphasis on class, often sidelines the concept of struggle (Engelhardt & Moore, 2017: 272). Conversely, social movement studies, with their focus on struggle and collective action, frequently neglect the concept of class, leading to a limited intersection between the two fields (Engelhardt & Moore, 2017: 2).

Bieler and Moore (2023) offers a critical intervention into the discourse on water grabbing, emphasizing the need to understand these struggles within the broader framework of capitalist dynamics, but also expanding our conceptions of 'class' as it relates to struggles over water. By adopting a historical materialist approach, Bieler and Moore (2023) attempt to bridge this gap, suggesting that struggles against water expropriation can be seen as mediated forms of potential class struggle (2). Such struggles, they argue, are not merely reactions to immediate material conditions but are deeply intertwined with broader capitalist processes of exploitation and expropriation.

From a traditional class lens applied to water grabbing, water is seen as an input to agricultural/industrial production or contributes to rent-making, and the control of which implicates direct power relations between capital, labor, and the peasantry. This overly-economistic attempt to draw lines between class and resource struggles, there tends to be a dominant focus on rigid, static categories of class, where class analysis and investigation becomes a matter of charting out the objective, direct relations to production and capitalist accumulation processes involved in a particular contestation over resources. The site of analysis, when this lens is applied to class or social conflict, tends towards a 'top-down' view that neglects the processes and dynamism of collective action and class struggle themselves.

While these objective relations are indeed critical to analysis, moving beyond this, Bieler and Moore (2023) employ the social reproduction theories of Bhattacharya (2017) to highlight social reproduction, and water's role in it, as essential for capitalist accumulation, while also emphasizing the interconnectedness of various forms of oppression within the capitalist system. By understanding this, they argue "it becomes clear that the worker's existence extends beyond the workplace and that the workplace becomes just one moment in the reproduction of capitalism and the associated class relations" (7). Water, given its unique role in agriculture, industry, energy, but also social reproduction – is a fundamental aspect of social reproduction and human survival. Therefore struggles over its control, even beyond cases where water flows are directly connected to production "have the potential to be mediated forms of class struggle against the reproduction of capital in general" (10).

This intervention allows us to understand that "class struggle occurs throughout the *social factory*, inclusive of both the workplace and the sphere of social reproduction in all its different manifestations" (9, emphasis mine). Such an analysis helps us better understand the multiple actors involved in collective action around water, including cross-class alliances, without ascribing the participation of non-proletariat

or non-peasant actors as simply acting out of some version of 'post-class morality,' that ascribed by some modern social movement theorists (Olofsson 1988:16).

Beyond understanding the social reproductive role of water, other authors have shown, struggles around natural resources and the environment can be vectors for 'malcontent' classes contesting broader logics of neoliberal developmentalism (See Arsel 2015). Conceptualizing water struggles as class struggles provides a more comprehensive understanding of the dynamics at play and underscores the importance of viewing subsequent collective action not as isolated incidents but as part of a larger fabric of resistance against capitalist accumulation. This perspective not only enriches the discourse on water grabbing but also opens up avenues for a better understanding of the active unfolding of solidarity and collective action across diverse social movements.

Returning to the problem of the overly economistic or stratified understanding of class – while questions such as "Who owns what? Who does what? Who gets what? What do they do with it?"a la Henry Bernstein (2010) are crucial components to begin analysis on understanding conflicts over control of resources and agrarian political economy, this should not be mistaken as all that 'class analysis' can and should entail. While this approach is useful in understanding socioeconomic structures, and lend a basis for the motivations and material constraints that actors face, it does not encompass the dynamics of class formation through active struggle, nor includes subjective experiences of 'class consciousness' – of which are crucial for unpacking agency in collective action.

A return to some of Marx's original formulations of class formation is useful in reorienting ourselves towards this. One starting point is the often-cited quote from Marx's Poverty of Philosophy Chapter Two, in which he states:

> "Economic conditions had first transformed the mass of the people of the country into workers. The combination of capital has created for this mass a common situation, common interests. This mass is thus already a class as against capital, but not yet for itself. In the struggle, of which we have noted only a few phases, this mass becomes united, and constitutes itself as a class for itself. The interests it defends become class interests. But the struggle of class against class is a political struggle."

Fantasia (1989) rightly critiques the trend of siloing class 'in itself' into objective measurements as discussed above and separating 'for itself' as a "'subjective' problem what extent class members are conceptually aware of a class structure, whether or not they employ a language of class, or whether they identify themselves as belonging to one class or another" (8-9). Rather, Marx's quote points to active struggling, uniting, and constituting, a "process of class consciousness," that dialectically links these falsely separated 'objective' structures and 'subjective' aspects of class formation (9). The centrality of process and action cannot be ignored (ibid). Cox (1987) echoes this notion, stating that "[c]lass is to be understood as a real historical relationship and not as merely an analytical category in the mind of the analyst. Whether or not social classes exist is a matter for historical investigation. The social basis for the existence of classes comes from the way in which people are positioned in production processes, but if the production process creates the potentiality for classes, it does not make classes. *Social practices shaped by events give people the common experience of class identity and of collective action*" (20).

E.P. Thompson has provided key interventions in an attempt to reorient an orthodox Marxist theory of class towards a dialectical understanding of class formation and experience, which is worth quoting at length:

> "classes do not exist as separate entities, look around, find an enemy class, and then start to struggle. On the contrary, people find themselves in a society structured in determined ways (crucially, but not exclusively, in productive relations), they experience exploitation (or the need to maintain power over those whom they exploit), they identify points of antagonistic interest, they commence to struggle around these issues and in the process of struggling they discover themselves as

> classes, they come to know this discovery as class-consciousness. Class and class-consciousness are always the last, not the first, stage in the real historical process" (Thompson 1978: 149).

Piven and Cloward (1978) echo this experience-grounded analysis in their 'poor people's movements' by stating "[f]irst, people experience deprivation and oppression within a concrete setting, not as the end product of large and abstract processes. It is the concrete experience that molds their discontent into specific grievances against specific targets"(21). People do not "experience" abstract processes like "monopoly capitalism," rather, "it is the daily experience of people that shapes their grievances, establishes the measure of their demands, and points out the targets of their anger" (22).

Emergent class consciousness therefore is shaped by individuals' lived experiences within capitalist structures and their specific histories. This understanding of class consciousness is closely linked to the broader notion of collective agency, which we can roughly define as the ability of a group of actors to make sense of the world in which they are situated and to change it. Following the formulation above, it is both a product of and a response to capitalist relations, but never completely determined by them. As with class consciousness, agency can be transformed through collective experience of struggle, or collective action.

As stated above, it is precisely these transformative experiences in the context of collective action against water grabbing in Mexicali that will be the focus of this paper. While there are an infinite amount of analytical directions I can use to explore and trace these transformations, I will focus on collective efficacy and cognitive liberation; issue framing and frame diffusion; and 'cultures of solidarity.'

1.4.4 Collective Efficacy and Cognitive Liberation

In this paper, collective efficacy signifies the shared conviction among group members in their combined capacity to critically engage with, interpret, actively confront, and change the dominant power structures that influence their daily lives. This is not a passive understanding but an active, dynamic realization of their role and potential within the broader structural landscape. It embodies the collective's understanding of their position within the broader socio-economic system and their potential to enact meaningful change through united action.

Tracking collective efficacy, as Piven and Cloward (1978) argue, is crucial in examining protests movements, especially when "people who ordinarily consider themselves helpless come to believe that they have some capacity to alter their lot" (4). This definition also tracks closely with McAdam's concept of 'cognitive liberation,' or "the process by which members of a group come to recognize the contingency of the existing system of authority and/or their place within that system. This recognition is accompanied by a sense that the system can and should be changed. Cognitive liberation thus involves two interrelated beliefs: first, that the system is no longer responsive to the vested group interests of the aggrieved population and, second, that it is right and *possible* for the aggrieved group to alter or replace the existing system through collective action." (McAdam, 1982: 51, emphasis mine). This recognition, as we'll see later in this paper, emerges from 'classed' experiences and varied, direct experiences within collective action. However, it's essential to note that this 'cognitive liberation' and sense of collective efficacy isn't ephemeral or merely psychological. It is deeply rooted in the real-world dynamics of changing social relations and political opportunities, which can shift and evolve over time. While some of these shifts might be attributed to broader systemic or political changes, they are often, as in the case under examination here, a direct outcome of the strategic organizing, resilience, and actions developed throughout a movement's trajectory. Collective efficacy developed and was continually built upon, leading to lasting participation and increased willingness to confront power among movement participants. This interplay between collective efficacy and the evolving political landscape underscores

the intricate link between agency and structure, between the potential for change and the constraints that seek to limit it.

1.4.5 Issue Framing and Diffusion

The concepts of 'framing' and 'collective action frames' are salient among social movement and collective action studies (Benford and Snow, 2000). Common to this field, it refers to the process of constructing and presenting ideas or narratives in a way that shapes perceptions, defines problems, and promotes specific interpretations and solutions. Benford and Snow (2000) describe it as "an active, processual phenomenon that implies agency and contention at the level of reality construction" (614). In their survey of literature, they identify three "core framing tasks" in social movements: diagnostic framing (identifying problems and attributing blame), prognostic framing (articulating solutions and strategies), and motivational framing (providing reasons or incentives for action) (615). While this concept rarely interacts with more explicit conversations on class relations and economic structures, there has been a focus on how "political opportunity structures constrain and facilitate collective action frames" (628). While frames are not completely determined by existing structural arrangements or by class locations and experiences, I argue, in my case study, that they can be heavily influenced by them. Here there is resonance in Wright's (1997) method of analyzing generalized class consciousness which "involves the ways in which the perceptions of the facts of a situation have a class content and are thus consequential for class actions" (Wright 1997: 196). Aligning with my analysis of class consciousness above, and with the emphasis by Benford and Snow (2000) on framing as an active and negotiated *process*, my paper pays special attention to the *transformations* of issue frames throughout the collective action experience and processes therein. These transformations and processes in framing shape the collective agency of movement participants (the 'ability to make sense of the world') and dynamically shape the trajectory, demands, and targets of the movement against water grabbing in Mexicali. Indeed, there were even formal processes formed for this framing to take place.

Key in these processes were 'frame diffusions' between movement participants in Mexicali, and ultimately, between different movements. Participants, bringing their own class experiences, were able to synthesize different angles of issue frames into a collective understanding and mobilization frame. This was not always even or without contradiction given the differentiated classes, namely rural, agricultural classes and urban classes of labor. This frame diffusion is part of a broader 'diffusion process' explained by Tarrow (2012), in which forms of contention and collective action, which includes collective action framing but also broader categories such as ideas, tactics, practices and innovations, are spread between and across social movements.

1.4.6 Cultures of Solidarity

Fantasia (1989)'s research explores the ways in which workers develop and maintain a sense of solidarity, even in the face of significant challenges and obstacles. Grounded in his view, which this paper subscribes to, that class is a "dynamic phenomenon," he is interested in "cultural expressions" of the "lived experience of class, and experience shaped by the processes of interaction" (14). Explicitly rejecting the "seamless" and "cohesive, integrated whole" conception of culture of many in the anthropology field, he uses the plural "cultures" to describe actions, expressions and practices within the process of collective, oppositional action. Cultures of solidarity, therefore, are "tactical activities, organizational forms, and institutional arrangements" that "represent the expression of solidarity and its creation simultaneously in the process of their development" (20). These can range from larger organizational structures, practices, and institutions built from collective action, to the 'praxis of daily life' or specific events or actions that reproduce and strengthen relations between those involved in class

struggle[1]. In my examination of the movement in Mexicali, the development of these 'cultures of solidarity' were crucial in maintaining sustained collective action, especially in difficult situations, and transformed relations between movement participants and between the movement and their oppositional forces.

1.4.7 Event-Experience Framework

Given the centrality of experience to my framework, and that in my interviews, informants recounted many of their experiences in terms of various events, I find William H. Sewell Jr. 's concept of "eventful temporality" a useful analytical lens. "Eventful temporality" underscores the transformative power of significant events in shaping historical and social trajectories (Sewell 2005, 100). Rather than viewing history as a linear progression, Sewell posits that change often occurs in intense bursts, driven by these pivotal events. These events, while sometimes culminating from long-standing processes, possess the capacity to introduce unforeseen directions in social movements and experiences thereof. Shifts like these have been understood by some scholars, dating back to Marx, as 'explosions of consciousness': bursts of collective action (be they disorganized or organized) which disturb 'normal' life and provides awareness and moments of learning that cyclically shapes conditions for future 'bursts' (Mann 1973: 45). Likewise, it is through this continual building of awareness, or consciousness, that allows for sustained, coherent political action and organization which moves beyond *just* sporadic action, and evolves into continued struggle. In recognizing "[l]umpiness, rather than smoothness, [as] the normal texture of historical temporality," this paper recognizes the lumpiness of event-experiences of informants (Sewell 1996, 843). Some event-experiences led to more rapid transformations than others, some built overtime in a more mundane, day-to-day nature. Overall, this focus on event-experiences, and the content of my fieldwork data collection has led me to structure this paper around certain conjunctural event-experiences and their aftermaths to track transformations that occurred.

1.5 Research Methodology

Semi-Structured and Unstructured Interviews

My fieldwork took place in Mexicali, Mexico from August 11, 2018 to September 19, 2018, with 5 days within this period spent in Puebla, and the State of Mexico. During field work I conducted at least 37 semi-structured interviews (see Appendix A) with members of various social movement organizations, primarily Mexicali Resiste (MR), Comunidad de Baja California Resiste (CBCR), and the Comité en Defensa del Agua de Baja California (Comité). Additionally, I was able to speak to 2 government officials with detailed knowledge of water politics in Baja California. These interviews were recorded with an audio device, and relevant quotes transcribed. I also had a notepad present to write important quotes or comments during interviews. I would also write down relevant quotes I heard during informal conversations, or at events. Due to the nature of my fieldwork, interviews were conducted in a variety of manners and circumstances. While some were formal, semi-structured, and scheduled sit-down interviews, others were impromptu conversations and took a flexible, unstructured form. Some conversions took place over an hour long, and some 15 minutes or so. On at least 6 occasions, I organized 'focus groups' where I spoke with several movement participants at a time (see Appendix B). Some of these I scheduled beforehand, some were group conversations that took place

[1] Though less analytically sharp – I will note there is a level of emotional bond necessary between those engaged in collective action that may originate in shared grievances or class experiences, but ultimately is needed to sustain a struggle, and we can understand (re)production of 'cultures of solidarity' as playing a role in that sustainment.

before or after a group activity or event. Due to the political sensitivity of the topic, and being a foreigner that had to build trust with informants, I heavily used a "chain referral" method (Penrod et al., 2003) and "snowball sampling" where one informant would vouch for me and recommend and introduce me to a new one, and so on. I also made notes and recorded, with permission, many of these informal conversations.

I did not arrive to the field with rigid or structured sets of questions, and usually my conversations were free flowing. Across each interview or conversation however, I was able to ascertain from informants: 1) their personal and family histories, including occupational; 2) the trajectory of their experience with collective action and politics more generally; 3) stated motivations for past participation in collective action, and why this participation was sustained; 4) the ways in which they framed and comprehended their movement, the issues they were fighting for, and broader analysis of socioeconomic and political views. Given my lack of clear thesis topic or focus when arriving to the field, I applied more of a grounded theory approach, in which my initial conversations developed throughout my interview process informed which questions to ask in subsequent interviews, and I would return to previous informants to supplement with further questions as my analysis of the situation sharpened (Strauss and Corbin 1990). The interviews provided me with a rich collection of primary, ethnographic data. In my paper, I make use of extensive quotations to highlight the informants' own articulation of their experience, which cannot be captured by my summarization.

Participant Observation and Multi-Sited Ethnography

A salient feature of my fieldwork was my method of participant observation and multi-sited ethnography. During my stay in Mexicali, I was in almost constant contact with members of social movements. I resided in the apartment complex utilized by the Mexicali Resiste media team, which provided daily informal interactions. I also visited Baja California Resiste members at their protest camp at *La Arboleda* frequently. Throughout my fieldwork, I attended events, assembly meetings, workshops, direct actions, and protests of the previous groups mentioned in various locations and environments (see Appendix C). Sometimes I would accompany movement participants for lunches, dinners, and social events I was invited to. My level and quality of my 'participation' varied throughout—sometimes taking the form of more 'fly on the wall' ethnography and at other times more intimate and interactive forms with those I had built the most rapport with. During (when possible) and after these experiences I took extensive field notes, and recorded with either video, audio, or photography, when given permission.

Digital Ethnography

In leading up to and during my fieldwork, I relied notably on 'digital ethnography,' which is becoming increasingly important when studying social movements that blend both online and offline activity (Mosca 2014). Within the social movement circles of Mexicali, social media is extensively used in order to organize, communicate, and debate. Through Facebook, Youtube, and the website run by Mexicali Resiste, I was able to contextualize myself with news, events, and protests in Mexicali before I arrived. While in Mexicali, most people I met 'added' me as friends and to various groups on Facebook. This provided a rich resource, as daily my newsfeed would begin to fill with photos, posts, and comments related to not only resisting Constellation Brands but other political concerns. Reading comment discussions and arguments allowed me to further understand the cleavages and multiple perspectives in the community. Particularly helpful was the extensive use of the live video function. Almost daily, individuals or pages would document a variety of events and provide their own voice-over commentary or interview participants, with various versions of the same event, giving me access to multiple perspectives of the same event. This method was also extremely useful in identifying future informants, formulating questions, triangulating information, and assisting me in establishing rapport with those I met in the field.

1.6 Ethical Considerations, Reflexivity, and Limitations to Data Collection

It is important as well to note my own role as a 'researcher' in the field. My own political posture, socioeconomic position, and emotional encounters necessarily affects the knowledge production process. Rather than an objective, detached observer, I carry with my own preconceptions that shape not only how I went about my data collection, but also the analytical directions I took throughout it. Though obvious, it is worth noting that although being born three hours away from Mexicali, being a US citizen and from a relatively privileged class, all affected the nature of how I was perceived and my perception of those I came in contact with. The nature of my methods also put me in intimate contact with the subjects of my research, forcing me to constantly negotiate roles and blurring the lines between what was strictly part of the 'research process' and what was 'life.'

Politically speaking, I am sympathetic to many of the objectives of the various social movement organizations, and ideologically I resonated with multiple members of the group Mexicali Resiste. With a few I had the closest contact with, I engaged in political debate and, when solicited, I shared my point of view on the state of the social movements from both an academic and activist/organizer perspective. Rather than ignoring these sympathies, they must be put front and center and taken into constant consideration as part of this knowledge production process.

The nature of my fieldwork also has led to limitations and 'lopsidedness' to my data collection. First, it was far easier for me to have daily contact with members residing in the urban areas of Mexicali, though I made many trips out to rural agricultural areas or met with rural movement members when they came out to events in the urban center. I lived in the apartment building of Mexicali Resiste's media team, leading me to have the most success in accessing their organization's members, spaces, internal documents, and their rich collection of media documentation. Furthermore, my initial perceptions of social movement politics and issues of water coming into the field were heavily influenced by Mexicali Resiste members, something I had to balance with exploration outside of their circles. Nevertheless, I was able to gain meaningful insight into other groups and spaces.

As far as ethical considerations, I informed the individuals who I interviewed about the purpose of the research, as well as asked for verbal consent to use the information gathered in my paper. However, in order to conduct my research, especially audio documentation and access to more sensitive conversational spaces, I was asked to keep members' names anonymous and at many times not to divulge certain pieces of information. I explicitly promised not to share audio recorded during interviews or conversations. When I arrived, several movement members were dealing with legal persecution by state and local authorities. Given security and legal concerns, I was also asked not to publicly publish this particular research, with an agreement that any future published work would be a collaborative project with the movement organizations. In order to honor that, and to avoid complications, I will be using pseudonyms for all respondents and have requested that the board not publish this paper.

1.7 Chapter Overview

Chapter 2 explores the political-economic-hydrological background of the Mexicali Valley through the 20th until the beginning of the Constellation Brands project, providing the macrostructural, material structures that gave birth to the Mexicali movement. Chapter 3 traces the initial evolution of the movement through various formative experiences of events and processes that took place such major protests, assemblies, camps,. Chapter 4 continues tracing experiences and events at a more matured stage in the movement and examines the formalizing of organizations and camps; returns to the Rancho Mena confrontation discussed above; and alliance built with other movements.

Chapter 2 - Mexicali Political-Economic-Hydrological Background

While my research and analytical focus centers on the experiences of collective action within a relatively small span of 18 months in the Mexicali Valley, it is crucial to locate it within its broader socio-economic-ecological, which provides, to borrow from Braudel (1960), the 'longue durée' backdrop to the l'événementielle (event history). Indeed this history constructed the terrain (both physically and socioeconomically) upon which the Constellations Brand brewery was constructed and through which the various political reactions to it were fought – though it was never pre-determined. This is not meant to be an exhaustive history, but an attempt to orient the reader.

2.1 A City born by a River

The Mexicali valley, situated at the northeastern tip of the Baja California peninsula, was largely an arid desert until the end of the 19th century. The California Development Company was permitted by the Díaz government to construct canals to divert water for Imperial Valley's agriculture (Luna-Peña: 83). In 1902, the Colorado River Land Company (CRLC) took over 354,438 hectares, investing in irrigation and transport. Populations from Mexico and Chinese immigrants were brought in to cultivate cotton for export, a crop that couldn't thrive in the US due to labor and land constraints (84). By 1910, few families controlled most of the land (Wilder 2002: 205). The 1917 Constitution, via Article 27, mandated land redistribution through the ejido system[2] (Kelly 1994: 542). Lázaro Cárdenas's administration, starting in 1934, escalated this redistribution (Kelly 1994: 553). In the Mexicali Valley, frustration with the persistent and legally questionable CLRC latifundia culminated in the 1937 land occupations by small cultivators and peasants, known as El Asalto de las Tierras. Consequently, Cárdenas expropriated significant land from the CRLC, much of which turned into *ejidal* communities that notably had larger, irrigated, and more productive parcels than other regions in Mexico (Martínez Zazueta et al. 2016: 12-13).

2.2 Mexico's "Golden Straightjacket"

In 1982, Mexico began to experience economic turmoil due to a severe debt crisis and inflation following more than a decade of borrowing against oil revenues for large public investments (Greenberg *et al.* 2012: 3). During the next few years, the World Bank, International Monetary Fund, US Federal Reserve, and the US Department of Treasury bailed out Mexico with conditional loans, commonly known as a 'structural adjustment program' (SAP) (Greenberg *et al.* 2012: 4). As the crisis kept growing, by 1985 Mexico took out new SAP loans, which necessitated large scale elimination of tariffs, coinciding with an entrance into the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (Greenberg *et al.* 2012: 5).

In 1988, President Carlos Salinas de Gortari took office and began a campaign of privatizing of state industries. Part of his mission "rationalize" the agricultural sector by eliminating most subsidies that went to small-scale *campesinos*. Under the growing hegemony of neoliberalism, the *ejido* sector was viewed by the World Bank and government technocrats as an impediment to developing a modern economy. In 1992, Salinas's government implemented a reform of Article 27 of the constitution in order to pave the way for privatizing the *ejidal* sector—allowing for individual titling, mortgaging, and leasing of *ejidal* land (Greenberg *et al.* 2012: 8). That same year, Mexico passed the National Water Law which sought to decentralize water management, create a market for trading water rights, and decouple water rights from

[2] The ejido system in Mexico refers to a land tenure system where lands are held communally by agricultural communities, called "ejidatarios." Originating from pre-Columbian traditions and formalized after the Mexican Revolution in the 1917 Constitution, the system *intended* to prevent the monopolization of land by large landowners. Lands under ejido ownership are not privately owned; rather, they are held in trust by the Mexican government for the ejido or community. While individuals can farm specific parcels and pass them on to their heirs, they cannot sell or mortgage them outside the ejido community. The system underwent significant changes with the 1992 reforms, allowing for more privatized land use rights and the ability to rent or lease ejido lands, described in more detail below.

land tenure (Wilder and Lankao 2006: 1982). In conjunction with the North American Free Trade Agreement, which forced smallholders to compete with cheap imports from primarily the United States, these reforms significantly transformed the countryside, leading to waves 'depeasantization,' which freed up large reserve armies of migratory and urban labor (Otero 2004: 24). Through the promise of comparative advantage-led development, Mexico's relationship to global accumulation dynamics transformed, and transnational corporations took advantage of the expansion of special economic zones, known as *maquiladoras* on Mexico's northern border, which took advantage of tax and tariff-free incentives and cheap Mexican labor (ibid.)

2.3 PANista 'Revolution'

In the political arena, Baja California took the country by surprise when in 1989, Ernesto Ruffo Appel became the first governor belonging to a party other than the *Partido Revolucionario Institucional* (PRI), which dominated all levels of electoral politics since the Mexican Revolution (Hernández Vicencio 2021: 9). The election of Ruffo Appel, of the more traditional and conservative *Partido Acción Nacional* (PAN), was a watershed moment that would turn Baja California into a stronghold for *PANista* politics, paving way for Vicente Fox's 2000 presidential victory over the PRI. Since 1989, PAN has controlled Baja California's governor's office, strengthening the party's apparatus and most importantly dismantling the PRI's – which had a particularly strong hold in union and *campesino* organizations in the agricultural areas, most notably in the Mexicali Valley. In 2013, Francisco Arturo Vega de Lamadrid, known commonly as "Kiko Vega," was elected as PAN's governor of Baja California and held the office until 2019.

2.4 "Neoliberal Water Utopia" and Mexicali Valley Today

Wilder and Whiteford (2006) argue that the "role played by water in the transformation of agriculture is integral to understanding major shifts in Mexico's political-economic landscape, and second, that Mexico's hearty embrace of free trade has intersected with other components of its liberalization strategy to create an economic straitjacket for ejidal producers" (342). The National Water Law of 1992 was heavily influenced by the United States and funded by the World Bank, who in the same year released a report on Integrated Water Resource Management that called for improving the allocative efficiency of water by first and foremost treating it as an economic good (commodity) and calling for the privatization of its provisioning (Wilder and Lankao 2006: 1979). The commodification of water, tradable water rights, and decentralization of provisioning and irrigation, couched in neoliberal logic, became the hegemonic paradigm for a new water rights regime (ibid.). Using the language of 'stakeholder participation,' the National Water Law, following the World Bank's lead, decentralized water management from the federal government to states and local "water user's associations" (WUAs) (ibid.). The World Bank and Inter-American Development Bank financed nearly 50 percent of total costs in facilitating the water reform (Wilder and Whiteford 2006: 344).

While *ejidos* technically could choose to sell out water rights and lease land on a voluntary basis, the structural dynamics of the post-SAP and NAFTA era furthered a class differentiation of the countryside, where smaller producers had no choice but to sell off once inalienable rights to large agribusiness, industry, and newly privatized municipal water service providers (Otero 2004: 30). Those that do remain cultivating, due to the 'full-cost recovery principles,' where decentralized irrigation districts must be completely financially self-sufficient, have seen their water costs dramatically increase (Wilder and Lankao 2006: 1989). Furthermore, the supposed democratic governance of irrigation districts implies equal footing for all users—despite the fact that those cultivators with more land gain more access to more water, as well as the existing political-economic power relations between cultivators (ibid).

The Constellation Brands brewery came at a time when both the State and Federal government

have all but completely abandoned *ejidatarios.* A few transnational corporations, with large private holdings and corresponding water concessions, dominate the bank of the Lower Colorado River, growing primarily cotton, wheat, and asparagus for export (Brun et al. 2010: 4). However, it is estimated over 50 percent of *ejido* land is currently out of production due to lack of adequate state support, and competition from the larger producers (Cortez-Lara 2014: 6). Many smaller private holdings that do produce have become contract farmers for cash crops. A significant number of former agrifood producers now seek precarious, waged work in the *maquiladoras,* or become seasonal farm laborers in the Imperial Valley on the US side of the border (Otero 2018: 15).

While there is growing industrial usage of water in Mexicali, which is discussed below, it is important to highlight that large scale industrial agriculture and *ejidal* agriculture (which uses industrial practices and flood irrigation techniques) uses more than 80% of the available water source of Mexicali (Martínez Zazueta 2017).

2.5 US-Mexico Water Relations and Water Scarcity

In addition to its promulgation of a neoliberal framework on Mexico and international institutions, the United States' physical control and agricultural water management has been a major determinant of water usage and scarcity in the Mexicali Valley. As mentioned, water in the Mexicali Valley derives from the Colorado River, which begins in the United States, crosses the border to Mexico, and ends in the Sea of Cortez. The seepage by the river feeds into a sub-soil aquifer in the Mexicali Valley, which is exploited for agriculture, industry, and human consumption. Upriver, the United States diverts water through dams, aqueducts, and canals for agricultural and human use (Cortez-Lara 2014: 10). In 1942 the US finished construction of the All-American Canal, which runs parallel to the Mexican border in order to irrigate agriculture in the Imperial Valley (a large agricultural area to the north of the Mexicali Valley, across the border). While reducing the amount of water flowing across the border via the Colorado River, for decades the canal actually contributed to the Mexicali Valley aquifer through seepage (Cortez-Lara 2014:12).

There were various conflicts and treaties in the early 20th century governing the usage of the Colorado River, with the Treaty of 1944 establishing more formal standards of water use and the creation of the United States-dominated International Boundary and Water Commission (IBWC) to manage infrastructure, pollution, usage, and other issues between the two countries regarding sharing the Colorado River. Importantly, it governed the fixed amount of water Mexico was promised annually from the river flow. A particular noteworthy conflict was a 'Salinity Crisis,' in the 1960s and 1970s, when United States agriculturalists produced significant salty runoff into the river, rendering the water damaging to crops in the Mexicali Valley (Sánchez-Munguía 2011). After *campesino* protests pressuring negotiation, this crisis was eventually resolved with an agreement in the quality, not just quantity, of water allowed to Mexico from the river.

A more significant crisis, which continues to impact the Valley today, was the lining of the All-American Canal in the early 2000s. As mentioned previously, the canal allowed seepage of water it carried from the Colorado River, which replenished the aquifer in the Mexicali Valley. However, in order to prevent this 'waste,' the United States underwent a large project to seal off the canal to prevent this seepage, significantly reducing the amount of water feeding the aquifer, and contributing to significant water scarcity and draw-down of the aquifer for decades (Cortez-Lara et al. 2014: 20-21). Unlike with the previous Salinity Crisis, *campesinos* were unable to resist the lining project, due in part because of the inability to unionize, with de-politicized "professional water organizations" which replaced water unions other previous collective arrangements as a result of the neoliberal restructuring of water management (Cortez-Lara et al. 2014: 24-25).

2.6 Asociaciones Público-Privadas (APPs)

In 2014 the PAN-dominated congress of Baja California approved the La Ley de Asociaciones Público-Privadas (Public-Private Associations Law in English; the Spanish acronym APPs will be used in this paper). This law, influenced by proposals crafted by the Inter-American Bank, set up a partnership model between the government and private businesses that essentially privatizes industrial policy, public infrastructure, and services (Martínez Zazueta et al. 2017). Private firms finance the initial costs of infrastructure projects and, in return, get long-term contracts to run them until the government repays the investment. The government thus not only commits to covering the investment (often with interest over decades, financed through public debt) but also bears the risks associated with the infrastructure's construction. In essence, APPs can be viewed as methods for transferring public wealth to the private sector. Five of the first batch of APP projects dealt with water, through a desalination plant on the coast in Rosarito, water distribution systems, and water treatment. Despite the need for potable water in the Valley, there have been plans[3] to sell water from the desalination plant, through publicly-financed aqueducts, to the United States – drawing the ire of residents around Baja California (Author's Field Notes 2018). APPs became a target of collective action by movements in Mexicali, described later in this paper.

2.7 Constellation Brands Brewery

The Constellations Brands brewery in Mexicali is the product of the neoliberal project of the last few decades, both globally, nationally in Mexico, and within Baja California itself, as well the result of US-domination of water, land, and labor resources on its southern border mentioned above.

After acquiring exclusive rights to Grupo Modelo's US market division[4] in 2013, along with 2 prominent brewing facilities in Mexico, the US-based transnational beer, wine, spirits, and recently, legal cannabis company, Constellation Brands (CB), began construction on a brewery in the Valley of Mexicali. The $1.4 billion US dollar project, officially named Compañía Cervecera de Baja California (CCBC), is planned to be a 'state of the art,' near-fully automated brewery that will expand their export market to the US of historically Mexican beer brands such as Corona, Modelo, Pacifico, and Victoria.[5] For the State Government of Baja California, the brewery represents the first step in the development of a larger, public-private "Gateway Project," through which a 2,943-hectare plot of land was secured in order to expand the "production, distribution, and sale of export products in the branch of food and drinks, strengthening the economic development of the state, to generate income to achieve a balance in state finances, and to guarantee resources for different government programs" (CESPM 2016).

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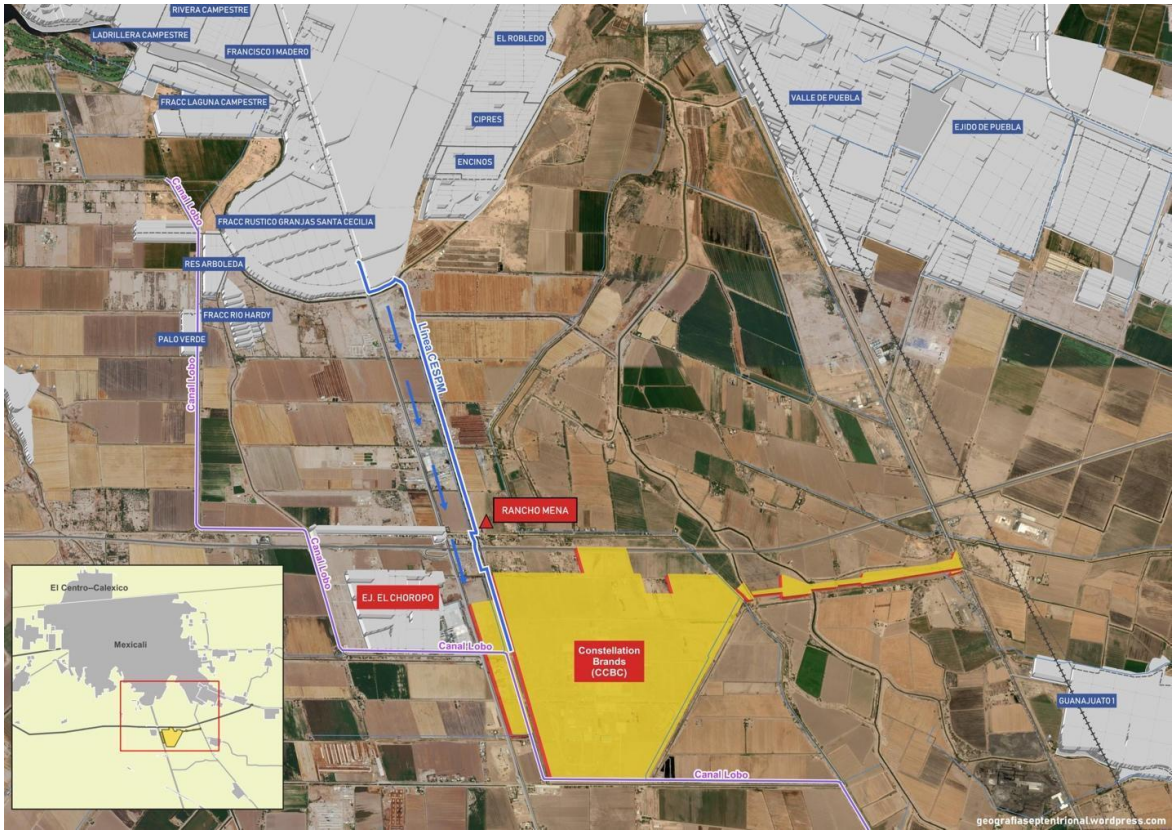
[3] 'El plan de BC y Sonora para exportar agua a Estados Unidos' (accesed 2017) https://newsweekespanol.com/2017/04/el-plan-de-bc-y-sonora-para-exportar-agua-a-estados-unidos/

[4] CB is among three other transnational beer companies, Anheuser-Busch InBev, and Heineken International, that in the past 18 years has acquired the main commercial Mexican beer brands, launching Mexico as the number one beer exporter in the world (The Economist 2017).

[5] See full list of Constellation Brands products here: https://www.cbrands.com/brands/beer



(Map of Constellation Brands' Brewery in Mexicali's Valley retrieved from http://geografiaseptentrional.wordpress.com, 2018)

According to reports provided by CB, the brewery will use 7 million cubic meters of water in the initial stages, which could reach an estimated use of 20 million cubic meters when production reaches full capacity—however conflicting data from the company's environmental impact statement and experiences at other facilities points to this being potentially higher in the long run (Constellation Brands 2016; Martínez Zazueta 2018). Even with CB's own estimates, it would consume 81% of the total water being used by all industries in Mexicali during its first stage, and if their second-stage planned production expansion is realized, its water consumption would equal the total amount used by industries in Mexicali and neighboring Tijuana combined (Martínez Zazueta 2018). According to CB themselves, the production of 1 liter of beer requires 3.5 liters of water[6]. This extremely water-intensive project comes at a time when nearly 6% of Mexicali residents lack running water and overexploitation of the valley's aquifer (Comisión Nacional del Agua 2015). In Constellation Brand's first published impact report, they did not mention the significant impact the project would have on Mexicali's already struggling water situation (Constellation Brands 2018).

Furthermore, a web of interests connecting industrial capitalists and local and state government officials, reflecting Tetreault and McCulligh's (2018) conception of "institutionalized corruption," has put into question the motivations and legality of the project as a whole, leading both to investigation and rejection by social movement organizations and officials in various branches of government (Author's Field Notes 2018). These conflicts of interest range from the use of a construction company owned by a

[6] As Big Beer Moves In, Activists in Mexicali Fight To Keep Their Water (2018). Retrieved from: https://www.npr.org/sections/thesalt/2018/03/26/596448290/as-big-beer-moves-in-activists-in-mexicali-fight-to-keep-their-water on September 15, 2023

state Senator being used in the initial stages of construction[7], a legal representative of CB working at the Mexicali mayor's director of urban administration[8], to the selling of public land to CB at an extremely discounted rate[9].

(Constellation Brands construction site in Mexicali, Author's Photo)

Public statements by the company revealed that they have secured their future water supply through buying water rights from users in the Valley as well as made a deal with the municipal government. However, there is a legal discrepancy between the state government agency, Comisión Estatal de Servicios Públicos, and the federal water agency, CONAGUA. While the state government has promised water, CONAGUA has not due to a moratorium on water concessions due to overexploitation and drought (Martínez Zazueta 2017). Originally, the water was going to be drawn directly from well pumps that tap into the valley's already overexploited water supply, and then a state government-funded aqueduct was going to be built to transport it directly to the facility. However, after public pushback to the proposed aqueduct, and legal challenges filed disputing the permitting process for the water source of the aqueduct, the government paused the project for a little less than a year.[10]

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[7] Hermosillo: Constellation Brands Case Study (publishing date unknown). Retrieved from https://hermosillo.com/constellation-brands-case-study/ on August 23, 2023.

[8] As Big Beer Moves In, Activists in Mexicali Fight To Keep Their Water (2018). Retrieved from: https://www.npr.org/sections/thesalt/2018/03/26/596448290/as-big-beer-moves-in-activists-in-mexicali-fight-to-keep-their-water on September 15, 2023.

[9] https://www.jornada.com.mx/2017/02/21/estados/027n1est

[10] The aqueduct construction was re-started in 2018, and will be discussed later in this paper.

This chapter's aim was to orient the reader into the broader social, political, economic, and ecological material structures and their transformations, that gave way to both water grabbing and the Constellation Brands project and, as we will see in subsequent chapters, the reactions to it. The next chapters will detail the experiences of collective action from the beginning of 2017 to September 2018.

Chapter 3 - 'La Gota que Derramó el Vaso' (The Drop that Spilled the Glass)[11]: Initial Transformative Events and Actions

"There are decades when nothing happens, and there are weeks when decades happen." – quote commonly attributed to Vladimir Ilyich Lenin, source unknown.

On the eve of 2017, two key events took place that ignited the largest 'mega-marches' and direct actions in recent Baja California history. Two days before the New Year, the Congress of the State of Baja California inaugurated the 'Ley del Agua Para el Estado de Baja California' (Water Law for the State of Baja California). Among many other changes to the structure of water management [12], a main feature was its Article 47 regarding the participation of the private sector, allowing for the full or partial management of public water and hydraulic infrastructure by private entities[13]. In January 2017, as part of Enrique Peña Nieto's energy reforms that sought to open up the state energy sector (run through the state-controlled company PEMEX) to private investment and control, gas prices in Mexico shot up 20% (roughly 15.99 Mexican pesos or $0.75 USD a liter), threatening price hikes for virtually every sector based on fuel—known popularly throughout Mexico as '*el Gasolinazo*' (Vargas 2017: 106).

As soon as the first day of the price increases, riots, direct actions, and protests engulfed various cities throughout México. In Baja California, civil society organizations, sectoral associations (such as bus and taxi drivers), environmental collectives, and unaffiliated, discontent crowds began direct actions in response specifically to *el Gasolinazo* in Baja California. Importantly, on January 2, groups of protestors and workers belonging to both public and private transportation sectors, blocked the entrance to a PEMEX plant in Rosarito, causing partial shortages of gasoline and diesel in the surrounding area and ending in a violent eviction on January 7.

Inspired by the occupation, taxi drivers and various discontented individuals and families did the same at a PEMEX plant known as 'La Rosita' on the outskirts of Mexicali, where protestors set up camp, physically blocked gas transport trucks and pipes that supplied the area[14]. Around the same time, various groups of motorcyclists began to block the state's rent office in protest of the gas hike as well as a new annual fee for replacing license plates. Eventually, the taxi drivers blocking La Rosita accepted a deal with the local government for gas subsidies, and hundreds of local, state, and federal police were mobilized to displace the remaining protestors, who ended up joining the camp in front of the rent office in the city center (Author Interview #1, author's translation).

"[el Gasolinazo protests] lit some sort of a fuse in the people. I was already struggling on payments, and I couldn't afford an increase in prices. For me, enough was enough." (Author Interview #4 with taxi driver who participated in blocking 'La Rosita,' author's translation)

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[11] An expression in Spanish that is equivalent to 'the straw that broke the camel's back' which many of my informants used to express the events of early 2017

[12] A 20% increase in water use tariffs, until 2018 where full liberalization of prices will be implemented, and the possibility to shut off water after 90 days of non-payment.

[13] Full Text of the Ley del Agua Para el Estado de Baja California. Retrieved from http://www.congresobc.gob.mx/Parlamentarias/TomosPDF/Leyes/TOMO_VII/Leyagua.pdf on July 13, 2023.

[14] Eyewitness estimates range from 50-100 people (Field Notes August 2018)

While popular resentment against the gas price increase was nation-wide, many of those who protested in Baja California linked this policy to the more local issue of water privatization. Before *el Gasolinazo,* and the inauguration of the new water law, a loose-knit group of Mexicali residents representing both rural and urban classes who had become increasingly concerned with water privatization began having conversations and organizing. Many of them participated in *el Gasolinazo* protests in one form or another, and recognized that the moment was ripe for further mobilization, and socialized expanded demands around water to other participants who were otherwise not preoccupied with the issue.

"People were angry because of the gas prices, because of course it made a difficult life even more difficult. But [the government and companies] were also coming for our scarce water. What water? We are already in a drought. When I was at the PEMEX plant, I had conversations with some people there that didn't really know the issue with water privatization, but it was easy to explain because at that moment everyone knew that the government wasn't trying to help the people, they were trying to rob the people and make their corrupt friends rich by giving away our motherland's resources. That belongs to us." (Author Interview #4, author's translation)

"So we began talking and saying, look, we can't let up our pressure. Even though they beat us at La Rosita, we can't give up. People are ready to do something, so let's take advantage and make some more noise about the gas and the water." (Author Interview #13, author's translation)

Recognizing the political opportunities created by the popular mobilizations, participants in La Rosita blockade and those affiliated with la Asamblea en Defensa del Agua y la Vida planned a march for Thursday January 12th, in the Centro Cívico[15] to highlight the concerns of the gas price increase and the Water Law without an organizational banner (Author Interview #3, author's translation). To the organizers' surprise, more than 15,000 people took to the streets for the first march. Continuing with that momentum, they organized another 'mega marches' on the 15th which gathered up to 45,000 to 60,000 and reached significant national coverage.

[15] The Centro Cívico, or Civic Center, refers to an area in Mexicali where the State Congressional Building, Mexicali Mayor's Office, City Council Hall, and various state and federal buildings are clustered.

Right: Original Flier Advertising first 'mega-march,' retrieved from https://endefensadelaguabc.wordpress.com
Left: Image of January 12nd protest in Mexicali's 'Plaza de Tres Poderes,' retrieved from https://desinformemonos.org/valle-mexicali-continua-pie-lucha-gasolinazo-defensa-agua/

3.1 From March to Movement

During and after the first major protests on the 12th and 15th, hundreds of demonstrators from the main march began to engage in direct actions to physically block the entrances of the state congressional and municipal buildings with a 'human chain,' standing off with riot police as protestors prohibiting the entrance or exit of government employees and representatives (Author Interview #2, author's translation). As the blockades grew, dozens of members began to construct makeshift camps at the entrances to the main government buildings of the Centro Cívico, receiving solidarity assistance from sympathizers. At night, campfires became a rallying point for group discussions amongst the protestors, which evolved organically into 'people's assemblies' that planned next steps for the burgeoning movement (ibid).

Around seven main camps were formed at the various points of entry to government buildings. At first they organized large general assemblies where issues ranging from day to day logistics to political strategy were debated and agreed upon by consensus. However, after a while, the protestors decided that each smaller camp would elect spokespeople to represent them at the general assemblies, and report back (Author Interview #3, author's translation).

On January 14th, the main popular assembly agreed on the formation of a media committee to diffuse information, news, and analysis from the camps under the banner Mexicali Resiste. Shortly after social media accounts on Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube were created, and a logo was created—which began to be adorned on shirts, stickers, fliers, and banners in protest activity that followed. At that point, the name *Mexicali Resiste* became a stand-in to represent most of those who were part of the nascent movement that continued direct actions in the wake of the three main mega-marches. Gradually, Mexicali Resiste would become more formalized as an organization, and participation in assemblies would be restricted due to concerns over information security and open voting being influenced by outside groups (Author Interview #3, author's translation).

(Logo of Mexicali Resiste retrieved from official Facebook page https://www.facebook.com/mexicaliresiste/)

Five days after the first mega-march in Mexicali, the State Governor, Francisco 'Kiko' Vega de la Madrid, officially announced through a video[16] that he would recommend to Baja California's congress to vote to rescind the State Water Law, which it was, unanimously, 2 days later. On the same day of its revocation, Mexicali's City Council agreed to hold its first 'mesa de trabajo' (working table) with Mexicali Resiste, which could not reach an agreement in regards to a local issue regarding property taxes that was amongst their list of concerns. With the failure of the first working table and the abrogation of the controversial Water Law, Mexicali Resiste deliberated in its assemblies on next steps (Author Interview #1, author's translation). Instead of packing up their camps, they decided to stay and to direct their focus to protest against: La Ley de Asociaciones Público-Privadas (APPs) de Baja California (Public-Private Association Law of Baja California), two Public-Private desalination plants in Baja California formed under said law; and the construction of a new beer facility in the Valley of Mexicali by the US company Constellation Brands. Agitating around these issues, on January 22, Mexicali Resiste and other groups convened another large demonstration in the city center, which garnered around 25,000 participants (Author Interview #1, author's translation).

In the course of formal interviews and informal conversations with those currently participating in the movement against Constellation Brands, it was clear from their narratives that the direct actions of January 2017 was a watershed in their political awakening. Despite the case of a few seasoned activists and those previously involved in formal teachers' and pensioners' unions, the bulk of dedicated activists that continue to contend Constellation Brands have never engaged in meaningful collective action before the initial protests and occupations (Author's Field Notes, 2018).

In tracing the chronology and narratives of collective action in Mexicali, it becomes apparent the importance of these 'explosions,' and the experiences of them, for the participants themselves. In this section, based on interviews and participant-observation field notes, I will delve in more specifically on these transformative experiences in the beginning of the movement, and their effects on issue framing, collective efficacy/cognitive liberation, and development of cultures of solidarity.

3.2 Formative Experiences of initial Marches, Assemblies, and Encampments

The initial marches, physical direct action against State property, and the camp assemblies were, for many participants, their first ever experiences in contentious collective political action. For many, as some of the below quotes demonstrate, the particular form of the actions were uniquely inspiring. Many of the participants I spoke to had a preconceived notion that 'politics' just entailed some form of electoralism promoted by 'corrupt' political parties (*partidistas*), that it was something they could not be the subjects of or take meaningful part in:

"I wouldn't say I was political before [the marches]. Of course, I had political opinions, I think we all do, but I didn't really get involved. For me politics was just all the elected officials, the corrupted officials, who came and gave a little something here or there to get their votes and then leave… but really when we [took the civic center] and then we started forming our own little democracies there, I thought 'Ah!' this is really what politics is and should be, this is something I can support." (Author Interview #5, author's translation).

"I've never seen anything like this here. It wasn't the old, tired demonstrations you normally see with political parties asking for votes or paying people to show up – this was really the people. It felt much more organic… A friend asked me and said 'Hey, I'm going down to the Civic Center for this, come with me.' I was skeptical at first because usually these protests don't do anything. But I said, 'Ok, sure.' … You know my family used to be campesinos in the Valley. My father's father before him too. I was very young then but we had to move to the city where my father got jobs at the maquiladoras because it was

[16] Official Video of Governor's announcement: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zAeDKwY00po

too expensive to farm. You paid more for the fuel and water and fertilizer than you made… and now they want to make it even more expensive? They are going to kill what's left of the Valley… So that's why I went." (Author Interview #19, author's translation).

Others, expressed an astonishment over how many people actually showed up to the rallies, and felt an empowered, collective efficacy:

"When they came out to the streets, when we saw how many people filled up the city center, we were surprised. Some say 100,000 people. We knew people were angry and fed up but we didn't expect this much support—we've never had anything like this [in Mexicali]" (Author Interview #8, author's translation).

"I couldn't really believe we actually got [the water privatization law] repealed. I've never seen something change so quickly that affected powerful people. But I also have never seen this many people [out in the Civic Center] demanding change, and blocking the doors so those thieves couldn't go in or out… I thought, what else can we do?" (Author Interview #9, author's translation).

"I heard the chant "El pueblo unido jamás será vencido" (the people united will never be defeated) my whole life but it always seemed kind of empty to me. But [in the Civic Center] I actually understood it and lived it. Normal, working people like us, we had power over these corrupt assholes" (Author Interview #18, author's translation).

Even those that were not able to be part of the marches and physical acts of blocking were inspired by the events:

"My mother was very sick, so I couldn't [participate in the marches and camps]… but I saw the videos of everything on social media and I was very inspired. They had a lot of courage. They were looking into the faces of government officials, of police, and saying we aren't going to move until you treat the people right and stop this corrupt politics and stop robbing our resources." (Author Interview #5, author's translation).

"[the camps] were very cool. I had not done anything like that before. I was with total strangers, and we all seemed so different but then we began to have long conversations around the campfires until the early morning. I felt a commonality between us, we were all fed up with the government selling off our water to the gringos, making corrupt deals, spitting on the people and the constitution." (Author Interview #7, author's translation).

*"One of the nights it started to rain really hard. I wasn't staying at the camps that night, but when I saw the rain I felt I had to help out… so I got some tarps and went down and helped set them up to keep people dry… I hardly knew anyone there before this all started. Some here and there but mostly these were strangers. But they took care of me and I took care of them … even though we were uncomfortable … We recognized this was something bigger than us." (*Author Interview #13, author's translation).

"It was pretty badass [what the protestors did]. I didn't go to the marches but I was happy to see finally people were waking up. Next time [there is a big march] I think I'll go." (Author Interview #37, author's translation).

While the *feeling* of collective efficacy was a crucial aspect that inspired the protestors to both continue and expand their engagement in collective action, it was not simply subjective, but a reflection and realization of the objective organizing capacity and relative power of the protestors vis-a-vis the state:

"After [the marches] we realized there was a lot more support for [our movement] than we thought... It was people from all over that joined… and we realized that we could accomplish much more than we anticipated because we simply had more people on our side" (Author Interview #19, author's translation).

"The [government officials] actually were reaching out to us to talk, to make an agreement with us. They were asking us, not the other way around, because we were causing a big problem for them and they knew that we wouldn't go away that easy" (Author Interview #2, author's translation).

A key development in the daily assemblies at the early-stage encampments in the Civic Center was the transformation of generalized political frustration, which was felt by many of the participants and what initially led them to join, into more concrete critiques, issue framings, and demands. This was partly due to the amalgamation of various urban classes of labor, some with ties to agrarian life, and small-scale *ejidatario* producers in the Valley in close circumstances with a common target.

Agricultural producers that injected many of their specific class grievances into the conversations that shaped much of the way issues were framed collectively when it came to water management and access. Conversely, urban-based activists shaped the framing of the burgeoning movement with more environmentalist and labor framings:

"I came to the camps one night because one of my friends I worked with at the plant asked me to come with him. I was a bit skeptical and nervous, I had never been part of a protest or anything like that before. My family was scared for me to go, they didn't want me to get hurt or in trouble. But it was very different from what I imagined. I was shy at first and didn't really speak much, but I listened to the stories from other people there. Stories from the campesinos in the valley, how they didn't have water and how the government screwed them over. Stories from older people who protested the government their whole life. Eventually I got the courage to share some of my own stories, how I was mistreated at my work, worried about how I can take care of my family … I really learned a lot and we felt almost like family after those few days… I decided I needed to do more." (Author Interview #13, author's translation).

"I don't really consider myself an environmentalist or anything. I didn't really care about water because of the trees or whatever (laughing). But when I heard how they are taking the water away from the campesinos, from the wells we get water to drink, and selling it to some foreign country to make beer, I was pissed off. And don't get me wrong, I like to drink beer! (laughing)" (Author Interview #22, author's translation).

"Once [we won the fight against the water law] we had long meetings in the assemblies on where we were going. We thought, well, look at what we've already accomplished so let's keep going. We already had been talking about the desalination plants and Constellations, we turned our attention to that, because it was obviously another way they were trying to steal water" (Author Interview #26, author's translation).

"I learned a lot more about water than I had ever learned in my life in those 3 days (laughing). There were campesinos and some professors too in the assemblies, they talked about how the water was managed and distributed. When they started talking about Constellations, I got really angry. What they were doing was illegal. It wasn't right to take water from our dry area just for the gringos to make money." (Author Interview #8, author's translation).

"To tell you the truth I didn't really care much about water then. I just was sick of these [corrupt people] in charge of everything, taking orders from foreigners, making our lives worse while they lived in their condos on the other side [of the border]…but I listened to some of these speeches they were making [at the march]. They were talking about how for decades they have been robbing the water from under us and how there is none left for the campesinos, and soon for us to drink or take showers … Last year we had some problems in my neighborhood and there wasn't enough water for showers… so I thought, how are they able to get away with this? They are robbing my children of a future here." (Author Interview #16, author's translation).

"I liked [the assemblies] because it was the first time for me as a campesino I could be with people in the city and they were actually listening to what we were having to say, and wanting to do something about it… in the past our issues were just issues of the Valley or ejidos and most people didn't care." (Author Interview #25, author's translation).

There were several forms of daily framing processes that occurred in the camps, some informal, such as conversations around campfires, and some more formal, such as assembly deliberations.

3.3 Framing Processes in Action through Collective Surveys

However, a clear formal framing process occurred during multiple 'survey' processes, where those participating at the camps came together to write down answers to key questions about the movement's identities, goals, and future. I was granted access to the archive of around 100 survey responses taken in early 2017, which provided a rich view into individual and collective framing of themselves and the movement.

In three surveys – one taken in January 2017[17] and one taken in April 2017 – participants were asked to answer the following questions:

1. "Who are we?"
2. "Who are we not?"
3. "Where are we going?"
4. "What are we looking for?
5. "What do we want in the short, medium, and long term?"
6. "What do you want these camps to become?"
7. "What should be the political function of the movement?"

While on their own, both surveys illuminated rich information about the framing, demands, and collective identity of the movement. However, more interesting and relevant to this paper was what changed or stayed the same in between the first survey and the second survey. The first survey, being taken in very early stages of the movement and the second survey taken months after, in which the participants experienced an intense and expanded period of collective action.

Most of the handwritten notes did not contain specific names of who filled them out, so one shortcoming of this data is tracking who the individual was with the opinion (and thus other information, such as occupation, age, where they lived in the area, etc.) but also the inability to track a specific change in framing.

However, as this paper is dealing with collective action and consciousness, taken in their totality it was possible to observe trends in comparing both the first and second survey:

1) Refined vision of collective identity

In answering "Who we are?" and "Who are we not?," there was a marked trend towards a more specific collective identity. For example, in most responses in the first survey, respondents answered in shorter sentences but with broader terms such as:

"*We are citizens who are against corruption"*
"A group of diverse citizens who want a change in our city and state"
"Parents who want a better future for our children"
"We are fed up with politicians"
"We are people who are not in agreement with our political representatives"

[17] This took place after the water privatization law was rescinded.

"We are those that have been robbed by the corrupt State and corporations"
"We are not part of the political parties"
"We are not paid off"

(Transcribed from original written documents, Author's Field Notes)

In the second survey, while some answers did maintain some broad answers, there was a more acute sense of collective identity that also incorporated a more refined sense of purpose and in their self-definitions included a more specific set of actors and forces they were opposed to. There was more prevalence in answers that included a focus on class location of both themselves and their opposition. For example:

"A movement of workers, campesinos, and all those who are being robbed of water and dignity"
"We are Mexicali Resiste, a movement to combat those who have been bleeding our Valley dry. Against the transnational corporations who don't respect our homeland"
"We are not people who just complain and talk. We are building our future and constructing a new politics"
"We are children of the Valley the corporations and their business partners in government are trying to destroy"
"We are protectors of life in our state. We fight the politics of death"
"A dignified movement against neoliberalism"
"We are a movement constructing a new system that benefits everyday people, not the rich nor the malgoberieno[18]

(Transcribed from original written documents, Author's Field Notes)

2) Change in demand targeting and issue framing towards larger political-economic structures, water, and *ejidatario* issues

There was a marked shift in answers to the questions "Where are we going?" and "What are we looking for?" and between the two surveys. While in the first, the demands associated with them were vague, in the second, they were not only more specific, but there was a noticeable shift towards a more developed analysis of the role of water grabbing and political-economic forces surrounding it and more oppositional 'enemies' were named and specified. Additionally, with the focus on water came framing that coalesced around the views of *ejidatarios* participating in the movement.

Table 1.1 - Sample Mexicali Resiste Survey Responses from January 2017 and April 2017, shared with Author

Survey	**Question**	**Responses**
January	Where are we going?	• *"towards a state-wide movement"* • *"towards justice"* • *"defending the interests of Baja California's citizens"* • *"A free Mexicali"* • *"Waking up the population towards justice and transparency"* • *"Uniting the citizenry"*

[18] 'Malgobierno' is a phrase literally meaning 'bad government,' but it is a commonly used term amongst many movements in Mexico to describe Mexico's corrupt political system

January	What are we looking for?	• *"Abolish laws that are against the people"* • *"A healthy city"* • *"Our rights"* • *"Whatever the majority of the citizens want"* • *"reforms to our laws and governmental system"* • *"The common good, correct the course of our country, eliminate corruption"*
April	Where are we going?	• *"To a unified movement of workers, teachers, campesinos, that will establish a new way of governance that is fair, just, and sustainable"* • *"We are going everywhere. We will continue to raise awareness in Baja California, and work with our compañeros in other parts of the country and in other countries who are fighting for dignity and the end of capitalist exploitation."* • *"We will develop and apply cultural and societal changes regarding health and environment in Baja California and Mexicali. We will make interdisciplinary projects where academics, collectives, and the Mexicali Resiste movement can work together to challenge the dominant structures."* • *"To kick these corrupt officials out of power and construct something new based on democratic structures we created here in Mexicali."*
April	What are we looking for?	• "*To prevent Constellation Brands from installing, the abrogation of Decree 57*[19]*"* • *"Stopping transnational companies from stealing our resources, exploiting our labor."* • *"Blocking any attempt to transfer water away from campesinos to the transnational companies"* • *"Ensuring a new system of governance where life is at the center, not profits for the corrupt elite"* • *"Stopping Constellation Brands from stealing water from the people, from the campesinos"* • *"Water for food, not for corporations. No public-private partnerships that will take every last drop of water from us."* • *"An end to an economic system that has not worked for the people but only for the corrupt elite."* • *"Water for the workers of the Valley, food for us all. Not for corporations or to enrich the malgobierno"* • *"Stopping the turnover of everything public to the private sector. The end of companies coming only for our cheap labor and water but not caring what happens to us or our city."*

(Transcribed from original written documents, Author's Field Notes)

3) More thoughtful short, medium, and long term strategies and expanded projection

[19] The decree that paved the way for public-private associations. Decreto 57, la verdadera privatización panista (2017) retrieved from https://zetatijuana.com/2017/01/decreto-57-la-verdadera-privatizacion-panista/ on October 13, 2023.

Similarly to the changes demonstrated above, there were notable shifts in the answers to "What do we want in the short, medium, and long term?", "What do you want these camps to become?", and "What should be the political function of the movement?"

Particularly, the second survey answers demonstrated a more analytical or thoughtful approach when it came to strategic thinking, planning, and organization. The projective ranges of what was considered short, medium, and long term goals were expanded. For example, answers that tended to be included in long-term goals in the January survey often became short or medium term goals, demonstrating a shifting terrain of what was considered possible after only four months of participation. As discussed above, answers tended to contain a broader structural analysis and incorporated a vision clearly influenced by rural participants and organizations. Additionally, there was a greater focus on bridging the movement to other geographies and issue areas.

Table 1.2 - Sample Mexicali Resiste Survey Responses from January 2017 and April 2017, shared with Author

Survey	**Question**	**Responses**
January	What do we want in the short term?	● *"Keep the pressure on the government so that they listen to us"* ● *"Open dialogue and negotiation with the government"* ● *"Maintain the camps"* ● *"Continue marches"* ● *"Resignation of Kiko Vega"*
January	What do we want in the medium term?	● *"Setting up a permanent organization to continue our fight"* ● *"Increasing our numbers through events and education"* ● *"End to Constellation Brands"* ● *"Throwing the PAN out of power in Baja California"* ● *"Abrogation of all laws that are against the people"* ● *"Returning everything [those in power] have stolen from us"* ● *"Work on petitions for our issues"* ● *"Present reforms to laws and demand transparency in government spending"*
January	What do we want in the long term?	● *"An honest government that works for the people and not their pockets"* ● *"End of companies dictating our policies"* ● *"End of corruption in our country"* ● *"Secure citizen participation to get rid of this government"* ● *"A dignified life"* ● *"A sustainable future and livelihood for our children"*
January	What do you want these camps to become?	● *"To keep blocking the centers of power until they listen to what the people want"* ● *"Centers for citizen learning"* ● *"Installations for popular art that citizens can come to sign petitions"* ● *"We should maintain the camps as a way to show we will always be here"* ● *"To stay how they are now until we win"*
January	What should be the	● *"To keep the government accountable for their actions that harm us and our city"*

	political function of the movement?	• *"Kicking the corrupt parties out of power but not to become a political party ourselves"* • *"To be an intermediary between the government and the people"* • *"Unify, educate, and organize the people"* • *"To expose the truth"* • *"Leaders of a real change to the attitude and culture of Mexicali residents"*
April	What do we want in the short term?	• *"Cancellation of the Constellations project and any other attempt to dismantle or rob our water by all means needed."* • *"Growth and expansion of our movement by increasing communications to spread our message, meeting with people in different neighborhoods and setting up solidarity projects, citizen tours of ejidos in the valley"* • *"Connecting with movements in other cities and states in order to fight together"* • *"Blocking more machines trying to build Constellations and aqueducts stealing water"* • *"Create a citizen's plebiscite to vote on ending Constellations and APPs"* • *"Marching to the desalination plants in Rosarito to demonstrate solidarity"* • *"Start with kicking out Kiko Vega from office and creating a citizen's commission to oversee any public-private projects in the valley and water management"* • *"Legal injunction against Constellations project and illegal water diversion"*
	What do we want in the medium term?	• *"Renegotiation of Rio Colorado treaty with the United States"* • *"Return of water management decisions to citizens and ejido authorities"* • *"Creation of a 'movement of movements.' creating delegations with other movements around the state, country, and even other countries to unite our fight"* • *"Independent unions in our factories and businesses to bring good paying jobs to the Valley. Supporting ejidatarios so they can produce food at a fair price and have a dignified life."* • *"Creation of neighborhood collectives that can run assemblies like the ones we have. Then having a real peoples' congress with representatives from those collectives."*
	What do we want in the long term?	• *"A new political and economic system based on democratic formations that provides necessities of life for all people and does not exploit them"* • *"A second Mexican Revolution without violence, that fights for 'tierra y libertad' and replaces the malgobierno"* • *"That all of foreign companies respect our sovereignty and leave us alone, and we create self-sustaining economy and environment"* • *"International movement that represents the interests of workers, campesinos, and all those who want a life of dignity and sovereignty"* • *"New relationship between our society with each other and the environment and natural resources"* • *"Replacing neoliberalism and capitalism with something that is sustainable and ensures that we control our own destiny, not companies or corrupt government"*

	What do you want these camps to become?	• *"A space for learning, for political formation, to form and strengthen community and to make a permanent struggle."* • *"Continue as a meeting space and central point to distribute resources for protests"* • *"Hosting informative assemblies where the public can come present information, proposals, and topics"* • *"Should be a site of a peoples' congress representing different areas and sectors of the city"* • *"They should be dismantled. They have served their original purpose and the development of the movement requires new tactics to respond to our circumstances."* • *"A media center to host programs and demand interviews with public officials working in the city center"*
	What should be the political function of the movement?	• *"Serve as a vanguard for larger political movement to change the valley"* • *"Be a non-hierarchical body where interests of the people can be represented and make plans for how to change Mexicali's situation"* • *"To replace the failed governance institutions"* • *"Not a political party, but a new formation that is democratic, does not look for personal benefit, but can help bring about a better system to live in"* • *"A vehicle to expose the injustices and power imbalances, to raise consciousness of citizens, and make action to fix our problems and build out a new world for our future generations"* • *"To be one collective within a larger ecosystem of collectives around the world, representing our own interests but also working with others to understand their situation and find global solutions to our different issues"*

(Transcribed from original written documents, Author's Field Notes)

Far from just being a simple process of writing down answers, in both survey sessions, movement participants came together for nearly all day assembly in the Civic Center where they discussed and deliberated (Author Interview #3, author's translation). All participants were asked to write down their answers, and afterwards, broke up into groups of around five people each to listen to what eachother wrote down and why. When disagreements arose, they were encouraged to respectfully discuss, even if sometimes it became heated (Author Informal Focus Group #1). Afterwards, all breakout groups joined together, where breakout group members were asked to give a summary of what they discussed to the main group. There was another round of debate and conversations to synthesize the various views presented.

I asked several participants in the surveys their perceptions of the process, who responded:

"[the survey process] wasn't easy, but it was very useful… yes there were a lot of opinions, and naturally there were strong debates on some topics… in the end we learned a lot about each other, about ourselves, and where our movement was going" (Author Informal Focus Group #1, author's translation).

"I found it interesting and engaging… I have never done something like that before. It was what I imagined a real democracy should look like." (Author Informal Focus Group #1, author's translation).

"The conversations [we had during the survey sessions] were very valuable. During all of the protests and activities and daily life we did, it was difficult to have time to reflect deeply. The survey helped us to make sense of what was going on, what we wanted as a movement." (Author Informal Focus Group #3, author's translation)

When asked how the second survey assembly went compared to the first one, one respondent answered, *"[between the two surveys] a lot of things happened. We all went through a lot together… we saw victories and losses, we saw friends taken away by police… I think we had a lot more experience and ability to analyze our situation with everything we learned…"* Another responded, *"I didn't really know too much about politics [during the first survey]. I think we all learned a lot about ourselves and what we were able to accomplish together in those months [between the surveys]."* Others present agreed, and reflected on their own answers: *"I don't remember exactly what I wrote the first survey but it probably didn't make sense. I hadn't really thought about it before we did that exercise. I mostly listened to other peoples' opinions… during the second [survey] I was much more engaged, I think I even had too many opinions!"* (Author Informal Focus Group #1, author's translation).

3.4 Constructing Solidarity Through Encampments

Another key aspect of the early-stage encampments was serving as a site of solidarity and organization building – both physically and subjectively. The daily operation of the camps required a high degree of coordination in both resources, security, organizational flows, and delegation of roles. Given that the original blockades were more organic and spontaneous, the protestors – many of them strangers to each other – had to develop bonds and a strong sense of solidarity in order to ensure the camps survived. This experience was transformative and lasting: the cultures of solidarity formed in these camps were the building blocks of organizational structures, bonds, and movement institutions that continued in subsequent stages of the movement. As discussed above – these cultures of solidarity are reflected not solely in the the attitudes and feelings of the protestors, but mainly through "[t]he tactical activities, organizational forms, and institutional arrangements employed during" struggle (Fantasia 1988: 33):

"[running the camps] was complicated, but we managed it well. There were a lot of things to consider: food, security, water, making sure people were warm because it was still very cold at night… we had meetings in the beginning where we all decided who is in charge of what, and what schedules we needed to run… I've never been part of an operation like that, so it was new to me. Sometimes it was chaotic, but we managed well." (Author Interview #26, author's translation)

"It wasn't easy, but we took care of each other. If someone was hurt, we had people help them. If someone needed food, we made sure they had food. I had some experience being a cook for a lot of people so I would help with the meals … A lot of people also donated resources to help even if they weren't part of the camps. Every couple hours people would come with trucks to give us supplies." (Author Interview #15, author's translation)

Even early on, the bonds created by the initial phases of struggle had a lasting effect on those involved, compelling them to act in new ways or against their normal inclinations: *"I left the camps to go home. To be honest, I was exhausted, I wanted my own bed. But one night, a bad rain storm was coming. Well, I wasn't going to let my comrades get washed out. I knew I had to go back and help. I had some tarps so I threw them in my car and raced down to camps and helped set them up. Then I decided to stay, I didn't go home."* (Author Interview #5, author's translation)

Chapter 4 - 'La Lucha Sigue': Continuing the movement, Confrontations, and Expanding Frontiers

4.1 Formalizing Organizations, Camps, and Assemblies

Mexicali Resiste

In the months following the initial marches and popular assemblies, several attempts were made by State police to dislodge protestor encampments in the Civic Center, sometimes violently, and with some incidents leading to arrests (Author Interview #1, author's translation). Despite this, protesters would always return to rebuild some form of encampment, with organizing structures remaining intact.

As discussed above, in the early stages of collective action to confront water privatization and the Constellation Brands project, participants representing classes of urban dwellers were loosely organized under the banner of *Mexicali Resiste*. This 'brand,' for lack of a better word, did not carry with it a formal structure, but was rather a common identifier linking a diverse network of protestors that had come together during the various actions in early 2017. A logo was made by local students, and then a website and social media pages to document the protests, collect information about Constellation Brands, and to live stream events related to the protests.[20] [21]

The make-up of the burgeoning *Mexicali Resiste* movement during 2017 consisted of a diverse mix of participants. This included: college students, municipal employees, teachers, workers from the various industrial plants around the city, those in precarious work situations, and small-scale agricultural producers from either *ejidos* or fully private land, who self-described as *campesinos*. As discussed, many of those who protested had never participated formally in any form of political or collective organization before, though some were involved previously in other forms of environmental or otherwise political organizations.

However, as protests continued, *Mexicali Resiste* began to crystallize into a more formal organization, creating a horizontal consensus voting structure through regular weekly assemblies, where organizational positions, strategies and tactics were debated and voted on. Eventually, after the bulk of protestors returned to living mostly at their homes, Mexicali Resiste constructed and maintained two semi-permanent camps in two areas of the Civic Center, which continued serving the role of a reunion site for strategy meetings, informational assemblies, and resource distribution. Mexicali Resiste affiliates devised working teams, with rotating schedules and responsibilities for sustaining the camps and various functions of the organization, including a dedicated media team (Author's Field Notes 2018)

Comunidad de Baja California Resiste

After roughly eight months since the early collective action formations in January 2017, as Mexicali Resiste formalized organizationally, various political disagreements and different opinions on strategy led to the creation of a new formal organization under the banner *Baja California Resiste (BCR)*. The main issues of contention stemmed around personal differences between the organic leaders of the movement [22] as well as contention over how to approach the 2018 elections and Andrés Manuel López Obrador's new party MORENA. However, both Mexicali Resiste and Baja California Resiste made it very clear in their communiques following the split that they remained fundamentally aligned as a common front the main objectives of fighting water grabbing in the area and especially the fight against Constellation

[20] https://mexicaliresiste.org/
[21] https://www.facebook.com/mexicaliresiste
[22] During my fieldwork, informants provided me with additional information regarding the splintering of the groups. Much of this was personal and unverifiable, and I was asked not to share. This information will ultimately not be part of my paper out of respect for the scholar-activist relationship, and its irrelevance to my central topic.

Brands[23]. The metaphor "we are separate fingers that make a fist" was commonly expressed to me during my fieldwork when describing the interactions of various other organizations (Author's Field Notes 2018). After their split, members of Baja California Resiste set up a makeshift camp, which turned into a permanent meeting space and even residence for some members, called "La Arboleda." This camp was located on the periphery of fenced off land where the Constellation Brands brewery was being constructed.

El Comité de Defensa del Agua

While various small-scale agricultural producers in the Valley were involved in the early 2017 protests around water privatization and the *gasolinazo*, it was not until the focus of action was directed specifically towards the Constellation Brands brewery that many of these producers formalized organizationally to contest water grabbing. Shortly after the mega-marches and peoples' assemblies described above, a group called *El Comité en Defensa del Agua de Baja California* (for the purposes of this paper, *'El Comité'*) formed. The initial grouping consisted of dozens of *ejidatarios* in the Valley, who, while having formally interacted through *ejido* organizing structures that managed day-to-day activities of production, had never formally organized together as political activists. In the early months of 2017, *El Comité* began to form assemblies of *ejidatarios*, where issues of water scarcity and price of inputs were discussed. The Constellation Brands project, which required a new aqueduct to bring well water for beer production, became the main target of criticism and action. El Comité worked with lawyers to levy a legal injunction on the project, while also participating in a variety of actions at government offices and in front of the brewery's construction zone.

Other Collectives and Groups

While the bulk of my fieldwork was with Mexicali Resiste, Baja California Resiste, and *El Comité*, it is worth noting that from 2017 protests, a variety of smaller collectives formed throughout Mexicali and Baja California that touched upon the Constellation Brands fight, but also broader issues of combating political corruption, domination by foreign interests, and local development. Most of these groups overlapped their activities, and even membership was shared between the groups – making some of them in name only. During my fieldwork, I observed that Baja California Resiste served as an umbrella grouping for most of these collectives who did not officially participate in Mexicali Resiste after the split noted above.

In the following sections, I will detail the transformational processes and effects of the collective organizational forms and arrangements constructed by movement participants, namely construction of permanent camps and assemblies.

4.1.1 Civic Center Camps

As discussed above, during the initial protest period, movement participants maintained makeshift encampments and blockades throughout Mexicali Civic Center, made from tarps and tents and subject to multiple expulsions and clean-ups by authorities. Eventually, in order to make expulsion more difficult, Mexicali Resiste constructed two semi-permanent structures made of plywood in two areas of the Civic Center.

[23] In this paper, I use the word 'movement' or 'movement participants' to speak generally about the group of participants who engaged in January 2017 protests and subsequent forms of collective action against Constellation Brands, regardless of formal affiliation. When necessary I will delineate between formal organizational names or specific classes of participants.

(Author's photo of Civic Center camp - North)

According to those I spoke to on duty to maintain the Civic Center camps, their construction and decision to maintain them indefinitely came about as a gradual result: *"the [police] kept ripping down our tarps and tents. So, we needed something stronger. We had some comrades in the movement who did a little construction work, so they would bring over stronger materials like wood and we'd all work to build structures together… more and more we kept making it bigger, stronger… and the police couldn't tear it down so easily… eventually, when we entered a different phase [of protest] we all agreed we had to keep the main camps here, we needed to maintain a physical presence"* (Author Interview #7)

While serving multiple functions, a main theme that arose when speaking about the camps was their strong symbolic power, which engendered a heightened sense of resilience and strength among those in the movement:

> *"We stay here to let them know we're still here, and that we will keep them accountable for whatever they try to do."* (Author Focus Group #1)

> *"[pointing at the camp structure] Look! They haven't been able to get rid of us. Not with all their guns and police and threats. We are still here and they cannot get rid of us. They can't get rid of the movement. Even if they burn this down, we will keep coming back."* (Author Focus Group #1)

> *"Every day these bastards have to walk by us, acknowledge us, sometimes even talk to us. We are a reminder of the movement we started, that isn't going anywhere. We are a constant reminder of the tens of thousands that came here to hold them accountable"* (Author Focus Group #1)

> *"I never thought one day I'd be leaving my house [on my own accord] to spend some nights in a place like this… but here I am, and I am happy to do it and serve our movement. [These camps] are a symbol of our struggle… they are not pretty, but unlike the other government buildings in the Civic Center, these are the only buildings that represent the people, not the rich, not transnationals, not the corrupt."* (Author Focus Group #1)

Much like the makeshift camps during heightened direct action earlier in the movement discussed previously, the collective day-to-day maintenance of the camps became in and of itself a practice that maintained solidarity between movement members:

> *"[maintaining the camps] didn't feel like a job, but a duty… we all relied on each other's labor, and if one person didn't fulfill their duty, then it would have an effect on other people so we all maintained good discipline."* (Author Focus Group #1)

> *"Most of us had families we had to care for, but also [the camps] became part of our responsibility. We even had our families helping out [with chores] at the camp."* (Author Focus Group #1)

> *"We all had shifts for who was coming to the camps… when we come[to relieve the previous shift] we usually sit and talk with those whose shift we were relieving… talk about if there were any problems that day with the camp, who came by, but also just talk about life, family, politics."* (Author Focus Group #1)

The camps became a central point to the creation of movement institutions, practices, and structure. Weekly, movement members would meet for two separate assemblies. One was an organizing assembly where organizational issues were solved, demands crafted, and actions planned; and another 'informational assembly,' where members of the community would gather to listen to presentations. The informational assemblies functioned as an 'open mic,' where anyone could sign up on a list to give a small presentation and allow for questions. These dialogues, while originally focussed on Constellation Brands and water issues, blossomed into discussions on a range of social and political issues, such as pensioner justice, indigenous sovereignty, land rights, or wages (Author's Field Notes 2018)

4.1.2 La Arboleda

In early July 2017, other participants, who later organized into Baja California Resiste, constructed a protest camp across the road from the fence of the construction site for Constellation Brands, which eventually grew into a permanent camp area with more robust housing structures complete with a kitchen, bathrooms, and meeting areas. This camp was nicknamed "La Arboleda."

(The "Living Room" at La Arboleda camp, Author's photo)

4.1.3 Spaces of Urban-Rural Encounters

Similar to the Civic Center camps, La Arboleda served as a crucial physical space that bolstered cultures of solidarity, collective efficacy, and development of issues through the daily labor of reproducing camp life, physically occupying a space near a locus of their powerful opposition (in this case, Constellation Brands brewery) and being a meeting space for assemblies.

However, a unique aspect of La Arboleda was its proximity to rural towns, agricultural plots, and ejidos, which led the camp to be a crucial area of valuable interaction between rural agrarian classes and urban working classes. These encounters took many forms.

After the creation of La Arboleda, and construction of the physical infrastructure to host a number of people, *Baja California Resiste* would hold various forms of open assemblies where local agricultural producers and *ejidatarios* gathered. Some were formally members of *El Comité* or independent sympathizers. Members of *Mexicali Resiste* would also drive from the city to join.. Through word of mouth, curious locals who were not participants in the early actions of January 2017 would also join in, as many of the assemblies were advertised in nearby communities. Some assemblies were open-ended forums where discussion of water issues and the fight against Constellation Brands were discussed. During other assemblies, a local expert was invited, such as a sympathetic activist-scholar from the Autonomous University of Baja California or a well-respected member of the community, who would present on a certain topic and engage in a lengthy question-and-answer discussion with participants (Author Field Notes 2018).

On a day to day basis, encounters would take the form of informal visits of *ejidatarios* or activists living in the urban neighborhoods of Mexicali who would stop by for conversation or dinner during one of their many weekly communal meals (Author's observation 2018). In these settings, daily politics, water, and agrarian issues were discussed, but also general conversations about each other's lives and families (Author's observation 2018).

As one frequent visitor to La Arboleda, from the nearby Ejido Choropo, commented: *"I try to come down [to La Arboleda] a few times a week after work to see what's happening. There's always some people here to talk to, and we share what's happening in the fields, any issues, things like that… a lot of people I already know who come*

here but every now and then there is someone I haven't met from the city or another ejido, and we get to know each other… there is always something to learn when I come here, I'm thankful for this space." (Author Informal Focus Group #3)

Another, who grew up and mainly stayed in the urban areas of the city, shared: *"I never spent much time in el campo, I had distant family who started out here but they moved [to the city] … here [at La Arboleda] I get to talk with a lot of campesinos and here about their issues, how rough it is to farm out here, what the neoliberal government has done to them… it is a good perspective to have and strengthens our movement."* (Author Informal Focus Group #3)

These urban-rural encounters not only strengthened solidarity amongst seemingly differentiated groups, fostering a realization of shared grievances, but also facilitated collective issue-framing activities. The location and class nature of those frequenting La Arboleda led to a diffusion of issue framing between small-scale agricultural producers and urban classes of labor.

Similarly to the Civic Center camps, La Arboleda acted as a staging ground for direct actions, but also was considered in and of itself a direct action due to its proximity to the Constellation Brands construction site. The simple presence of the camp, within view of private security forces hired by Constellation Brands, elicited a collective sense of staying power. Respondents from my multiple trips to La Arboleda spoke with pride as they described the durability of the camp, the way that private security would harass them, and their unwillingness to leave until not only Constellation Brands left Mexicali, but the proliferation of a just water management system for the community (Author's Field Notes 2018)

4.2 Direct Confrontations with Constellation Brands and the State

4.2.1 Initial Protests of Constellation Brands

As the major protests around water privatization and gasoline prices turned into a more focussed campaign against Constellation Brands, as discussed above, movement participants who had met, organized, and developed an understanding of intersecting issues that faced them during the initial protest phase, planned and executed a series of direct actions and confrontations with the Constellation Brands company itself.

As early as February 2017, members of Mexicali Resiste and *ejidatarios* physically blocked access to the construction site of the Constellation Brands brewery. In the early morning of February 19, a couple dozen movement members took to the main roads leading to the construction site, setting up makeshift roadblocks, mostly with their own bodies, tree branches, and traffic cones to block construction equipment from entering the site. They also attached banners and signs around stalled transport vehicles bringing in the large fermentation chambers that were to be installed at the brewery. Through social media, the activists sent out invitations to their community networks to come join them, leading to over 200 to do so. At the blockades, attendees took turns making speeches against the project and crystalizing their grievances.

Photo retrieved from https://www.jornada.com.mx/2017/07/16/estados/024n2est

Various *ejidatario* commissioners expressed their grievances[24]

> Ejido Villahermosa commissioner: *"Water is the blood of the valley. What does the government want? They want our blood. They are doing this without permission, without environmental impact statements. This is a robbery, privatizing water, it's a robbery."*
>
> Ejido Morelos commissioner: *"A country from outside. Whatever person from outside can't just come here and make a plant here. We don't want to be the maquiladores for foreign companies, slaves. They come to our house to install themselves, this cannot stand."*
>
> Ejido Cuernavaca commissioner: *"I'm here with all these people because we are discontent that they are constructing the brewery, most of all that they are constructing this aqueduct that they want to put, none of this serves the ejidatarios, the agricultural producers, the parents of families, even less the kids which are the future. I hope in God, like with all things, that they don't construct this brewery, because for us it would be a tragedy. We already are experiencing a lack of water, imagine if they construct this, they would leave us with water completely. I talk for me and for my comrades in defending water."*
>
> Ejido Choropo commissioner: *"They've beaten us down. They've left our laws in the hands of international markets when they signed NAFTA. They left us defenseless. They've left us at the mercy of the international octopuses that buy our harvests. They've left us at the mercy of the 'free' market for our inputs like gasoline and diesel. Still more, this governor and this circuit of corruption—they want to take our last family patrimony, which is water…. If they think they are a lot, we are more. We can't take it anymore. The majority is in the hands of a minority of corrupt people. Enough is enough. The people have woken up."*
>
> Ejido Choropo resident: *"[the Constellation Brands project] represents the frivolous attitude that the government has towards the campesinos, the producers, while we are dedicated to produce food with the water of the Colorado River, they are trying to get water to do business. And this is worthless, when there are cities like*

[24] Video from Mexicali Resiste's Facebook page (retrieved August 2, 2023) Author's translation of quotes.

Ensenada that suffer everyday scarcity of this vital liquid where they barely have a few hours a day where they can count on the little bit of water that reaches them"

Those present on that day told me many of these speeches were broadcasted live through social media, but there was a moment in which organizers asked everyone to put away their phones and stop recording, and a few men from the crowd with bandanas around their faces and sunglasses were asked to come give a few words. These men were laborers for one of the construction companies, owned by a state senator, involved in the brewery project. Coming from states in the far south of Mexico, from majority indigenous communities, these laborers were sent up through recruiters to provide cheap labor for the project. Speaking confidentially, these workers narrated their conditions: they worked 10 hours daily; slept on cardboard or wood; they didn't have a fixed contract; received salary in cash; were unaware of their legal situation; and owed money promised to them by the company (Author Interview #5).

The introduction of these new class subjects – exploited precarious laborers involved in the construction itself – had notable effects on the movement participants. When recollecting this moment, one participant noted, *"it was really heavy to hear their stories, how they came from so far away in the country, forced by economic circumstances to be part of this project to rob water … I felt very bad. I didn't know about the conditions [for the workers on the project]. You know we are always talking about the rights to water, the campesinos, but when we heard from the construction workers we became more cognizant, and we wanted to help highlight those injustices as well."* (Author Interview #5, author's translation).

After that encounter, Mexicali Resiste formed a working group, which contacted the Baja California State Human Rights Commission in order to investigate the working conditions of the construction workers. The project blossomed into an ongoing coalition fighting for workers' rights for vulnerable migrant communities in the area (Author Interview #5).

4.2.2 Courthouse Confrontation and Everyday Articulations of Class Power

On August 19, 2018, I went to the Rio Nuevo courthouse to attend an action in support of a Baja California Resiste member who was being sued by lawyers of Constellation Brands for trespassing on the grounds of the construction site, when, months earlier, he climbed up one cranes, staying there three days in a hunger-strike protest. Forty protestors attended to support him and packed the waiting room where one of his pre-trial hearings was to be held. Quiet conversations and murmurs suddenly rose into a crescendo of chants and yells, as Constellation Brands's lawyers, guarded by four private security members, rushed into the room and passed through the security checkpoint to the trial room.

"Go home, Constellations!" was yelled repeatedly at the lawyers, and when they were no longer present, the bodyguards that were left behind in the waiting room quickly became the target of verbal attacks. One woman, with a hoarse voice, walked up to the four men in dark sunglasses: *"How do you feel working for this foreign company? You're sellouts of your country. Aren't you ashamed? Don't you know that they are stealing our water, or do you not care?"* (Author's Video Field Notes 2018, author's translation).

A while after the company's lawyers had been received by court's staff, the defendant's team still hadn't been called for, not knowing what room it would be in nor when hearing would start. Chants continued, and it appeared that one of the clerks had turned off the air-conditioning, turning the small room packed with people into a sauna. *"Look, look at how they're protecting these invaders. This whole court is at the service of business, of the corruptos. There are senior citizens here, children. What shame!"*—rang out in response (Author's Video Field Notes 2018, author's translation).

When the hearing was over, the courthouse officials tried sneaking the Constellation Brands defense team and officials through a back door so they could leave undisturbed. However, one of the protestors spotted them in the stairwell, and called over the protestors. Dozens of them began running

and shouting *"Get out, thieves!"* and chased after Constellations Brands officials out of the building, until they managed to get into their cars and leave (Author's Video Field Notes 2018, author's translation).

A protestor, who I had seen at many of the courthouse protests, turned to me and pointed: *"You see this here? This is … what do you call it… the proletariat fighting the bourgeoisie. We're here, humble people, up against a team of well-paid lawyers. The company has all of this money to repress our protest. But we're here to let them know we won't go out quiet"* (Author's Video Field Notes 2018, author's translation).

A few days later, I had a chance to talk with him further about his motivation to participate in the courthouse protests. Quite simply, he recounted: *"You know why I go? I like confronting power. When we're all there, when we see the people from company and government officials run from us, hide from us, I feel like we have power—it's the people who are giving the orders and they have to hang their heads in shame"* (Author Interview #21, author's translation).

4.2.3 Returning to Rancho Mena

Exactly one year since the first marches of 2017, movement participants had one of their most violent encounters with Constellation Brands and the Mexican state. As described in the opening section of this paper, the confrontation took place at 'Rancho Mena,' near the Ejido Choropo. The land, about 11 hectares, belongs to an elderly couple, who were once small-scale, non-ejidal agricultural producers of asparagus, alfalfa, and wheat, but due to the prices of inputs and lack of water were forced to stop (Author Interview #15, author's translation).

The family used to rent out their land and irrigation rights to larger agricultural companies who would farm it yearly, but given the drought and issues with water management in the valley, their usual renters did not grow that previous agricultural cycle (Author Interview #15, author's translation). It was in that context that the family began participating in collective political action for the first times in their lives, first during the marches against water privatization, and then becoming active participants with the subsequent movement against Constellation Brands (Author Interview #15, author's translation).

On January 15, 2018, movement members received word of seeing work crews and state police making their way to the stretch of dirt road near Rancho Mena, which they believed to be part of the renewed construction efforts of an aqueduct to transfer water from deep wells in the north-east of the valley to the Constellation Brands brewery. The government of Baja California was spending approximately $549,000,000 Mexican pesos (or around $26,461,800 USD) for this project [25]. Previously, the aqueduct project was paused due to illegal irregularities and pressure from the early-2017 protests (Author Interview #33).

That evening, a small group of around twelve– representing members from *Mexicali Resiste*, *Baja California Resiste*, *El Comité*, and neighbors – arrived at Rancho Mena and set up camp in order to observe the road and movement of police and construction equipment. The excavators began digging up the road in order to lay the aqueduct's pipe. The next morning, movement members put out a call to supporters that the government was preparing to excavate and construct the underground aqueduct for Constellation Brands in front of Rancho Mena. Protestors arrived with shovels and began to fill in the excavated sections of the road. Shortly after, multiple vans of armored police arrived with more construction equipment. The riot police pushed back protestors obstructing the construction and formed a protective line on the road.

Over the ensuing hours, movement participants had a heated standoff with the riot police at the line where the public road met the private property line of Rancho Mena, shouting out "Go Home

[25] 'Más de 549 mdp costará el acueducto para zona donde se instalará Constellation Brands: Sedeco', Lindero Norte Noticias (2017) retrieved from https://linderonorte.com/2017/01/26/mas-de-549-mdp-costara-el-acueducto-para-zona-donde-se-instalara-constellation-brands-sedeco/ on July 27, 2023.

Constellations!" and deriding the police for being "puppets" of the foreign company.[26] There were several outbursts of violent confrontations, which began when police crossed into the property line to grab a protester and used batons to ensure submission, something that occurred several times throughout the day. The other protesters fought back to grab and eventually free him. The increasing encroachments by the police and attempted arrests of those attempting to block the construction equipment culminated in a breaking point, where protesters began throwing water, then dirt, and then rocks at the riot police. The heavily armored police began throwing the rocks back, hitting many unarmed protestors – some in the head. Despite the injuries, the protesters kept resisting until several were ultimately taken away and arrested and it was decided they should eventually keep the calm in order to not lose any more members to arrest (Author Interview #16, author's translation).

One key arrest was of one of Mexicali's most active participants, who was actually arrested months after this confrontation for premeditated murder, for attempting to move his vehicle out of the way of rain of rocks and debris closely to some of the police, who saw it as an attempt to run them over. Due to the risk his political activities posed, the judge argued, he was put into 'preventative' detention. The charges were reclassified as 'aggravated injuries' and he served 20 days in jail. On May 23, 2018 he was released[27] During that time, and afterwards, news of his arrest circulated across the country and the United States, making his face and name an icon of water resistance, which opened up opportunities discussed later.

This confrontation defined a major culmination in the trajectory of the movement participants' transformative experiences in collective action over the previous year. While there were violent confrontations with the police, such as when protestors were expelled from encampments, there had never before been this level of physical resistance to the state and intense displays of solidarity.

[26] YouTube video, 'Represión policiaca en el rancho Mena en ejido choropo en Mexicali | Noticias Mexicali' retrieved from https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=urZh-lZhrRQ&ab_channel=NoticiasMexicaliOficial on September 20, 2023.

[27] El Proceso (2018) 'Tras 20 días en la cárcel, juez libera a León Fierro, dirigente de Mexicali Resiste' retrieved from https://www.proceso.com.mx/nacional/estados/2018/5/23/tras-20-dias-en-la-carcel-juez-libera-leon-fierro-dirigente-de-mexicali-resiste-205587.html on September 30, 2023

(Photo retrieved from: https://www.animalpolitico.com/2018/01/mexicali-planta-cervecera)

(photo shared courtesy of Mexicali Resiste)

(photo shared courtesy of Mexicali Resiste)

One participant I spoke to, a 27 year old service-job worker in the city, who suffered injuries from the confrontation but nevertheless continued to fight, had a particularly illuminating experience. In the weeks leading up to that day at Rancho Mena, she had been experiencing doubts continuing her extensive work with Mexicali Resiste and the movement in general due to nonpolitical, interpersonal conflicts as well as a general exhaustion from the past year. In fact, she relayed that she officially decided to "quit" the movement the previous day. However, when the Rancho Mena confrontation began heating up, another movement participant, an *ejidatario* who had organized with her since the first protests of 2017, called her explaining the situation, expressed fear, and asked for her to come join the group. After deliberation, she felt compelled to rush down to the farm. When I asked her why she decided to take that risk, even after deciding to quit the movement, she responded: *"There wasn't another option for me. [the person who called her] was in the trenches with me for over a year… all of those comrades there were in the trenches with me. They took care of me, I took care of them. Even though it was only a year, even with all our differences, I felt that it was my duty to go [to Rancho Mena]. Despite my exhaustion, I realized this was bigger than me or some disagreements. This was about water, this was about life and justice for our future generations here and even around the world… it was for [the person who called her]'s family who couldn't even farm their own land anymore"* (Author Interview #11, author's translation).

Other participants – both rural and urban classes – I asked regarding that day and their motivations had similar responses, relaying a profound sense of duty, responsibility, and respect towards one another, people they had only known a short while in their lives, built on a foundation of the past year (Author's Field Notes 2018). Equally, every person I encountered that were involved that day, when asked if they had ever imagined they would have ended up in that situation prior to their engagement in the early 2017 protests, responded with a resounding "no," even among respondents who had participated in some form of activism before 2017 (Author's Field Notes 2018).

4.3 Expanding Targets and Geographies

As discussed previously, organizational forms, cultures of solidarity, and master framing of movement participants underwent a transformation through their initial collective actions against the

gasolinazo and water privatization. This transformation laid the foundation for a sustained struggle against the Constellation Brands brewery. In a similar manner, the collective action against Constellation Brands and its transformational impact further expanded the foundation. This enabled the movement to confront a broader range of demands, issue areas, and geographies. While there are numerous examples, some of which I touched on in previous sections, I will focus on two that I had directly observed during my field work: a campaign to liberate 'las casetas' to promote freedom of travel and solidarity trips to movements in other parts of the country.

4.3.1 Liberating Las Casetas

Early morning on August 25, 2018, I arrived at *La Arboleda* along with a couple dozen members of *Baja California Resiste*, who loaded their trucks with meals, placards, and other equipment. Once packed, I joined the group as they headed through a federal highway in La Rumorosa – an arid, mountainous stretch between Mexicali and Tecate. Eventually, we reached a federal toll-booth (*caseta*, in Spanish), which were quite common, and ever-increasing, along highways in Mexico. The trucks were parked on the sides of the booth, and the group descended, carrying flags, banners, and sounding a siren on their many megaphones. *"We are here to liberate this caseta!"* they shouted as they made their way to the booths where the toll-booth attendants were stationed. Familiar with the situation and not wanting any confrontation, they left their posts, and the protestors pressed the buttons to lift up the road barriers. This wasn't the first time – for the past few months, the group would do this every other week (Author's Field Notes 2018).

The participants pointed to Article 11 of the Mexican Constitution, which grants the freedom of travel throughout the country for its citizens, as the legal rationale for their action. As a broader issue, the protestors explained that these tolls were another circumstance where the capitalist-aligned state was exercising an undue burden on working people by demanding increasing payment for the basic right to travel between these major cities.

When I asked one of the organizers to explain the origins of these actions, he recounted: *"Since we started organizing against the theft of our water, we started finding more and more ways that the malgobierno and their big business partners were screwing us over… we already paid taxes, and the government would contract their friends for big road projects, but we never saw a difference in the conditions [of the roads], all they did was build these casetas to take money from us… they were putting the rest of the money in their pocket. We already have to pay so much for gas, cost of living, and they keep increasing the prices of the tolls."* He explained further, *"We already had a lot of success raising awareness about Constellation Brands… well, this is part of the same larger issue we are facing, so we decided to take action and raise more awareness"* (Author Interview #24, author's translation).

During the 'liberation,' the participants explicitly connected the seemingly disparate issues of Constellation Brands and the issue of *casetas* through signs, pamphlets, speeches made through bullhorns, and conversations they had with those in cars passing through (Author's Field Notes 2018).

One protester, while cars were passing through, shouted: *"The malgobierno is taking our water, they are charging us to travel when the Constitution says it is illegal. This is our corrupt system! We say 'Enough is enough!"* (Author's Video Field Notes 2018).

(Author's photo, protestor posting sign reading "CONSTELLATION BRANDS LEAVE BAJA CALIFORNIA" over toll booth prices)

A couple months earlier, their 'liberation of *casetas*' drew the attention of a few construction contractors turned community activists from neighboring coastal cities of Tijuana and Rosarito who had stopped through the *caseta* during one of their actions. Inspired by the message, they began joining the protestors from Mexicali. Importantly, Tijuana and Rosarito were themselves facing water shortages and concerns over the public-private desalination plants discussed earlier. Through the continued encounters at the *casetas*, these activists became involved in both the Constellation Brands issue and were connected with movements in their hometowns dealing with water issues as well. One of the activists, from Rosarito, commented to me, *"We knew about the brewery issue, but we didn't know how much there was a connection to what we were dealing with [in Rosarito] and the whole desalination plant issue… thank God that we stopped through [this toll booth] one day, now we are connecting our struggles and are stronger because of it"* (Author Interview #21, author's translation).

4.3.2 Encuentros with other movements in Mexico

During my fieldwork I had the opportunity to accompany members of Mexicali Resiste for three convenings with movements contesting water grabbing and land grabbing in the state of Puebla, Mexico and one in the rural town of San Pedro Tlanixco in the State of Mexico. The first was a convening with scholar-activists in the city of Puebla at La Benemérita Universidad Autónoma de Puebla (BUAP). The second was in the town Cuetzalan, Puebla, with nahua and totonac *ejidatarios*. The third was at a church in Tehuacán, Puebla with local communities from the area. The fourth was a large gathering of land, water, and human rights defenders from around the country convening to create a dialogue and strategic alliance plan in San Pedro Tlanixco.

The invitation to Mexicali Resiste came after the news of León Fierro's arrest, mentioned above, disseminated nationally, piquing the interest of communities and movements who have long fought water

and land grabbing in differing contexts. The *encuentros* were set up through mutual interest in learning from each other's struggles, and forging a larger national network.

A notable aspect of these encounters and interchanges was the mutual recognition of key differences in the social, political, economic, and environmental conditions surrounding the various movements' struggles, but nevertheless forging solidarity on commonalities that transcended these class differences. For example, in one dialogue with an *ejidatario* farmer from Mexicali and an *ejidatario* from Cuetzalan, while both were legally organized under the same system of land reform governance and referred to themselves as '*campesinos,'* their material circumstances and connection with water and agricultural production differed (Author's Field Notes 2018).

The agricultural producers from Mexicali (one from an *ejido* and one who had a private parcel) primarily grew non-edible industrial crops or animal feed on flat land, which demanded certain types of synthetic fertilizers, machinery, and commercial arrangements with middle-men distributors. While they did grow some food for themselves in gardens, they primarily derived food to consume through purchase. Their issues with water, as discussed, came from hydrosocial issues surrounding the Colorado River basin and diversion of water for industrial factories (Author's Field Notes 2018).

Those from Cuetzalan, on the other hand, farmed primarily edible crops such as beans and corn on hillsides, using manual labor to clear and tend the land. Much of their personal food consumption derived from farming separate plots that were kept just for their family and not commercial use. Their issues with water derived from contamination threats from mining and water supply threats from the construction of a hydroelectric dam (Author's Field Notes 2018).

While much has been written analyzing the class differentiation of the peasantry (Bernstein 2010), what was most striking about these encounters was the ability for these agricultural producers, along with the urban-based Mexicali Resiste members, to find commonality in the issues they faced and diffuse their understandings of them to each other, despite seeming contradictions or non-conformity in circumstances.

During a dialogue session, participants were open about these differences but broadened their views of being part of something together. One Cuetzalan *ejidatario* I spoke with reflected on the fact that they were impressed with the movement in Mexicali: *"I never really knew about what was going on in the border areas. I always thought it was just big business agriculture. But I saw the ejidos up there were struggling in the same way, fighting for their family's future… maybe our land looks different but they have the same heart, and are fighting the same bastards that we are. The transnational companies, the corrupt government contractors… they are getting beat up and arrested like we are"* (Author's Informal Focus Group #4, author's translation).

Speaking informally with the group of Mexicali Resiste members after a forum, they noted to me how striking it was to them the intense challenges faced by the *ejidatarios* they met. One noted that while they thought they had it hard with government repression of their movement in Mexicali, they were shocked by the stories of violence faced by the communities in Puebla and their resilience to continue fighting (Author's Field Notes 2018).

The Tlanixco gathering spanned three days and united various movements under the banner of "Defending Water, Land, and Life." At this assembly, attendees exchanged their individual experiences, insights, and strategies, culminating in the formulation of a united strategic approach to their shared objectives. Though I was explicitly requested to withhold specific details regarding these strategies, a significant portion of the discourse centered around the evaluation and dissemination of tactics – discerning what strategies suited certain scenarios and which did not. In focussed breakout sessions, movement members collaborated to address shared challenges and refine their strategies. Members of Mexicali Resiste emphasized the value of these discussions, sharing with me the various approaches they planned to bring back to their group. Additionally, they recounted the positive reception to the legal tactics they suggested during these interactions (Author's Field Notes 2018).

(Strategy session break-out group at Tlanixco *encuentro*, Author's photo)

The experiences of the "liberation *of las casetas*" and *encuentros* were demonstrative of several key transformations. First, they demonstrated the evolved ability of participants to adapt the institutional arrangements and issue framing learned and developed through their collective action experiences of the past two years to expand to other demands and geographies. In the case of the *casetas*, the movement participants found new targets they saw as logical extensions of previous grievances, embedded in an understanding of their socioeconomic circumstances, and used those new targets and demands as a bridge to recruit back to the struggle against water grabbing.

Second, the Mexicali movement's successes—and setbacks like Fierro's arrest—garnered recognition and respect from other movements across the country. This opened up new networks, fostering broader cultures of solidarity across differentiated classes that recognized common points of their objective oppression. This respect wasn't merely symbolic; it had tangible effects. These new connections exposed participants of the Mexicali movement to fresh issues, contexts, tactics, and framings, broadening their worldview. They brought this expanded perspective back to Mexicali, integrating it into their local struggles, much as those they interacted with incorporated the Mexicali movement's insights into their own. Recognizing a wider network of allies across the country, all sharing similar grievances, amplified the perceived and actual potential of Mexicali groups to influence political outcomes.

Chapter 5: Analysis/Conclusion

This paper set out to answer the question: "How do collective action experiences of various social actors in Mexicali emerge from and subsequently influence structure-agency dynamics, and how does this transformation reshape the agency of those involved and their broader terrain of political contention and resistance?" To explore this, I focussed on transformations in movement participants' collective efficacy and 'cognitive liberation'; issue framing and diffusion; and 'cultures of solidarity.' Through the event-experience framework I provided a detailed and rich ethnography, based on my field work, to trace through the 'event-experiences' of movement participants in Mexicali who engaged in

collective action starting in 2017, and coalesced around, but also moved beyond, opposing the Constellations Brands brewery.

My data demonstrated the larger political, economic, and ecologic dynamics which formed the contours of objective, structural relations of the Mexicali Valley and its produced certain agents, whose initial reactions to water grabbing were conditioned by and their relationships to water. Their experience of collective action to contend this water grabbing changed the structures that gave way to it simultaneously changed their collective ability and ways for them to make sense of the world in which they are situated and to change it.

Firstly, the movement participants' collective efficacy was notably enhanced, as evidenced by their sustained engagement and adaptive strategies in the face of opposition. This cognitive liberation was not merely a psychological shift but was grounded in the tangible successes and setbacks of the movement – ranging from quotidian confrontations to grandiose clashes – fostering a sense of empowerment that bred intense dedication and increasing willingness to take risk overtime, underlined by a strong sense in their ability to confront power and change structures that grew through each new experience.

Secondly, the way movement participants framed issues and diffused them evolved. The Mexicali movement's framing of issues was not static; it changed as participants engaged with each other and with external movements through the course of their collective action. The engagement between agrarian and urban actors produced a synthesized framing that incorporated the contestation of water from the perspective of a production input and the broader, social-reproductive framing of 'water is life.' This diffusion fostered a greater mutual understanding developed between seemingly disparate groups that gave them a perceived sense of unity against a larger, shared oppression, where a victory for one was a victory for another. Diffusion took on a national role, as the collective action of those in Mexicali earned them recognition and respect among other movements, allowing them to create spaces to mutually exchange ideas and frames.

The movement itself developed a framing process that was both reflective and constitutive, as it not only represented the participants' understanding of their situation, and demonstrated its change over time, but also actively shaped the movement's collective identity and strategy. Through these collective framing actions we can observe that localized or isolated grievances were expanded to encompass more structural frameworks of understanding the fight against Constellation Brands, a clearer sense of identity, as a movement and strategic vision. These shifts in framing made them more effective as a movement, while also paving the way for the movement to expand targets and demands that went beyond Constellation Brands or even water grabbing.

Thirdly, the collective action experience fostered the creation of 'cultures of solidarity' represented by and through participants' organizational structures, practices, bonds, and movement institutions. These were reproduced and strengthened from intense bursts of contention, daily life maintenance in camps and assemblies, to building networks across the country. These cultures actively constructed and reconstructed building upon each other throughout their experiences and were pivotal in sustaining momentum, forging a collective identity, and instilling camaraderie and closeness between participants.

While a more cross-comparative research needs to be done to identify more potential axes of transformation, and perhaps identify any trends or generalities within similar contexts, I hope this paper underscores the importance of dynamic transformations within collective action 'reactions from below' against control grabbing as an object of investigation and study, and the transformative power of collective action experiences, even when there are no clear victories. In the field of development studies, I hope that further attempts are made to find ways to bridge macro-structural theory with the real, lived, human experiences of those who make up and experience them in a fruitful way.

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Appendix A - Semi-structured interviews

Interview ID	**Affiliation:**	**Date:**	**Location:**

Interview #1	Mexicali Resiste	August 11, 2018	Centro Cívico, Mexicali
Interview #2	Mexicali Resiste	August 11, 2018	Campamento 'Eje. Sur,' Centro Cívico, Mexicali
Interview #3	Mexicali Resiste	August 14, 2018	Personal Residence, Mexicali
Interview #4	Mexicali Resiste	August 14, 2018	Personal Residence, Mexicali
Interview #5	Mexicali Resiste	August 15, 2018	Campamento 'Eje. Norte,' Centro Cívico, Mexicali
Interview #6	Mexicali Resiste	August 15, 2018	Campamento 'Eje. Norte,' Centro Cívico, Mexicali
Interview #7	Mexicali Resiste	August 15, 2018	Campamento 'Eje. Norte,' Centro Cívico, Mexicali
Interview #8	Mexicali Resiste	August 16, 2018	Campamento 'Eje. Norte,' Centro Cívico, Mexicali
Interview #9	Mexicali Resiste	August 16, 2018	Campamento 'Eje. Norte,' Centro Cívico, Mexicali
Interview #10	Mexicali Resiste	August 16, 2018	Campamento 'Eje. Norte,' Centro Cívico, Mexicali
Interview #11	Mexicali Resiste	August 18, 2018	Personal Residence, Mexicali
Interview #12	Mexicali Resiste	August 18, 2018	Personal Residence, Mexicali
Interview #13	Baja California Resiste	August 19, 2018	Centro de Justicia Penal Río Nuevo, Mexicali

Interview #14	Baja California Resiste	August 19, 2018	Centro de Justicia Penal Río Nuevo, Mexicali
Interview #15	Baja California Resiste	August 19, 2018	'Rancho Mena,' el Ejido Choropo, Mexicali
Interview #16	Baja California Resiste	August 19, 2018	'Rancho Mena,' el Ejido Choropo, Mexicali
Interview #17	Baja California Resiste	August 20, 2018	Personal vehicle, Mexicali
Interview #18	Baja California Resiste	August 20, 2018	Personal vehicle, Mexicali
Interview #19	Baja California Resiste	August 20, 2018	'La Arboleda,' Mexicali
Interview #20	Baja California Resiste	August 20, 2018	'La Arboleda,' Mexicali
Interview #21	Rosarito activist	August 25, 2018	Toll Booth 'El Hongo,' highway outside of Mexicali
Interview #22	Tijuana Activist	August 25, 2018	Toll Booth 'El Hongo,' highway outside of Mexicali
Interview #23	Baja California Resiste	August 25, 2018	Toll Booth 'El Hongo,' highway outside of Mexicali
Interview #24	Baja California Resiste	August 25, 2018	Toll Booth 'El Hongo,' highway outside of Mexicali
Interview #25	Comité en Defensa del Agua	August 26, 2018	Sanborns Café, Mexicali

Interview #26	Comité en Defensa del Agua	August 26, 2018	'La Arboleda,' Mexicali
Interview #27	Comité en Defensa del Agua	August 28, 2018	Ejido Guanajuato, Mexicali
Interview #28	Comité en Defensa del Agua	August 28, 2018	Ejido Guanajuato, Mexicali
Interview #29	Comité en Defensa del Agua	August 28, 2018	Ejido Guanajuato, Mexicali
Interview #30	Comité en Defensa del Agua	August 28, 2018	Ejido Guanajuato, Mexicali
Interview #31	Comité en Defensa del Agua	August 28, 2018	Ejido Guanajuato, Mexicali
Interview #32	Comité en Defensa del Agua	August 28, 2018	Ejido Guanajuato, Mexicali
Interview #33	Comisión Estatal del Agua del Baja California	August 28, 2018	Comisión Estatal del Agua del Baja California office
Interview #34	Ex-Director del Distrito del Riego del Valle de Mexicali, CONAGUA	September 1, 2018	Starbucks location in Mexicali
Interview #35	Baja California Resiste	September 9, 2018	Restaurant
Interview #36	Mexicali Resident	September 5, 2018	Bar
Interview #37	Mexicali Resiste	September 9, 2018	Restaurant

Appendix B - Informal Focus Groups

Focus Group ID	Number of Participants	Affiliation(s)	Date	Location
#1	12	Mexicali Resiste	August 17, 2018	Civic Center
#2	15	Comité en Defensa del Agua	September 5, 2018	Ejido "El Choropo", Mexicali
#3	11	Baja California Resiste, Comité en Defensa del Agua, unaffiliated agriculturalists	September 6, 2018	"La Arboleda"
#4	10	Cuetzalan campesino movement, Mexicali Resiste	September 10, 2018	Cuetzalan Assembly Hall
#5	6	Mexicali Resiste, Baja California Resiste	August 20, 2018	Private Residence
#6	9	Encuentro por la Defensa del Agua, Territorio, Libertad attendees	September 10, 2018	San Pedro Tlanixco

Appendix C - Participant Observation events (non-exhaustive)

Event:	Group(s) Present:	Date:	Location:
6 Meetings with Core Members of Mexicali Resiste (10-25 people each meeting)	Mexicali Resiste	Between August 14 and September 14, 2018	Various meeting spaces throughout Mexicali

Direct Action: ('liberating' toll-booth 'El Hongo') with Resistencia Civil de BC	Resistencia Civil de BC, Rosarito Resiste, Tijuana Resiste	August 25, 2018	Toll-booth on Federal Highway 2 between Mexicali and Tijuana
Platform planning meeting hosted by BC Resiste	Comunidad BC Resiste, OPT, Fuerza Mexicali, Independent candidates, MORENA party members	August 26, 2018	Restaurant 'Muralla China' in Mexicali
Dialogue Event	Mexicali Resiste	August 4, 2018	Casa de Culturas Contempráneas ICSyH-UAP, in Puebla, Puebla
Dialogue Event	Mexicali Resiste, MIOCUP-CNPA	August 5, 2018	Explanada de la Iglesia de la Conchita, Cuetzalan, Puebla
Dialogue Event	Mexicali Resiste, Movimiento Agrario Zapatisa Indigena	August 6, 2018	Convento 'El Carmen,' Techuacán, Puebla
Action: Protest at court hearing of Rigoberto Campos	Resistencia Civil de BC, Comunidad Baja California Resiste, Comité en Defensa del Agua, few members Mexicali Resiste	August 23, 2018	Centro de Justicia Penal Río Nuevo, Mexicali

Action: Protest at court hearing of Filiberto Sanchez	Baja California Resiste, Comité en Defensa del Agua, few members Mexicali Resiste	September 7, 2018	Centro de Justicia Penal Río Nuevo, Mexicali
Action: Collecting and turning in money for transparency on APP projects	Baja California Resiste	September 9, 2018	Centro Cívico, Mexicali
Community Meal	Baja California Resiste	August 27, 2018	'La Arboleda' camp outside Constellation Brands site
Meeting of Comité en Defensa del Agua	Comité en Defensa del Agua	August 28, 2018	Salón Ejidal del Ejido Cuernavaca, Mexicali Valley
'Anti-Grito' Protest at Independence Day Celebration	Comunidad Baja California Resiste, Mexicali Resiste	September 15, 2018	Centro Cívico, Mexicali
Encuentro por la Defensa del Agua, Territorio, Libertad	Various collectives from around the country, Mexicali Resiste	September 18, 18	San Pedro Tlanixco