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Food Regimes, Race and The Coloniality of Power: Linking his- tories in the food sovereignty movement

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Abstract

This paper centers the food regime as a critical tool for understanding state hegemony, and invokes the introduction of racial categorization to further extend the powerful role of states' formations historically. To do this I present the food regimes analytical tool and characterize the *coloniality of power* thesis, to argue that a better understanding of state formation in modern times is achieved by unifying both race and food regimes together, rather than thinking of them as two detached concepts. First I characterize Aníbal Quijano's Coloniality of Power thesis, which explains how the categorization of people by racial identities was a novel process of the conquest of the Americas, used to exert power and develop a capitalist hierarchy over labor based on categories of race. Then, I define and problematize Friedmann and McMichael's food regime analytic, discussing a few criticisms brought forth from other scholars. The food regime analytical tool explains how the state hegemony controls food systems through industrial agriculture marketing and policy-making. The result of this paper shows how the integration of Coloniality of Power alongside a food regimes analysis have combined to support the genesis of the food sovereignty countermovement. Food sovereignty, which arguably is an ideology more than a process in it self, supports the political, social and economic rights of people to control their own food systems. It counters the hegemony of food regimes by integrating equality of race, gender, religion and class into the agency afforded to people to resist corporate and state hegemony of food systems. It follows that those people and groups whose rights and agrarian livelihoods have been most direly challenged have organized together to define food sovereignty. Thus, this paper characterizes the changing frame of reference that the food sovereignty movement advances to counter state hegemony, racial categories and labor relations in food regimes.

Introduction

Historically, food counter-movements are challenged to bring much-needed attention to the racial inequalities embedded in agri-food systems, which I trace to the beginnings of capitalist development in the Americas. Food sovereignty exercises political claims over the rights to food, and more succinctly, the rights and the cultural affirmation of racial groups whose autonomy from corporate control signifies not just survival, but thriving through political and cultural expression. Since the "modern world" is in part defined by corporate and industrial relations of capital and wage labor, both the *coloniality of power* and food regimes interrogate the "modern world's" derivation of global power in unique ways. The political economy of the Americas, as it has developed since the time of European conquest at the end of 15th century, presents the concomitant rise of capitalist relations based on hegemonic control over industry and agriculture. Specifically in regards to control of the food system, food sovereignty has animated

counter-movements to claim the right to food, specifically for workers, women and impoverished people. Food sovereignty does not directly challenge state making, but rather it is indirectly challenging the corporate-state grip on agri-food systems that have been dependent upon the exploitation of people of color, or non-whites.

Food regimes analysis looks upon the way that food is produced as a power relation and as a labor relation, and therefore as a social relation that is subject to exploitation by capitalist development. Likewise, the *coloniality of power* conceptualizes the way that people's identities were categorized into simplified racial categories as a social relation to the mode of production that depended on slavery. In this paper, I choose race as a node in which to anchor my analysis of food regimes and food movements because, as Norman Girvan (1981) succinctly puts it, race, "has been a central factor in the political economy of exploitation and for that reason of central importance in the politics and ideology of resistance." I combine a food regime analysis and the *coloniality of power* thesis to explore the historical development of counter-movements to the agri-foods hegemony in the Americas. I ask, "What are the limitations of the two theories if they're not combined together? What are the advantages of combining the theories together?" Since the *coloniality of power* constructs the "modern world" by making a new understanding of social relations – a racialized global order – wouldn't this need to be integrated into food regimes to fully understand the racial history of counter-movements?

I conclude by demonstrating how this combination of critiques in food and race theories may explain the genesis of the food justice and food sovereignty counter-movements. Social movements in food and farming are increasingly becoming more diverse in their scope across time, space, class and ethnicity. As counter-movements, various groups synergize their efforts in response to the wide range of effects of industrialized agri-food systems. Food movements represent myriad ideological and geopolitical bases, and organize to address issues including state and corporate hegemony over the food supply, land use, and the racial underpinnings of inequity in labor, to name a few. I argue that simple racial categories can't capture the variety of rationalities employed by resistance groups, working towards breaking out of hegemonic paradigms. Beginning with the racial relations that animate my inquiry into food regimes, I now turn to the *coloniality of power* thesis to better understand the racialized global order.

Race and the coloniality of power

In his work *Coloniality of Power and Eurocentrism in the Americas* (2000), Aníbal Quijano claims that racial categories can be tracked to the historical era characterized by the conquest of the Americas. The 1492 arrival of the Spanish 'exploration' armada, led by Captain Christopher Columbus, marks the beginning of this era. During the European invasion of the "new world", powerful elites applied grossly abbreviated categories to the groups of people that they

encountered. *'Indio'*, which translates into Indian, connotes that a person is a savage or uncivilized person and the expression has remained a part of the Spanish language as spoken in the Americas today. Biophysical difference was applied in an attempt to legitimize power by the hegemonic conquest of Latin America. The homogenization of people into inferior, codified groups was a key feature of the *coloniality of power* in the Eurocentric conceptualization of modernity.

The *coloniality of power* thesis recognizes that a Eurocentric perspective of racial differences has endured as one of the dominant underlying causes of regulatory and social power in the Americas. Power is anchored in the European way of state making and was reproduced through the categorization of people into labor groups, based upon the simplified terms of 'black' and 'indian', rather than 'Mandé' or 'Aymara' respectively speaking¹. People were deprived of their ancestral heritages in order to decrease their social agency, and force them into slavery for the production of material goods sold on the European controlled market. Although heterogeneous ethnic groups spanned across the Americas, Caribbean and Africa, European elites bundled them into a few homogenous groups in order to classify them for mass labor exploitation. The *coloniality of power* made way for the European, capitalist rationality to exert greater dominion over people, their labor, and their land. (Quijano 2000)

The conquest of territory now referred to as Latin America resulted in colonies being formed by satellite monarchies ruling over appointed leaders, who used racial authority over workers to produce agricultural good and sundries for the European market. Centuries into the conquest, the category of 'white' emerged to denote Europeans. Up until the early 1800's, Europeans were still identified by their class, their region of origin, and their national patronage. With the shift from colonies to independent states, a distinct *coloniality of power* came to dominate, whereby the legacy of Eurocentric state formation transitioned from European colonial rule to so-called independent state rule. Although new countries formed under the auspice that they were liberated from colonial ties, several major characteristics of newly formed states were duplicative of colonial pasts: plantation agriculture and the development of large estates, the expansion of the Catholic church, capital accumulation in the hands of the bourgeoisie and elites of partial or full European descent, dispossession of indigenous people's land and their consequential impoverishment and labor exploitation. Thus, integral to the understanding of current food justice and food sovereignty activism is a history of plantation development, dependence upon racial categories and the *coloniality of power* embedded in food production.

¹ Mandé is the name of a distinct language group of several related ethnic groups, originally from the region in West Africa where people were kidnapped or taken as prisoners of war by headhunters and sold to slave-ship captains, bound for the new world between the mid 15th-19th centuries. Aymara is the name that (continued Footnote #1) people self-identify with, originally from the Andean Altiplano in South America, where people were displaced by colonial land distributions and biological disease, beginning in the 16th century.

The premise that race was born out of the conquest of “(Latin) America²” explains how slave labor was the cornerstone to build European colonies, and later, Latin American states. European *conquistadores* developed their liberal state production through the racialization and serfdom of the majority populations already living in Latin America, and also imported slaves from Africa. Quijano draws out his theory of the *coloniality of power* by historicizing the Latin American states inability to be “modern” because they were colonial, dependent upon their European monarchies and a system of slavery. Contrasting their state formation with the formation of the modern United States of America, democracy – and its concomitant voting system – professed to recognize all citizens. In this context, when Quijano argues that, “modernity and democracy were and still are in (Latin) America a kind of political mirage (2005:5),” he overlooks the problematic and implicit notion that, in the US, to be a *citizen* was to be *white*. Food production for markets has historically been earmarked as off-limits for people of color. Salt fish was a typical slave food in the Caribbean archipelago, and people of color labored in the fields to produce cash crops and market foods for white people. Today, whites and people of color consume cheap food equally, but people of color still perform much of the labor in the fields³.

Racialization was a driver of colonial and capitalist power, and the genesis of race as a construct in the social imaginary has segregated, subjectified, and paradoxically, *united* peoples. The use of racial categories – including indigeneity – continues to be contentious for many, reflecting the complexity of identity politics across time and space⁴. Food sovereignty, because of its emphasis on self-control of food rights, may not be at the top of the agenda for indigenous groups, but it has several useful considerations that could contribute to self-governance, based on shared ethnic and racial histories. Organized around common ancestry, such groups as the Unión Nacional de Comunidades Aymaras (UNCA) are directly mobilizing their claims of autonomy through collective, political action (Ccopacatty 2013). This redresses modernization theory,

² By putting parentheses around the word ‘Latin’, Quijano reminds us that the ‘New World’ was defined by a satellite power.

³ The contemporary racial segregation of food is remarked upon by Tezozomoc (2013), community organizer for The South Central Farmers Health and Education Fund (SCFHEF): “Too often, the same people who work our fields during the day, planting and harvesting fresh produce, spend their evenings in line at the local food bank. As large centralized corporate companies increasingly mechanize their production and conceal it behind closed doors, what actually happens in our food system is hidden from us.”

⁴ It is difficult to attain one sole definition of indigeneity, but in an attempt to confer my references to it in the rest of this paper, I provide a flexible definition of indigeneity with the acknowledgement that it continues to change, depending on the person or group who is self-identifying. Indigenous is a relatively new racial category: people united around common ancestry, or who lay claim to a shared origin that pre-dates colonial pollution. Although indigenous movements form organizations and governances that take on the racial category of indigenous for the time being, Quijano (2005) suspects that the word itself will shift over time towards something else, as groups continue to push the boundaries that identify them racially and ethnically.

colonial power and development paradigms. However, the word 'indigenous' still obviates unique attributes of the Aymara. “Not long ago in Peru, an Aymara leader harshly challenged a journalist who insisted on calling him indigenous: ‘Señorita, I am neither Indian nor indigenous; I am Aymara’ (2005:17).” While autonomous governances of indigenous peoples continue to challenge the colonial conquest over 520 years later⁵, they challenge the Eurocentric state-making approach by organizing their nation based on ancestral solidarity rather than the powerful forces of military protection, political boundaries or capital. Artist Aymar Ccopacatty said, “The [UNCA] organization has been a uniting force in many different manifestations to protect our cultural identity, territory, and way of life (2013).”¹ UNCA represent mainly those Aymara residing within Peru, but the Aymara people live in the Altiplano region that covers three nation-states (Peru, Bolivia and Chile). The integration of traditional agricultural knowledge into the indigenous movement offers important strategies for not solely survival, but the ecological and social resilience of peoples historically oppressed by colonialism and corporate hegemony.

People mobilized in the indigenous movement today have had to struggle with the alienation by their national citizenry because their struggle has largely been deemed peripheral to nation making (Marcos 1997; Quijano 2005). Since the conquest of Latin America, Eurocentric perspectives of state formation were incompatible with the notion that indigenous people would attain autonomy, especially if such claims involved control over territory. This is why the majority indigenous populations – especially in Mexico, Bolivia, Ecuador and Peru – have posed serious conflicts of the liberal agenda, since liberal democracy is constructed around citizenry. In this way, the autonomous movement threatens the nation-state’s contemporary *coloniality of power* by challenging its domination over the majority populations of indigenous people in Latin America.

Quijano (2005) contends that if anything, the indigenous movement formulates unique ideologies incompatible with the liberal-democratic paradigm⁶. Although indigenous movements are produced through democratic organizing of unions and nations, such as the UNCA, they are not founded on the enlightenment concept of Democracy. Rather, indigenous

⁵ This date is in reference to the colonial period beginning with the debarquement of the Spanish Armada in 1492. To the original peoples in (Latin) American, social agency was preemptive to the conquest over labor and power, and social movements are also importantly defined by their political will. For example, the autonomous movement in several Latin American countries is a form of protest and resistance to the continuation of power in empires existent before conquest. The colonial and state oppression over people that began during the conquest was a major power shift from indigenous empires towards the early utterances of what would later form into the imperial mega-states of the European Union and the United Kingdom.

⁶ Although it is historically supported by a *socialist*-democratic paradigm, resonating with European state's persecution and exile of the Third International's leadership.

movements' persistence in forming governance bodies - without basing their organization's authority on territorial boundaries - confounds the Eurocentric concept of an autonomous nation, and shifts reliance upon common ethnic identity. "The demand for pluri-national states and citizenship appears much more confused and complicated (2005:13)," because of the dependence on the territorialized and racialized boundaries of nationhood.

In this way, indigenous movements are not seeking sovereignty, that is, self-governance free of outside control or influence. Rather, autonomy offers political and humanistic recognition of unique ancestral groups living with the state's territory. Subcomandante Insurgente Marcos articulates, "The EZLN [Zapatista Army of National Liberation], and the best of the national indigenous movement, does not want the Indian peoples to separate from Mexico, but to be recognized as part of the country with their differences (Marcos 1997)." Thus, rather than depriving people of their ancestral identity, indigeneity is claimed by myriad groups united in solidarity in struggles of autonomy and recognition of the diverse political and cultural differences they jointly construct through indigenous movements.

The *coloniality of power* theory thus recognizes that racialization and the attendant assimilation of people into simplified race categories continue to be key factors in the formation of states in the Americas, and the formation of counter-movements. I add too that territory and resources are key identifying factors for conquest. Currently, the majority of Latin American states are still governed with the Eurocentric authority that obviates indigenous claims to autonomy. Continuing to witness how UNCA and the EZLN governance persevere without territorial boundaries should provide more empirical criteria for understanding the indigenous movement in Latin America.

Although the indigenous category may repeat the problematic of a racialized trope, it has served to unite people ethnically and politically while potentially alienating migrants and landless people whose identity may not be formulated from a 'landed' origin. *Coloniality of power* incorporates race and ethnicity as prominent issues into the development discourse in a way that these prior theories failed with their narrower focus on structural political economy⁷. Conversely, scholarly contributions have yet to utilize a food regimes analysis to consider the role that race plays in development, global corporatism or regulatory frameworks. I argue that a food regimes analysis may offer a useful perspective for understanding the autonomous

⁷ However, it fails to discuss culture and *cosmovision* (that is, a world view) as guiding factors of political agency inculcated in social movements in Latin America. The author's marginalization of the *indigenista* movement as solely cultural could be said to be an aspect of Eurocentric creative forms of literature and art. This critique is a dated misuse of the Eurocentrism argument, and misplaces the agency and relevance of mestizaje and raza political artistry in the Americas and globally.

movement, by cross-examining the food justice and food sovereignty movements as similarly resisting the ‘rationality’ of capital-based hegemonies. Furthermore, I will discuss later how other social movements address race and ethnicity in their resistance to hegemony in terms of food regimes. In order to arrive at that conclusion, I first present the food regimes analysis as a useful, albeit partial, tool for understanding a racialized global order in the modern world.

The Power of Food Regimes

At the center of the concept of food regimes is the interplay between powers. A food regime gives insight into the way that state formation asserts power over space and society. Space is altered by the ecological change affected by agriculture, livestock domestication, forestry and settlement. Society is constantly changing by the way the state reveals itself through its hegemonic manipulation of agriculture and food consumption, which in turn, exerts control over the labor supply. The labor supply itself is not the focal analysis; rather a food regimes perspective examines institutions, financialization and their regulatory effects, and capital’s effect of generating the food crises. Substantive analyses on food regimes’ formation investigate development, trade, regulation and state formation, but have yet to engage with the history of race creation. I’ll provide a brief overview here of food regimes periods, then continue with more depth to lay the groundwork for discussing food regimes and race.

What function does the concept of the ‘food regime’ serve, and why do food regimes rise and fall on internal contradiction? The ‘food regime’ analysis saliently calls out the consequences of power differences in capital accumulation where the benign term ‘food system’ falls short. At its grandest scope, the concept of a food regime is not simply about food, but about “the relations within which food is produced, and through which capitalism is produced and reproduced (McMichael 2009).” Philip McMichael and Harriet Friedman honed in on the realm⁸ of food and agricultural relations to depict an example of how states regurgitate their hegemonic cultures through capitalist relations. It is my intention to suggest that a food regimes analysis presents time periods and their relative control patterns for which food sovereignty countermovements may build agendas for action, and to better understand the political economy of food.

Historically, food regimes hegemony is located during three periods, being exceptionally powerful in two, and a fourth regime is – arguably – underway in the 21st century. Food regime analysis historicizes patterns of power relations in 25–40 year cycles for each food regime. These relatively discreet periods are useful for approximating generalized trends since the industrial era of the late 1800s, as capital has developed its hegemonic culture. The danger of

⁸ They might have chosen the equally useful realm of military relations or petroleum markets for exploring hegemony in capitalist state formation.

these discreet periods is that they may mistakenly generalize, or that they may omit experiences of multiple and/or small groups that don't fit neatly each cycle's major themes.

The first food regime was characterized by expanding grain production from 1870–1914, the second introduced experimentation with biochemical inputs from 1914–1947, and the third food regime of 1947–1973 introduced global governance and finance firms into food industries. The current food regime, since 1973, is agreeably a contested and continually experimental period (Friedmann 2000). Scholarly consensus has yet to be reached on its character, and whether *two* regimes have passed in the last 40 years, or if it has just been one long period. The discourse creates fruitful contributions from evolving concepts such as fair trade, organic and place-of-origin labeling, payments for ecosystems services and carbon trading, suggesting that a fourth regime is emerging from “green” corporatism. While such terms are settling into the everyday discourse of the agri-food complex today, a food regime analysis would, “represent naturalized commonsense in urgent need of deconstruction (Friedmann 2009).”

To analyze a food regime, a period of time with a notable type of capital accumulation can be dissected and linked to the uneven power distribution of international regulations on food production, and consumption. This analytical tool was born via Wallerstein's world-systems perspective, in which capitalism begins with colonial expansion in 1500 and has remained essentially unchanged since then (Wallerstein 1991). However, it departs from the notion of an unchanging version of capital to address its evolving character over shorter and more recent periods. The concept of food regimes adds an important perspective to world-systems theory: that geographical specializations relate to historically specific commodity complexes, in this case, the agri-food complex. It is critical to mention that such an analysis fails to escape the trap of a Eurocentric account of capital accumulation, because it approaches hegemony via the story of finance, power and capital accumulation, rather than the story of race category creation, labor exploitation and the creation of state governance over territory, as professed in the *coloniality of power* thesis (Quijano 2000).

The strength of a food regimes analysis is its use it as a tool, “to identify when meanings of apparently continuous institutions and behaviors change” (Dixon 2000, cited in Freidman 2000). By no means should this tool be considered to have an automatic function, but rather one can analyze the components involved in a particular conjecture of food production and consumption, institutional behavior and regulatory hegemony. The analytical approach encourages scholarly inquiry such as, “What were the relationships that fostered food aid's creation? What relations did food aid foster?”

Foreign food aid presents a useful case study of the “modern world’s” style of repressing food rights to people of color. Applying a food regime analysis, I locate the subject of food aid into the third regime of 1947–1973, when the introduction of PL 480 was signed into US federal law in 1954 (Ball and Johnson 1996). PL 480 directed surplus grains from American industrial farmers towards foreign countries to use for emergency crop seed and livestock feed. The bill “resolved” a major surplus problem of stock grains that weren’t profiting in their dormant storage to be sold under the name of emergency aid. Countries undergoing famine, environmental disturbances or war were selected to receive the indebted aid, that is, the surplus grains from the US market, mainly countries with populations of color.

When the US Congress passed Bill PL 480 in 1954, the four principles characterized food regime relations: 1) find an outlet for the mounting tons of surplus agriculture commodities; 2) promote American geo-political interests to combat communism; 3) establish and develop humanitarian and emergency aid programs; and 4) create new markets abroad for US agricultural products (Ball and Johnson 1996). PL 480 essentially viewed poor countries as massive dumping grounds for the surplus cereal grain production empire that had burgeoned during the first regime. Under the guise of emergency aid, PL 480 legalized the US state’s debt relationship with countries largely comprised of people of non-European descent, namely ‘black’, ‘brown’ and ‘indian’ people, and those who identify based on their common ancestry. Aid’ was not synonymous with ‘free’ however, and the implication of food aid deliveries to famine-torn nations was resoundingly one of a patriarchal form of development⁹.

Sixty years of US food aid only achieved success with two of its four original goals: dumping surpluses and cornering markets, although hegemony of the food regimes since then has retained growth of the other two goals. Meanwhile, an estimated 90% of the world’s farmers who work an average 2 hectares each cannot compete with the bottom barrel prices of subsidized American grains. The presence of surplus grains on the local market undercuts these farmers, and undermines USAID’s alleged objective of long-term agricultural development (Perrey 2009).

Applying the *coloniality of power* perspective, I interject that the majority of the world’s small farmers who received food aid were of non-European descent. People of color encompass the majority of the global poor and hungry. Regions outside Latin America with histories of European colonial development have also resulted in racialized effect on poverty and hunger, disproportionately affecting POC globally: “Of the 854 million malnourished people in 2001 to

⁹ This form of patriarchal development wasn’t limited to the US. The relationship between white politicians from the US, Canada, Australia and Europe was directed towards politicians and corporations led by non-European elites in poor nations.

2003, only 9 million were in the developed world; East and Southern Asia and the Pacific accounted for 61% of the total . . . while 206 million malnourished Sub Saharan Africa inhabitants represent 32% of the region's population (IAASTD 2009)." I'd further extend that such a patriarchal relationship of food aid development contributed to the accumulation of capital in the hands of elites (of North American heritage), while extracting surplus labor from US laborers working the fields and factories, and accumulating debt from impoverished nations abroad.

According to Friedmann (2009) the "novel mechanism" of food aid during the second food regime was dependent on specific institutions of the Bretton Woods monetary system and their effective influence over the US dollar. The role of the US dollar has pivotally stabilized US markets while destabilizing others, serving as an instigator of crisis. Although US hegemony has prospered under the proliferation of the dollar as the global currency, trade and fiscal deficits reduce the power of the dollar, suggesting that US hegemony is declining. And, as crises continue to be manufactured as an insurance policy for hegemonic nations, we've seen from Britain's historical trajectory following the first food regime and World War I that new currencies were affected by wars and depressions (Arrighi and Silver 1999). As a whole, the hegemony of US & European institutions has implicated the agri-foods complex into the cycles of capital's crisis carousel.

Since the demise of the Bretton Woods system, humanitarian and emergency aid, including food aid, has functioned via a system rooted in generating crises. Crisis cycles are a result of capital relations changing character throughout the various food regimes, and are an activity of state/corporate hegemony. The food regime 'method' is useful for interpreting the historical conditioning of financial and productive shifts, and also for understanding food regimes' capitalistic tendency to profit while sustaining cyclical crises. Since politics are considered null in the status quo systems perspective of the food and agriculture industry, food sovereignty restores the urgent attention to rights and political agency that food regimes analysis saliently exposes. Indeed, the critical perspective produced from food regimes analysis underscores the importance of the generation of crises as a process of hegemonic state formation, and the resulting food countermovements that, in part, are retaliating against state-corporate control.

Harvey (2011) reminds us that capitalist crises are engineered to rise and fall on internal contradictions because of the dictum that capitalism depends upon the cyclical retrieval of surplus labor value amassed from underproduction and overconsumption. In his book, the Enigma of Capital, Harvey states that, "crises assume a key role in the historical geography of capitalism as the 'irrational rationalisers' of an inherently contradictory system. Crises are, in short, as necessary to the evolution of capitalism as money, labour power and capital itself (2011)." This helps to explain why, when discussing 'the food system' it is a common mistake to

think of an ecological equilibrium cycle of production and distribution that has relatively equitable weights of inclusion amongst voluntary or socially “rational” participants. Generating crises does not require rationality, but rather, an unevenly distributed disturbance. I argue that the advantage of the food regime analysis is it accordingly recognizes the uneven development of capital accumulation amongst participants, and further, has the potential to recognize the racial division of labor as a consequence.

Financialization, then, arises as a prominent characteristic of food regime’s grip over poor nations, manifested by those with powerful colonial pasts where crises are inherent to capitalist state formation. In the form of food regime debt, financialization is a central and vital feature (Friedmann 2009), especially from 1947–1973 in the third food regime when global governance and finance firms invested and intervened in food industries. Each hegemon relied on financial relations to flow capital, including trade regulations, debt, fiscal deficits and stock market trading. This flow rises and falls on the internal contradiction of crisis cycles, often bringing into the limelight a declining hegemon, or an upcoming contender¹⁰. A food regimes analysis recognizes the relations of hegemonic capital accumulation. It also recognizes that financialization attempts to stabilize these relations, but fails to do so because crises’ inherently disruptive nature (McMichael 2009). What a food regimes analysis neglects to do is recognize the racial relations between corporations and their labor supply. For example, although McMichael (2009) substantively analyzes the global food crises of 2008, his argument underlines that riots and demonstrations were caused by *agflation*, that is, “a neo-liberal virus transmitted through markets organized by transnational corporations, which profit from the integration, since they manage overlapping and competing supply chains.”

Massive uprisings by poor people of color (POC) during the 2008 food crises were seen as a racial issue by food sovereignty and food just countermovements, but given little mention via food regimes analysis, specifically in regards to race. Neglecting to address the obvious inequities of historically Eurocentric perspectives, race becomes naturalized in the current discourses of financialization, crisis and hegemony. Nonetheless, global hunger affects POC disproportionately to poor white people of European descent, as well as poor people most directly impacted by hunger due to insufficient funds to purchase food of increasing prices. Food regimes scholars attribute hunger to capital accumulation of hegemons, and accumulation by dispossession (McMichael 2009, Friedman 2009). On a global finance level of analysis, the hunger of POC is capitalized upon to create the debt regime that characterized the later portion of the third food regime. Yet, the intertwined relationship between corporate-state power and influence over food, race and class in the Americas requires deeper examination.

¹⁰ Financialization allowed the global flow of capital from North American and European investors to Third World and developing nation’s primary and tertiary corporations.

The institutional relations of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) became a leading hallmark of the third food regime, as capital accumulation was garnered through the international debt regime, and “structural adjustment programs.” The IMF imposed an end to the state-centered, mercantile institutions previously concerned with solely the US (Friedmann 2012). The maneuvering of the IMF reveals the falsehood of Fernando Henrique Cardoso’s contributions to dependency theory, that is, the core/periphery conceptualization of development. Although a food regimes perspective derives much of its origins from a world systems theory of development, the core/periphery idea does not explain the IMF’s strategy of capital accumulation. Michael Davis’s (2002) thesis on Third World genesis is far more useful for understanding this turn in international affairs. The IMF supported Third World states with their ‘conditionalities’ of extended payment schedules for borrowed funds in order to continue importing costly oil and food. Structural adjustment programs were the crushing result of capital accumulation through debt creation during the third food regime. Northern banks held the debt, while the IMF engineered the debt collection instrument for maintaining food and oil deliveries on their behalf. With the dollar remaining a loosely regulated world currency, the US wielded their hegemony through food and oil exports via IMF mandates.

Third World countries responded to the IMF imposition with the emergence of a capital-driven food regime. Elite businessmen rose to the occasion to tap into the processed food market. Often educated in North America or Europe, Third World business owners replicated models of agri-food moguls (such as Nestle and Carrefour) to ‘modernize’ the Third World industrial food sector in the name of economic development. Widespread changes were made towards corporate-dominated exports of ‘non-traditional commodities’ such as counter-seasonal fruits, vegetables, flowers and fish. National agri-food policies shifted in order to meet food security needs, imports replaced domestic auto-sufficiency with cheaper food products from countries with economies-of-scale advantages, and Third World dependence on grain imports deepened. For example, despite rice being the largest and most abundant crop in Madagascar, since the 1970’s the national population relied on cheaper Thai and Pakistani rice imports (IRIN 2011)¹¹. Meanwhile, the US and Europe continued to evade the IMF’s international trade regulations, as they were able to rely on major grain stockages and the interconnected web of power that set the stage for neo-liberalized market conditionings of the 1980s. Despite the US’s own fiscal and trade deficits, their historical position in negotiating powerful deals in financial relations leveraged the successful deflection of criticism regarding their agricultural commodities trading,

¹¹ Speculation by IRIN economics journalists cast blame for rice shortages onto natural disasters and the inadequacy of traditional farming methods. However, I argue that the debt regime, neo-liberal trade relations - and its powerful control in the hands of a few corporate interests allied with the Malagasy state - have undermined the ability of self sufficiency in Madagascar rice production.

carried out in the name of ‘feeding the world’, and fostering the modern era of development and trade. As Friedmann sums up, “This is what McMichael calls the corporate food regime. It is what both of us have noted changed focus of ‘food security’ from ‘hunger’ to ‘trade’ [McMichael 2004; Friedmann 2004] (Friedmann 2012:338).”

Whereas neither McMichael nor Friedmann deal with the kind of question that Quijano does regarding race, all three authors grapple with labor relations in regards to hegemonic authorities. The problem we encounter with a food regime analysis is its inability to address the unequal treatment of people of color in agri-food labor and the resulting effects on poor health, hunger and landlessness among black, brown, red and yellow and ‘indigenous’ people globally. Essentially, food regimes depict a highly modernized, i.e. corporate and industrialized, version of colonialism. Is the idea of food regimes some kind of synchronized structure between corporate and state production regimes or are they emerging as separate regimes? What does this separation of corporate and state regimes do to racialized relationships globally and regionally?

Further alternative topics of analysis with a food regimes perspective should be extended to consider the role of race and cultural identity in food regimes. To name a few more interventions: the division of labor in agriculture on an industrial scale versus a small-scale farm; corporate patterns of capitalist accumulation by men of color and the accompanying poverty of women of color; agricultural and culinary knowledge as it differs in its racial dissemination. Recognizing racial influences and the transgression of an increasingly industrialized agriculture paradigm would be an important starting point, equalizing the role that racial categories play in the agri-food complex.

Race and the Peasant Question

Development scholars have cited how and where large quantities of labor have been reduced and absorbed into urban areas, without specifically diving into issues of the genesis of race and indigeneity. Their focus is on the shift from a traditional society – usually considered agrarian – to a modern society, and its aim of producing an industrialized, developed society and environment. According to Araghi (2000), the contemporary peasant question today has a worldwide character that is not related to the state, but rather to the corporate industrialization of spaces. Other scholars contribute that the peasantry are considered residual, or on the way to disappearing, because industrialization is seen as the goal of progress (Cowen and Shennan 1995, Bernstein and Byres 2001). Questions around agrarian production and the politics of food are always focused on the mode of production, as are questions today around industrialization of food systems – including distribution, packaging, processing, and agriculture. Peasants are those who, from a Eurocentric perspective, come from a poor, farming class of people living in the countryside. ‘Peasants’ masks group’s ancestral identities and shifts the focus towards their

labor, in a way that reproduces the Eurocentric optic as well. This is a problem because it diverges from locating the differential treatment of peasants, or workers, based on historical differences, ethnic specificity and land-based rights. Rather, it lumps diverse groups of people into the homogenous category of ‘peasants’.

This lumping of people loses its utility when considering the diverse ancestral, political and social histories of people. The homogenization problem arises in the peasant question once again, because lumping people into one group deprives them of their ancestral identities, including their political ideologies and relations to land, *cosmovision* (that is, their worldview) and future generations. Specifically in regard to Latin America, where entire ancestral groups have experienced genocide due to the conquest, recognizing a group of people for their unique identity is vital for their survival. For example, the 700 remaining members of the Baro tribe in Colombia are not going to amass the power to survive by referring to them as peasants (United Nations 2008).

Thus, economic development paradigms may easily slip into recognizing peasants based on class alone, while neglecting to acknowledge their social and cultural uniqueness. The trope of confusing peasants with ‘indigenous’ is inaccurate for the Latin American context, where ‘indigenous’ empires contained their own class hierarchies prior to the application of a racial category. Ancestral identities are posited as racial or ethnic identities, whereas the referent of the ‘peasantry’ refers to class, which bypasses ancestral, racial or ethnic specificity. Categorizing people according to race and class is made a more complex question because of the changing nature of agrarian society and peasant society – a question that is hungry for recognizing the unique histories and identities of diverse struggles as they vary amongst global groups of people.

The global political economy of food and its countermovements

How can we move forward the food regime analysis with a corporate food regime and a *coloniality of power* framework? The global political economy of food challenges scholars to find one simple definition of a food regime. In her early work on the subject, Harriet Friedmann (1982) identified the *international food order* as a, “stable set of complementary state policies whose implicit coordination creates specific prices relative to other prices, a specific pattern of specialization, and resulting patterns of consumption and trade.” Substantive critique cannot be afforded enough to the political economy of food without recognizing the role that race has played in the resistance to exploitation implied by the confrontations on people’s agricultural lands, forests and foodways (c.f. Girvan 1981). Resistance movements have arisen amongst people who share affiliations with neighboring landholdings, but more notable groups organize around shared ancestry. Political affronts to groups sharing common ancestry and racial

identities call upon scholars of food regimes to recognize how hunger and poverty disproportionately affect people of color, indigenous people and migrants. How do social movements begin to re-question the global systems that began to form in the 1940s, and the rising of the indigenous movement in 1990s?

La Via Campesina is the most widely representative group globally addressing smallholder rights and the counter-movements against the industrial agricultural complex. Their struggle is against those market firms whose business objectives threaten the livelihood strategies of smallholder farmers, landless farmers and craftspeople who live from the land. Food sovereignty is the ideology that drives the countermovement actions against the dominant state and market regulationism of food regimes. Taking root in the *Movimiento Sin Tierra* (Landless Worker's Movement), food sovereignty is animated through the activist-led encampments and settlements of displaced indigenous and POC farmers throughout Brazil. Advocates of food sovereignty might also be positioned in the appropriate ideoscape to analyze "new elements" or "transitional projects" (c.f. Goodman and Watts 1995), and to explore state formation in the Americas as a congruent development in dominant agri-food paradigms.

"Most political economy, including food regimes, has been caught in the deep divisions of modernist thought. But the openness of the approach to include new as well as old elements in considering transitional projects of many kinds is very far from any 'convenient elision of the problem of transition...' (Goodman and Watts 1995, p. 3, quoted in Friedmann 2009)."

Social justice counter-movements resist the exploitation and dominant regulations of corporate markets and state jurisdiction over food and farming. The United Nations World Conference on Indigenous Peoples recommend that, "that States cease subsidizing the expansion of industrial, commercial agriculture plantations which promote toxic chemical fertilizers and pesticides as well as genetically modified organisms (GMO's) in Indigenous lands and territories (UN 2013)." It follows that those people and groups whose rights and agrarian livelihoods have been most direly challenged have organized together to define a new paradigm for resisting oppressive conditions of neo-liberal reforms and state regulations. By claiming food sovereignty or food justice, which arguably are ideologies more than processes, support the political, social and economic rights to control their own agri-food systems. Indigenous countermovements have rallied alternative education programs that prioritize indigenous farming and food heritage. They counter the hegemony of food regimes by integrating equality of race, gender, religion, migration status, workers rights and class into the agency afforded to people.

Different cultures across time and space can be viewed through many different identifiers. When we think of the power embedded in the agri-food complex, it is crucial to understand how the formation of states has been contrived by the social construction of race. Amongst agricultural production sectors, farming has a racialized texture apparent in the division of labor. For example, the US black farmer movement of the late 1990's arose in conjunction with the sustainable food movement that recognizes the need to return localized food economies and pesticide-free production values to black people in the US. Sustainable agriculture farming advocates run the gamut of ethnic backgrounds, and POC are now beginning to increase their representation in the labor force amongst farmers, agri-food advocates in non-governmental organizations (NGOs), garden and farm educators, farmers' market entrepreneurs, food purveyors and restaurateurs. The food justice movement in North America encourages a greater increase of POC to bring more equity of representation to alternative foods and sustainable agriculture.

Increasingly, POC have carved a space for themselves at the table to address a major void in what purports to be a hybrid socio-ecological movement. The "unbearable whiteness of alternative food", as Julie Guthman (2008) points out, marginally acknowledges racially different norms, income disparities and community relationships of POC into the alternative food movement. The alternative food movement aims to retrieve diminishing culinary traditions and cultivars, through community-based organizations and agro-ecological farming, but it is remiss if it reproduces racially segregated patterns of food and agriculture social relations. Cultural traditions and nutrient rich food should be preserved for POC too, while also recognizing the historical, political and socio-economic inequities that have hindered retention and access. The extent to which the food justice movements bring racial issues to the forefront of the agri-foods complex discourses is vital. Food justice movements place social agency in the control of POC, while building alliances between POC and white people and other social justice issues, including prison reform, migration issues, workers rights, economic and community development and health. Emerging out of the environmental justice movement, rather than alternative food, POC started the food justice movement in the 1990s via community groups organizing against the loss and/or absence of grocery stores in neighborhoods populated by POC.

Food justice is a concept that unites POC with whites in myriad forms of community groups, and works towards the equitable inclusion for accessing whole, fresh, local and culturally appropriate food provision for all people at all times. For example, the People's Grocery in West Oakland, California underlines the injustice of food deserts in the district of Oakland predominately populated by POC, the majority of which are African Americans. Historically, low-wage naval yard workers were provided affordable housing three-four generations ago during the WWII naval vessel contractor boom, and have retained residency there amidst increased

environmental pollution from the naval yard and increased crime. Corner liquor stores, bodegas and the occasional taco truck are insufficient to meet the cultural, nutritional and community needs of West Oakland. Other programs advocating for food justice may interrogate the prison industrial complex by reaching out to educate inmates of color about the agri-foods complex. Food justice advocacy is not the same framework as food security. Food security solely assesses access to caloric intake, while food justice recognizes that racial and residential categories differentiate the way people eat, often meaning that POC have lower quality food available, and must travel farther from home to purchase it. Access to food should be considered in terms of spatial arrangements, and combined with the historical racism that has segregated people based on common ancestry or the color of their skin, is a provocative cause for resistance movements.

Food justice movements are often involved with urban agriculture, planting seeds and building community alliances in backyard food gardens, community center gardens, public and private school gardens, reclaimed park spaces, abandoned or neglected brown-field parcels and rooftop gardens. Urban agriculture is an important way to address the triple bottom line of sustainable food systems for POC in urban environments. Some criticism has arisen saying that there are more white youth than POC neighborhood residents, joining the urban agriculture trend that food gardens purport to improve. The triple bottom line of sustainability recognizes the importance of social, ecological and economic programming as central to achieving successful sustainability outcomes across the board. Sustainability requires both operational and ideological coherence amongst stakeholders to recognize how racism plays out in the food system. The food justice movement insists that in order to move towards greater racial equity in nutrition, farming and eating culturally appropriate food, institutions, businesses and community organizations must begin to implement programs that prioritize the participation and leadership of youth of color.

Group solidarity carries important attributes for organizing groups motivated to make social change. Organizing outreach and service programs by and for farmers of color may be the key to addressing important, historical economic and social challenges for non-whites. Tezozomoc (2013), of The South Central Farmers Health and Education Fund (SCFHEF), said that, "While our communities have a strong Mesoamerican heritage in growing and cooking food, the free market rarely provides culturally-sensitive, organic options." One priority for SCFHEF is the conservation of heirloom land race varieties of fruits, vegetables and medicinal herbs that originate in North America. Cultural sensitivity to producing foods that reflect the traditions of diverse groups invites otherwise marginalized people from growing and eating the foods that reflect their people's history. Growers of Mesoamerican heritage are able to support their communities in refuting canned *huitlacoche*, the fungus that grows on maize kernels, by

harvesting it fresh, and offering this culturally specific, and seasonal special crop at farmers markets and through CSA boxes. In this way, food justice takes on a racial and cultural angle that is more complex than class alone.

The racial categories that have previous enslaved people have been turned toward solidarity movements today to reclaim social agency for organizations of resistance. Many counter-movements in food and agriculture literature source their geographical origins to Latin America, although countermovements are globally increasing their scope to address the global, multi-later character of food regimes. On one hand, these groups could be viewed as agrarian solidarity groups, with little consistency or alliance based on race, but rather on workers rights. On the other hand, I've discussed the historical basis of race and its complex relationship to working class agrarian groups and communities of color in urban settings. In light of this, there's no denying the racial roots of countermovements, there is only the obfuscation of race as an issue. This may be an illusion advanced further by La Via Campesina, that, solidarity amongst all people - *regardless* of their race, who are involved in agriculture and land stewardship – should mobilize against the hegemonic control by agri-foods corporations. I argue that this is not the full picture. Counter-movements in food and agriculture engage individuals into social solidarity groups that have deep seated histories in race as a construct of division of labor. Resistance is mounted against the continuation of food regimes hegemony in order to make statements, cultivate alternative opinions, voice complaints and suggest alternatives to hegemonic behaviors, attitudes and regulations that oppress diverse groups of people around the world. Food sovereignty builds from these resistance movements to craft futures where food rights reflect the historical roots of ethnic heritages and express thriving food traditions in the modern world.

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FOOD SOVEREIGNTY: A CRITICAL DIALOGUE INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE PAPER SERIES

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A fundamentally contested concept, food sovereignty has — as a political project and campaign, an alternative, a social movement, and an analytical framework — barged into global agrarian discourse over the last two decades. Since then, it has inspired and mobilized diverse publics: workers, scholars and public intellectuals, farmers and peasant movements, NGOs and human rights activists in the North and global South. The term has become a challenging subject for social science research, and has been interpreted and reinterpreted in a variety of ways by various groups and individuals. Indeed, it is a concept that is broadly defined as the right of peoples to democratically control or determine the shape of their food system, and to produce sufficient and healthy food in culturally appropriate and ecologically sustainable ways in and near their territory. As such it spans issues such as food politics, agroecology, land reform, biofuels, genetically modified organisms (GMOs), urban gardening, the patenting of life forms, labor migration, the feeding of volatile cities, ecological sustainability, and subsistence rights.

Sponsored by the [Program in Agrarian Studies at Yale University](#) and the [Journal of Peasant Studies](#), and co-organized by [Food First](#), [Initiatives in Critical Agrarian Studies \(ICAS\)](#) and the [International Institute of Social Studies \(ISS\)](#) in The Hague, as well as the Amsterdam-based [Transnational Institute \(TNI\)](#), the conference “Food Sovereignty: A Critical Dialogue” will be held at Yale University on September 14–15, 2013. The event will bring together leading scholars and political activists who are advocates of and sympathetic to the idea of food sovereignty, as well as those who are skeptical to the concept of food sovereignty to foster a critical and productive dialogue on the issue. The purpose of the meeting is to examine what food sovereignty might mean, how it might be variously construed, and what policies (e.g. of land use, commodity policy, and food subsidies) it implies. Moreover, such a dialogue aims at exploring whether the subject of food sovereignty has an “intellectual future” in critical agrarian studies and, if so, on what terms.

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