GLOBAL DEVELOPMENT AND THE CORPORATE FOOD REGIME

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ABSTRACT

The corporate food regime is presented here as a vector of the project of global development. As such, it expresses not only the social and ecological contradictions of capitalism, but also the world-historical conjuncture in which the deployment of price and credit relations are key mechanisms of 'accumulation through dispossession.' The global displacement of peasant cultures of provision by dumping, the supermarket revolution, and conversion of land for agro-exports, incubate 'food sovereignty' movements expressing alternative relationships to the land, farming and food.

INTRODUCTION

The concept of 'global development,' informing the Doha Round, is premised on the political reconstruction of agriculture as a *world* economic sector. In 2001, the U.S. Secretary of Agriculture, Ann Veneman, envisioned a 'global agriculture (where) future agriculture policies must be market-oriented…they must integrate agriculture into the global economy, not insulate us from it' (quoted in IUF, 2002, p. 4). Such reference to a 'global

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agriculture' is a discursive construct embedded in the political narrative of globalization, as a progressive realization of economic liberalization. The narrative is prescriptive, but not inevitable. And yet, while agricultural trade remains the center of political controversy in the WTO, the seemingly irresolvable nature of these trade rules will continue to realize this narrative.

Meanwhile, Vía Campesina, the transnational peasant coalition, observes that the "massive movement of food around the world is forcing the increased movement of people." Notwithstanding the profound impacts of human displacement on such a growing scale, the juxtaposition of new circuits of food and labor represents a historic moment in the reproduction of capitalism through mechanisms of 'accumulation by dispossession.' The latter is both an originating and a self-propelling dynamic, where capital expands through the release of assets, whether new or over-valued: "[w]hat accumulation by dispossession does is to release a set of assets (including labour power) at very low (and in some instances zero) cost. Over-accumulated capital can seize hold of such assets and immediately turn them to profitable use" (Harvey, 2003, p. 149).

In the context of corporate globalization, 'accumulation by dispossession' operates through *general* mechanisms of structural adjustment, which devalue and privatize assets across the global South, as well as through *particular* mechanisms of displacement of peasant agriculture, as a world of agriculture emerges. Here, local provisioning is subjected to the combined pressures of dumping of Northern food surpluses, an agro-industrial supermarket revolution, and the appropriation of land for agro-exporting. That is, through economic liberalization, new food circuits relentlessly displace small farmers into an expanding circuit of casual labor, flexibly employed when employed at all. Thus, a global labor reserve, and (displaced/released) cultures of provision, represent new opportunities for accumulation in a global project of 'development.'

This chapter proceeds by examining the institutional tensions in the Doha Development Round associated with the pursuit of global development, via the corporate food regime. While the rhetoric of development frames the WTO Ministerial meetings since the Doha Ministerial in 2001, the practice of global development is filtered through the competitive relations among (unequal) states. And these competitive relations are increasingly governed by the corporate pursuit of 'comparative advantage' across the state system. The latter is decisive in constructing a world of agriculture, generating the new circuits of labor fueling 'global development.'

The corporate food regime is a key vector of the project of global development. This project is characterized by the global de-regulation of financial relations, calibrating monetary value by credit (rather than labor) relations – as practiced through the privatizing disciplines internalized by indebted states, the corporatization of agriculture and agro-exports, and a world-scale casualization of labor (McMichael, 1999). The corporate food regime exemplifies, and underpins, these trends, through the determination of a world price for agricultural commodities strikingly divorced from cost.

It is one thing to subject agriculture to the price form, but quite another, through *political* means, to artificially depress agricultural prices through a food regime of overproduction and dumping. While the postwar U.S.-centered food regime managed overproduction to serve targeted Third World markets, the world price of the corporate food regime is universalized through liberalization (currency devaluation, reduced farm supports, and corporatization of markets), rendering farmers everywhere vulnerable to dispossession as a precondition of the construction of a world agriculture.

THE DOHA MINISTERIAL AS A DEVELOPMENT INITIATIVE

The designation of the WTO Ministerial in Doha (2001) as the 'development round' responded to concerns in the global South that 'globalization' was not meeting its promise. Accordingly, the Doha Development Agenda Round aimed to strengthen globalization as an inclusive force. Naming it a development round recalls the legitimizing function of development discourse in moments of intensified global inequality, like the era of decolonization (Escobar, 1995). It also reminds us that calling the new round 'development' simultaneously promises *and* proscribes.

The Doha Round proposed to facilitate new trade-offs for the global South, whereby further de-regulation of Southern economies would be matched with possible Northern concessions. These concessions were:

1. Freer trade, e.g., improved access to Northern agricultural markets, and reduction of Northern subsidies of farmer and agro-exports.
2. Qualification of WTO protocols, e.g., public health emergencies overriding specifications of TRIPs for trade in pharmaceuticals.
3. Management of liberalization of services to enable participation by Southern countries in service trade.
4. Reinforcement of Special and Differential Treatment provisions to address food security and rural development needs of Southern countries.
5. Technical assistance and capacity building schemes for the global South,

especially for the 'least developed countries.'

As it happened, the development round was stillborn, because of institutional inertia, concessions by Northern states to corporate lobbies (e.g., the pharmaceutical industry), and lack of capacity in Southern states to address and/or implement reforms. In the run-up to the Cancun Ministerial in September 2003, the Northern states adopted a more aggressive stance, reformulating the Doha Round as an opportunity to impose a corporate agenda of equal domestic treatment of foreign corporations, notably in private investment in public services, in return for Northern action in ending farm subsidies. However, where the latter decoupled subsidies from farm prices, removing farm assistance to the WTO's 'non-trade-distorting' Green Box (as part of the Agreement on Agriculture), the Northern states, and especially the EU, disingenuously retained the capacity to dump cheap farm produce onto the world market.

The combination of the Europeans' attempt to reintroduce the Singapore agenda regarding a global investment treaty, and the North's avoidance of the dumping question, crystallized a counter-mobilization in Cancun (September 2003) of the global South, represented by the so-called G-20 (the Southern equivalent of the Cairns Group of agro-exporting states). Since Cancun, while trade negotiations have slowed if not stalled, the parties have regrouped – the U.S. around bilateral negotiations, the G-20 around regional agreements, and the Europeans around CAP reforms offset by progress in 'trade' in services, via the GATS. At the same time, the EU and the U.S. have made attempts to co-opt the leaders of the G-20, Brazil and India (Wiggerthale, 2004, p. 20).

Revival of the Doha Round pivots on agriculture, whose centrality to Doha is reflected in its contentiousness. New negotiations in 2004 involved a revision of the pre-Cancun agreement struck between the EU and the U.S., including counter-proposals by the G20 (Oxford Analytica, 2004). The focus of the new March text included the three key, original issues of market access, export subsidies, and domestic support policies. The subsequent 'July Package' contained a commitment to end export subsidies, but over at least a decade. Meanwhile, additional demands from the global South, led by the newly empowered G-33 (exporters dedicated to protecting their domestic markets), for a 'Development Box,' to sanction subsidies supporting agriculture which is farmer-driven rather than trade-driven (surplus dumping) gained little ground (Khor, 2004, p. 3). While agricultural reform is central, it unfolds in piecemeal fashion, with the EU making what it considers concessions in decoupling farm payments from commodity prices (though without ending overproduction), and successful WTO litigation by Brazil on U.S. cotton subsidies, which have wrought havoc on African producers.

In short, Doha concentrates international tensions and the contradictory relations which constitute 'development.' Currently, Doha claims further global deregulation as the premise of development. Historically, Doha replicates the GATT Uruguay Round of the 1980s, which aimed to liberalize agriculture and services (then banking, insurance, and telecommunications) in which the North held a competitive advantage. At the time the global South was skeptical, as its cheaper exports of steel products, footwear, electronic products, and agricultural products were limited by Northern protections. India and Brazil led the resistance to broadening GATT, but Northern pressure and the promise of open markets, including agricultural markets, tipped the balance (Adams, 1993, pp. 196–197). When GATT became the WTO, the liberalizing Agreement on Agriculture was the *quid pro quo* for the global South's acceptance of TRIPs and TRIMs, which ''soon proved to be a double threat to food security and sovereignty in the developing world'' (Wallach & Woodall, 2004, p. 193).

The Doha Round continues this dance, disingenuously representing GATS 2000 as a trade agreement, which demands openness to 'cross-border' provision of services (by TNCs) as a condition for opening EU and U.S. markets in garments, textiles, and agricultural products (Wallach, 2003). Oxfam's Kevin Watkins (2002, p. 21) argues this replays the Uruguay Round, when the global North offered market access in return for protection of TNC patents (costing the South $40 billion in technology rents). He maintains that while the game has changed, the rules are the same: ''The West buys your bananas and shirts if you give its banks and insurance companies unrestricted access to your markets''

Offering perspective on the terms in, and means by, which Doha addresses agricultural reform, Vía Campesina, noted: ''The negotiations on agriculture still seem to be a fight between the 'corporate elephants of the agro-industry' represented by the European Union, the United States and the Cairns group instead of negotiation on how to come to fair, equitable trade relations that give protection to domestic food production and consumption and the world's environment'' (quoted in Wallach & Woodall, 2004, p. 215). Sophia Murphy (2004, p. 4) suggests ''the U.S. and the EU are fighting what is likely to be a losing battle to maintain their export share in world agricultural markets''. Subsidizing their farmers is a short-term, and increasingly untenable, tactic in the world market where countries like Brazil, Argentina, Russia, China, and India can offer cheaper farm commodities to transnational agribusinesses concerned with reducing costs and accessing emerging markets of middle class consumers in these countries. She concludes: "While the U.S., E.U. and Cairns Group/G20 fight with each other over who will get (or keep) the investment of transnational agribusiness, most development countries [notably in sub-Saharan Africa] are left on the sidelines" (*idem*).

LINEAGES OF A CORPORATE FOOD REGIME

The losing battle within the global North nevertheless conditions the construction of a 'world agriculture.' The combined dumping of subsidized food surpluses and growing agribusiness access to land, labor, and markets in the global South clears the way for corporate-driven food supply chains binding together a (selective) global consumer class. I examine this historic process via the concept of the 'food regime.'[1]

Food regime analysis has centered on distinguishing specific political–economic organization of food production and consumption relations during the periods of British and U.S. hegemony (Friedmann, 1987; Friedmann & McMichael, 1989). As Harriet Friedmann (2005, p. 129) puts it, "Free trade in agriculture, key to British hegemony, gave way under U.S. hegemony to managed agriculture within the Free World". The point of such a distinction is to account for the particular developments in agriculture associated with each regime. In the second half of the nineteenth century, the British-centered world market encouraged the incubation of industrial agriculture in settler states geared to supplying cheap foodstuffs for a proletarianizing Europe. Through the devices of the U.S.-aid program of the mid-twentieth century, surplus foods and green revolution technologies from the First World entered the urban markets and the agrarian sectors of the Third World, respectively.

The continuities across these two eras were the progressive industrialization and specialization of agricultures (alongside tropical export agricultures originating in colonialism), and a project of state-building, proceeding from the settler colonies to the ex-colonies, as European empires collapsed and the development era took shape. But there the similarities end. In fact, these periods reveal quite distinct principles with respect to food and capitalism.

The first period was anchored in Britain's model of 'free trade imperialism,' the deployment of a policy of economic liberalism to gain access to the economies and colonial empires of its rival European states, and thereby consolidate British commercial dominance in the world economy. The City of London and the sterling/gold standard facilitated capital's first world market, especially in channeling investment to the 'peripheries' of the world economy given the protectionism of European rivals (McMichael, 2005a, pp. 11–27). Within these global circuits the "first price-governed market" in food emerged, anchored in the U.S. frontier of family farming, which produced low-cost wheat relative to that produced on capitalist farms in Europe (Friedmann, 2005, p. 125, 1978). Cheap foodstuffs from the colonies (from sugar to grains) sustained capital's primitive wage-relation in Europe, where elites remained committed to restricted consumption for the proletariat (Mintz, 1986; Halperin, 2004, p. 91).

The second period, characterized as "embedded liberalism" (Ruggie, 1982, but see Lacher, 1999), was governed by a series of social protections, from policies of full employment, through fixed monetary exchanges, to managed farm sectors. Farshad Araghi views this as an "aid-based food order of an exceptionally reformist period of world capitalism" (2003, p. 51) rather than as a 'food regime of capital.' The question here concerns both history and intentionality. Historically, Britain formed its free trade empire spatially through incorporation of new lands and resources, politically through backstopping the gold standard (as an instrument of economic liberalism), and temporally through manipulating countries' sterling balances in London to deepen the circulation of capital. The U.S., by contrast, was not concerned with outmanoeuvring economic rivals, so much as containing the Soviet empire. Accordingly, it reconstructed the capitalist world order "not through formal empire, but rather through the reconstitution of states as integral elements of an informal American empire" (Panitch & Gindin, 2004, p. 17). Central to this objective was political legitimation via the 'development project:' a state-building process in the Free World via economic and military aid, with the U.S. model of consumption as the ultimate, phenomenal, goal of development (McMichael, 2004a).

This model, represented as the endpoint of development (Rostow, 1960), was historically particular to the U.S. as one of a set of (mainly settler) states lacking a landed aristocracy, which might restrict domestic markets and consumption levels for the working poor (Halperin, 2004, p. 280). In addition, the Fordist response to the Great Depression in the U.S. promoted mass production via mass consumption (Halperin, 2004, p. 282). The 'inner-directedness' of this dynamic model, integrating agriculture and industry, facilitated the incorporation of food consumption relations into an intensified capital accumulation in the postwar period, and distinguished the U.S. model of modernity (Friedmann & McMichael, 1989). Following the British imperial legacy, 'beefing up' (steak *and* fast-food hamburger) was the dietary form in which modernity was represented (Rifkin, 1992). Historically, it was a product of a 'managed agriculture,' depending on commodity stabilization programs and public support for capital-intensive agriculture, and expressed in mounting food surpluses (a model also adopted in Europe, stimulated by Marshall Plan aid).

The food aid regime was a solution to the overproduction of agricultural commodities within a heavily protected U.S. farm sector, offering food at concessional prices as aid to friendly Third World regimes on the Cold War perimeter. Local, counterpart funds generated through this program promoted agribusiness and adoption of western diets (Friedmann, 1982). Thus, the *Pax Americana* centered on states as guarantors of markets. Agricultural commodity prices remained relatively stable during this period of publicly regulated trade in foodstuffs (Tubiana, 1989). Hegemony was achieved through the development project, which was also a vehicle for the 'freedom of enterprise' associated with the reach of the U.S. multinational corporation (Arrighi, 1982).

The distinctiveness of these food regimes lay in the instrumental role of food in securing global hegemony – in the first, Britain's 'workshop of the world' project linked the fortunes of an emergent industrial capitalism to expanding cheap food supply chains across the world; in the second, the United States used food politically to create alliances and markets for its agribusiness. The model of accumulation differed markedly across these two eras.

The point is not to *hypostatize* 'food regimes.' They constitute a lens on broader relations in the political history of capital. They express, simultaneously, forms of geo-political ordering and, related, forms of accumulation, and they are vectors of power. In the first, British hegemony, premised on 'gunboat diplomacy' and a sophisticated financial architecture centered on London, constructed a price-governed world market through which food resources were developed in, and appropriated from, 'European peripheries' to cheapen labor costs (Friedmann, 1978; Luxemburg, 1963; Davis, 2001). In the second, U.S. informal empire balanced the historic commitment to the social contract with containment-driven state-building, legitimized through the aid regime of the development project. Food's role was to subsidize, simultaneously, the First World social contract and Third World urban-industrial development.

The difference *across* the two 'food regimes' was the realization of First World citizenship and Third World independence. This emerged through the crisis of the British model (Polanyi, 1957), social transformation precipitated by ensuing warfare in Europe (Halperin, 2004), the collapse of European empires, and the completion of the state's system – championed by the rising power of the U.S. and its model of accumulation anchored in national economic integration. Through these successive food regimes, the relations of production and consumption of food expressed the distinct moments in the political history of capital.

The 'corporate food regime' is yet another moment. It carries legacies of the previous food regimes, nevertheless expressing a new moment in the political history of capital. The political decomposition of citizenship and of national sovereignty, via the neo-liberal 'globalization project,' reverse the political gains ('welfare' and 'development' states) associated with the period of U.S. hegemony, facilitating an unprecedented conversion of agriculture across the world to supply a relatively affluent global consumer class. The vehicle of this corporate-driven process is the WTO's Agreement on Agriculture, which, as above, institutionalizes a distinctive form of economic liberalism geared to deepening market relations via the privatization of states.

The distinguishing mark of the corporate food regime as a new moment in world capitalism lies in the politics of neo-liberalism. As argued elsewhere, the 'globalization project' emerged to resolve the crisis of the 'development project,' in which the financial relations associated with the rise of transnational corporations and banks, and offshore money markets, were constrained by the social and spatial limits of the national state and its charge of civic protection (McMichael, 2004a). The 1980s debt crisis of the Third World revealed a world-economic crisis generated by over-reaching: of the U.S. dollar, transnational bank lending, and borrowing by Third World states. In this atmosphere of crisis, investors chose financial instruments over productive investments and firms relocated manufacturing to Third World export processing zones.

This was enabled by the new 'conditions' of structural adjustment, and the dumping of cheap foodstuffs (lowering wage costs), stemming from the breaching of the U.S.-centered food regime in the 1970s. Here, U.S. détente with the Soviet Union was marked by massive U.S. grain shipments to the Soviet Union, opening the door to an escalating trade war with Europe in commercial food exporting (Friedmann, 2005, pp. 132–133). Behind the protections of the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP), Europe had achieved self-sufficiency by the 1970s, in the form of an imported (U.S.) model of industrial agriculture producing surpluses of butter, milk, cereals, and beef. With the French government proclaiming 'Produce to export: agriculture is France's green petrol' (Bové & Dufour, 2001, p. 148), and the

U.S. committed to agro-exporting as a rear-guard 'green power' strategy expressing hegemonic decline (Revel & Riboud, 1986), intensified competition for world market outlets via agro-export dumping shaped the transition from developmentalism to globalism.

Agro-export dumping undermined the U.S.-centered food regime's system of stable prices and managed disposal of food surpluses. World agricultural prices fell from a mean of 100 in 1975 to 61 by 1989 – a 39 percent decline. Bearing less and less relation to the cost of production, which included increasingly expensive farm subsidies, price volatility, and decline brought the agro-exporting states to the 1986 GATT Uruguay Round (1986), declaring "an urgent need to bring more discipline and predictability to world agricultural trade" (quoted in Watkins, 1991, p. 44). The outcome of this round was the signing of the Agreement on Agriculture in the newly founded WTO, 1995, and the institutionalization of the corporate food regime.

ORIGINS OF 'FOOD SOVEREIGNTY'

As a lens on the political history of capital, the 'food regime' embodies the tensions of periods of world ordering. In this sense, the food regime is not a political–economic order, as such, rather it is a vehicle of a contradictory conjuncture, governed by the 'double movement' of accumulation/legitimation. The British-centered food regime embodied the tensions associated with the demands for citizenship and decolonization, realized in the subsequent U.S.-centered food regime, which modeled the possibilities of each via economic nationalism. The U.S.-centered regime, in turn, embodied the tensions associated with social protectionism, as the principle of 'freedom of enterprise,' central to the U.S. informal empire, undermined economic nationalism (Arrighi, 1982; Lacher, 1999; Friedmann & McMichael, 1989). Resolution via economic transnationalism has been institutionalized in the governance mechanisms of the multilateral institutions, led by the WTO. Here, the *corporate* food regime embodies the tensions between a trajectory of 'world agriculture' and cultural survival, expressed in the politics of 'food sovereignty.'

The current political conjuncture is the culmination of a long-term imperial trajectory – not simply the conversion of the non-European world to export monocultures, but also the power relation consigning the peoples of the colonized hinterlands to an unseen, racialized underconsumption that has become the condition for metropolitan development and overconsumption. In this trajectory, the appropriation of agricultural resources for capitalist consumption relations (encompassing regions of capitalist modernity in much of the global North and parts of the global South) is realized through an expanding foundation of human impoverishment and displacement, and the marginalization of agrarian/food cultures. This much the generic capitalist dynamic of accumulation/dispossession would predict.

What is distinctive about this conjuncture is how dispossession is accomplished. Briefly, where the 'development project' socialized security, the 'globalization project' privatizes security. These phases both represent political solutions to material needs. But Third World material needs under the development project were already the result of colonial-induced social catastrophes. Mike Davis (2001) has documented, for example, how empire dismantled village grain reserve systems in the non-European world, by commodifying grain and transforming it into an export product.

The insecurities attending colonialism animated the twentieth-century decolonization movement. However, despite Frantz Fanon's warnings (1967), in the execution of the development project across the postcolonial world: "Instead of the state being used as an instrument of development, development became an instrument of the state's legitimacy" (Bose, 1997, p. 34). In other words, while all states were officially charged, under the UN QA :4 system, with implementing the social contract, most ruling elites saw that as an opportunity to centralize power and thereby progressively undermine the viability of cultural forms of security in the name of development. To this end, they prosecuted cash cropping with World Bank funding, prioritized industrialization as the centerpiece of development, promoted mechanisms of urban bias for political purposes, dam-building, and imported cheap foodstuffs via the food aid regime. The managed construction of the Third World (urban) consumer paralleled the decimation of peasant agriculture. Each confirmed the central tenets of the development vision: that the western consumption pattern was a universal desire and peasants were historical remnants destined to disappear.

The development project incorporated post–colonial states into a universal system of national accounting methods, standardizing the measurement of material well-being (GNP), and the 'externalization' of a variety of environmental degradations and social catastrophes. Only monetized transactions were counted as productive, devaluing subsistence, cooperative labor, indigenous culture, seed saving, and managing the commons as unproductive, marginalized and undeveloped activity. As a consequence, the world's rural population decreased by some 25 percent in the second half of the twentieth century with the steady displacement of peasant cultures (Hobsbawm, 1992, p. 56; Araghi, 1995, 1999).

It is important to stress that this process is not simply the realization of the development narrative – a preordained movement of rural populations into an increasingly urbanized wage-labor force – but the displacement of biodiversity, customary forms of knowledge and moral economy. This historic rupture accounts for the emergence of 'food sovereignty' as an alternative to the productivist paradigm, which measures food security in the quantitative/monetized terms of market transactions. Food sovereignty is as much a cultural, as a material, principle. How this rupture came to express itself in the 'food sovereignty' paradigm depended on the de-legitimization of development.

The development honeymoon lasted at most for three decades (ca 1950–1980). The so-called 'lost decade' of the 1980s was a key turning point, as the management of the debt crisis heralded three profound changes in the global political economy. First, the deployment by the debt managers (IMF, World Bank, G-7) of structural adjustment conditions across much of the Third World punctured the 'developmentalist illusion' (Arrighi, 1990). States, QA :5 compelled to adopt neo-classical economic solutions, reversed course on the social contract. Second, on a world scale, neo-liberalism reinforced a financialization of capital, away from productive investment toward securitization and business mergers and takeovers. Third, international power relations were recast in terms of the North/South axis, rather than containment politics legitimized by developmentalism.

The debt regime began the institutionalization of the 'globalization project,' via the WTO, as the mother of all trade agreements (though not the father, given the virulence of NAFTA, for example). During this transition from a collapsing development, and emerging globalization, project, the Agreement on Agriculture sprung from the Uruguay Round's movement to reform farm sectors and agricultural trade. Consistent with the neo-classical agenda, 'food security' came to be redefined, and institutionalized, in the WTO as an inter-national market relation. That is, in spite of the asymmetry between the Northern and Southern agricultural labor force percentages – 4 percent, versus 30–70 percent, respectively (Kwa, 2002), a system of 'free trade' in agricultural products was installed to privatize food security as a global, corporate relation.

PRIVATIZATION OF FOOD SECURITY VIA THE CORPORATE FOOD REGIME

The shift in the 'site' of food security from the nation-state to the world market was engineered during the Uruguay Round (1986–1994), anticipating the WTO's Agreement on Agriculture (1995). Under this agreement, states no longer have the right to food self-sufficiency as a national strategy. The WTO's minimum import rule requires all member states to allow imports of food up to at least 5 percent of the volume of domestic consumption – despite Article 25 (1) of the UN's Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and Article 11 of the International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights, which viewed "the right of peoples to exercise sovereignty over their natural wealth and resources" as essential to the realization of human rights (Desmarais, 2003, p. 148). QA :6

On the face of it, states appear to have been trumped by the WTO, exposing their domestic food markets to the grain traders. French Farmers' Confederation leader, Jose Bové declares this is a "totalitarian exercise" that allows the TNCs to force domestic producers "to submit to their logic" (Bové & Dufour, 2001, p. 137). Nevertheless, the logic of subordinating agriculture to the corporate model is not synonymous with a stateless world food market.

In the first place, the U.S. introduced a redefinition of food security as "best provided through a smooth-functioning world market" (quoted in Ritchie, 1993, fn 25) into the Uruguay Round in order to secure a competitive advantage for U.S. agribusiness via the GATT, and subsequently the WTO's Agreement on Agriculture. Second, and related, the WTO retains this mercantilist imprint in managing asymmetrical agricultural relations, founded in an unequal state system. Third, corporate agriculture's trajectory is governed by historic divisions of labor and current financial mergers that centralize agribusiness capital. Unlike industry or services, the capitalization of agriculture retains important spatial dimensions, expressed politically in Northern agribusiness lobbies and farm sector policies geared to producing (and dumping) food surpluses.

Thus, in Europe food self-sufficiency was the initial postwar goal, shaping Common Market policies in 1957, and into the 1960s. In return for the right to protect large-scale staple food production (cereals, milk, beef, sugar), the EEC agreed to import U.S. soya beans for European livestock in the Kennedy Round of 1962–1967 (Herman & Kuper, 2003, p. 5). Bové notes: 'The arrival of the first soya beans in French ports, not subject to any Customs duties, signaled the start of agricultural industrialization'' (Bové & Dufour, 2001, p. 61). Cheap imported soya beans, complementing local maize grains and silage, underwrote a global livestock complex (cf. Friedmann, 1994). QA :7 This in turn drove a CAP (1962) geared to guaranteed high internal prices and the overproduction of cereals, generating food surpluses and their untidy dumping on the world market. CAP management of overproduction involved establishing production quotas, reducing the farm population by 90 percent, and hastening corporate monocultures (Herman & Kuper, 2003, pp. 10–11). Moving to manage overproduction internationally, the U.S. Agriculture Secretary, John Block, observed in 1986: ''the idea that developing countries should feed themselves is an anachronism from a bygone era. They could better ensure their food security by relying on U.S. agricultural products, which are available in most cases at lower cost'' (quoted in Schaeffer, 1995, p. 268).

This form of global 'food security' is accomplished through the political construction of commodity prices. In 1986, U.S. corn dumping forced Zimbabwe's grain marketing board to cut domestic producers prices almost in half and to reduce its purchase quota from these producers (Watkins, 1991, p. 43). A decade later, in 1996, politicization of price was key to NAFTA – in 8 months the domestic price of Mexican maize fell almost 50 percent, ''converging with the world price 12 years earlier than envisaged'' (Herman & Kuper, 2003, p. 72). In 2002, the average price below the cost of production of various U.S. agribusiness exports was 43 percent for wheat, 25 percent for soybeans, 13 percent for corn, and 35 percent for rice (IATP, 2004, p. 3).

The political determination of world agricultural commodity prices emerged through the Uruguay Round negotiations, which sought to stem the escalation of farm subsidies and manage the crisis of overproduction arising from the U.S. and European Community agricultural policies (Dawkins, 1999). Anticipating the outcome of the Round, in 1992 (by the 'McSharry reform') the EU began switching from its original CAP farm price support policies to U.S.-style government subsidies (Dawkins, 1999). Replacing a guaranteed price with direct payments introduced the 'world price' to European producers, stimulating rather than eliminating surpluses (Herman & Kuper, 2003, pp. 27–28), and synchronizing EU policy with that of the U.S. in favoring traders over producers.

The preference given to the price form disempowers farmers, and empowers agribusiness, across the world. In the North, traders and processors purchase commodities through farm contracts at low prices unrelated to production costs. For processors, artificially cheapened corn subsidizes 'supersizing' in the fast food industry (Manning, 2004, p. 43). For traders, low commodity prices enable commodity dumping in the world market (assisted by export subsidies, especially European), forcing local prices down at the expense of small farmers. The resulting, or potential for, low-cost agricultural production in the global South in turn enables global sourcing by agribusiness to exert further downward pressure on Northern farmers. The result has been a mass exodus from farming in North, and South. It is accomplished by depressed prices and the competitive advantage of intensive agriculture integrated into agribusiness, and favored by a system of asymmetrical farm supports. Privileging the price form facilitated the restructuring of Northern farm sectors, dominated by corporate agriculture.[2]

Synchronization of Northern farm policy anticipated the WTO's Agreement on Agriculture. Despite the rhetoric of free trade, the Northern agenda is realized through a corporate-mercantilist comparative advantage in a highly unequal world market. The Agreement on Agriculture was designed to open agricultural markets through minimum import requirements and tariff and producer subsidy reductions. Southern states signed on in the hopes of improving their foreign currency income from expanded agro-exports (under the imperative of servicing foreign debt). But the effect was to open markets for northern products, strengthening the position of the global North in the international division of labor in agriculture (Pistorius & van Wijk, 1999, pp. 110–111). From 1970–2000, declines in the world percentage of agri-exports from Africa (10 to 3 percent), Latin America and the Caribbean (14 to 12 percent), and the 'Least Developed Countries' (5 to 1 percent), contrasted with a Northern increase from 64 to 71 percent (FAOSTAT, 2004). QA :8

Within the rules set by the WTO, delinked from the UN Charter's provisions for economic and cultural (food) sovereignty, growing food dependencies fulfilled the global vision of 'food security.' National health, social, and environmental regulations are assumed to restrict trade, and, therefore, were required by the WTO to be translated into visible and quantifiable tariffs, then subject to reduction over time. In addition, a subsidy hierarchy was constructed, where subsidies were consigned to 'boxes,' arranged according to degree of protectionist effect (Herman & Kuper, 2003, pp. 35–36). The box system works to the advantage of the Northern states, which routinely consign decoupled farm support payments to the 'non-trade-distorting' Green Box. The CAP, in particular, justifies such an arrangement through a 'rural development' initiative prepared for the 1999 WTO Ministerial, whereby direct farm payments support the 'multifunctionality' of agriculture.

Besides allowing for a bait and switch operation to hide Northern subsidies, the box system also disadvantages Southern states, which lack the resources for (decoupled) farm support programs. The combination of reduction of customs duties via 'tarrification' and protection of expanding farm subsidies via 'boxes,' has constructed a regulatory system that transfers resources from public to private hands in the North, and exports food dependency (and insecurity) to the South via dumping.[3] Already in the mid-1990s, half of the foreign exchange of the FAO's 88 low-income food deficit countries went to food imports (LeQuesne, 1997). The destabilizing effects of intensified export dumping, and Northern agricultural subsidies, frame Doha and the geo-political tensions expressed at Cancun.

While the WTO is composed of member states, the very asymmetry of the state system privileges corporate solutions in the implementation of rules. For instance, the recent CAP reform, introducing 'multifunctionality' as a method of renaming the decoupling of farm subsidies to reward agriculture's non-remunerative services (environment, space, rural habitation, food safety, and animal welfare) and making the CAP WTO-compliant, "paves the way for the end of any policy of market management" and allows "beneficiaries of decoupled subsidies to produce without restraints (other than those of a phony ecology), to produce what they want and eventually to change their production every year" (Herman & Kuper, 2003, p. 84). The logical extension of this reform is the 'de-localization' of agricultural production to preserve the European environment, while importing food from offshore regions with low wages and weak environmental regulations – as the Doux group, the foremost French and European poultry producer, accomplished by purchasing Frangosul, the fourth largest poultry producer in Brazil, where production costs undercut those in France by two-thirds (*ibid.*, pp. 21–22). De-localization is part of the global sourcing strategy of U.S. corporations (Blank, 1998; Public Citizen, 2001), a movement confirmed by the recent migration of failing U.S. soy farmers to Brazil's expanding and low-cost Matto Grosso region.

The WTO policy eliminating 'market management' of agriculture shifts priorities from public interest in producing use-values for domestic provisioning, to private/public encouragement of producing exchange-values to expand profits and export revenues. Liberalization is the means to this end – either through de-coupling, which supports Northern agribusiness with public monies, or through reduction of Southern protections – opening economies to food importing and/or agribusiness offshore investment. Legitimized by the discourse of food security, its privatization conditions an emerging *world* agriculture subordinated to capital.[4]

WORLD AGRICULTURE AND EMPIRE

Historically, the movement of capital involves the progressive subordination of agriculture, as an attempt to resolve agro-ecological crises stemming from the 'metabolic rift,' in a deepening of the rupture in nutrient cycling between countryside and city (Moore, 2000, p. 123). Across the former food regimes, subordination occurred within the framework of the nation-state, whether via the national/colonial state nexus, or the national/neo-colonial state nexus. The WTO, as the material expression of the state/capital nexus, continues this process of subordination by capital on behalf of its member states.

The WTO is not a state, rather a disembodied, and unrepresentative, executive, but on a world scale. Comprised of member states, the WTO not only instrumentalizes the competitive and hierarchical relations among those states (cf. Buttel, 2003), but it also denies civil society full representation. In these terms, the Cancun impasse expressed opposition to Northern hypocrisy by Southern states, disenfranchised by WTO procedures and overwhelmed by the material consequences in the erosion of their domestic farm sectors. But, ironically, the G-20's call for greater market access expresses at one and the same time a formal demand for equivalence in trade opportunities, and yet a substantive complicity in the movement toward a world agriculture based in agro-exporting (Peine & McMichael, 2005).

G-20 complicity expresses the logic of the Agreement on Agriculture, namely to complete the liberalization of trade relations as the condition for a world agriculture. But a world agriculture involves more than an intensifying system of food swapping across national boundaries. It is premised on the green revolution principle of 'appropriation,' the progressive removal of components of agricultural production from the control of the farmer via intervention in natural processes (Goodman, Sorj, & Wilkinson, 1987), starting with bio-engineered seeds, and complemented with a range of chemical and mechanical inputs and specialized agricultural inputs (e.g., livestock feed).

Green, and subsequently, gene revolution technologies deepen the elimination of biodiversity, seed saving, and local knowledge via agro-industrial monocultures. Bio-engineering has transformed the crop development industry[5] through the concentration and centralization of agri-chemical corporations (Pistorius & van Wijk, 1999), and the corporate 'gene giants' already account for more than one-third of the global seed market and 100 percent of the transgenic seed market (Shiva, 2000, p. 9). Deploying the discourse of intellectual property rights, the biotechnology industry seeks to institutionalize gene patenting, through the WTO's TRIPs protocol,[6] as a key to elaborating a world agriculture, premised on the elimination of *extant* agricultures and agro-ecologies through the privatization of knowledge – a principal feature of the corporate food regime.

The abstraction from ecology and local entitlements associated with a world agriculture privileges the production of inputs for food processors, agri-chemical companies or global retailers. Agro-industrialization, delivering agriculture to an array of input industries (from energy through fertilizer to animal feed), consolidates a specialization process whereby ''[I]n intensive farming the object is to adapt the soil to the crop, never the other way round'' (Bové & Dufour, 2001, p. 67), also a movement of abstraction anticipating a world agriculture. While this movement of abstraction is associated with the history of the agricultural frontiers of European capitalism (Friedmann, 2000; Moore, 2000), its completion as a world agriculture is prefigured in the biological and socio-economic blueprints of the gene revolution and the WTO's Agreement on Agriculture.

The concept of a 'world agriculture' refers, not to the entirety of agriculture across the earth, but to a transnational space of corporate agricultural and food relations integrated by commodity circuits. Justin Rosenberg terms this space 'the empire of civil society': a politically managed ''material integration of social reproduction across borders'' involving ''the extraction and relaying of surpluses'' (Rosenberg, 2001, pp. 134–135, 131). But the material integration of social reproduction across borders is not simply a space of globalized commodity flows creating new interdependencies – an immanent tendency in the history of capital. Rather, beyond Rosenberg's formulation, a world agriculture resembles Hardt and Negri's emergent concept of 'Empire,' characterized by the removal of boundaries – either spatial or temporal (implicit in the process of abstraction), and, most significantly, a ''paradigmatic form of biopower'' (2000, p. xv), where capital reconstitutes humans through reconstituting the natural order, in the name of food security and peace. This is particularly the case for agricultural workers, more than half of whom are women, and who comprise a third of the 1.3 billion people actively engaged in agricultural production (half of the world's labor force), concentrated in the global South, and as high as 80 percent of the workforce in some countries (IUF, 2002, p. 3).

Deborah Barndt's representation of one set of increasingly common conditions of social reproduction of the agricultural labor force in corporate agriculture captures this process:

> [T]he only Mexican inputs are the land, the sun, and the workers… . The South has been the source of the seeds, while the North has the biotechnology to alter agro-export production also denies them participation in subsistence agriculture, especially since the peso crisis in 1995, which has forced migrant workers to move to even more scattered work sites. They now travel most of the year – with little time to grow food on their own plots in their home communities…[W]ith this loss of control comes a spiritual loss, and a loss of a knowledge of seeds, of organic fertilizers and pesticides, of sustainable practices such as crop rotation or leaving the land fallow for a year—practices that had maintained the land for millennia (1997, pp. 59–62).

Such abstraction of agriculture through its incorporation and reproduction within global capital circuits imparts a 'food from nowhere' character to the corporate food regime (Bové & Dufour, 2001, p. 55). At the core of this process is the appropriation of farming, via the expulsion of rural populations through land dispossession and concentration, as farming is rendered unviable by withdrawal of public supports and exposure to a world price, or the conversion of farmers to contract farming or hired/plantation/migrant labor, depending on context and crop. Mexico, the home of maize, has been so transformed by liberalization and NAFTA into a food deficit country, and forced to import yellow corn from the U.S. at the expense of almost 2 million *campesinos,* unable to compete with corn price falls on the order of 70 percent (Carlsen, 2003; Oxfam, 2003). In Brazil, price falls for staple crops like rice and beans render small farming increasingly non-viable, exacerbating a swelling rural exodus and rising urban unemployment (Cassel & Patel, 2003); while in China recent liberalization associated with WTO accession has accelerated a swelling rural migrant population that overwhelms urban job markets, coinciding with the shrinking of state enterprises (Eisenburger & Patel, 2003). In a 1997 FAO study of 16 Southern countries, reporting the dispossession of at least 20–30 million people, the overall impact of liberalization was identified with: "…a general trend towards the concentration of farms, in a wide crosssection of countries. While this led to increased productivity and competitiveness with positive results, in the virtual absence of safety nets the process also marginalized small producers and added to unemployment and poverty" (Madeley, 2000; p. 75).

Loss of land, livelihood, and knowledge constitute the core of cultural displacement and dispossession. But empire, as the corporate food regime, emerges through related forms of dispossession, notably of local food markets and cuisines – such as displacement in Mexico of inexpensive white maize tortillas by yellow corn tortillas manufactured at triple the price (Bensinger, 2003; Oxfam, 2003, p. 19). Analytically, the construction of a world agriculture involves 'accumulation by dispossession' (Harvey, 2003).

While this process is both secular and cyclical, the neo-liberal project focuses the expansion of profit on the release or privatization of (public) assets. Here, the global integration of social reproduction is effected through the appropriation of farming and informal provisioning (wet markets, street vendors, and the commons). These processes eliminate *extant* systems of provisioning, converting them to inputs for the corporate food regime's proliferating supply chains.

Land expropriation may be the original form of 'accumulation by dispossession,' but the realization of the corporate food regime involves a deeper, and broader, reconstitution of material culture, centered on bio–political mechanisms. Thus, the global fast food industry, grossing $110 billion a year in the U.S., provides cheap and unhealthy convenience foods, based on the appropriation of home-cooking activities and knowledges (cf. Friedmann, 1999). The supermarket revolution in the global South (Reardon, Timmer, Barrett, & Berdegue, 2003) intensifies the combination of food processing and retailing accumulation, incorporating small or independent producers and local markets and street vending into new corporate circuits and biopolitical relations.

In the 1990s, supermarkets expanded their reach in Latin American countries from 15–30 percent to 50–70 percent of national retail sales – a growth rate five times that in the U.S., and accelerating now across Asia. In Latin America, firms, including Ahold, Carrefour, and Wal-Mart, comprise 70–80 percent of the top five supermarket chains, centralizing procurement from farmers across the region (and their own global processing plants), and serving regional consumers (Regmi & Gehlhar, 2005). In a case study of Guatemala, where supermarkets now control 35 percent of food retailing, it was reported that "their sudden appearance has brought unanticipated and daunting challenges to millions of struggling, small farmers" – especially tenuous relations in the absence of binding contractual agreements, rewarded only if they consistently meet new quality standards, but subject to declining prices as retailers have virtually unlimited suppliers (Dugger, 2004). Meanwhile, urban diets converge on a narrowing base of staple grains, increasing consumption of animal protein, edible oils, salt and sugar, and declining dietary fiber, as consumption of brand name processed and store-bought foods rises, contributing to an increasing prevalence of non-communicable (dietary) diseases and obesity (Kennedy, Nantel, & Shetty, 2004, p. 14).

Corporate circuits frame the global transformation of social, biopolitical and ecological relations. Thus, the director-general of the Centre for International Forestry Research (Cifor) noted: "In the 1970s and the 1980s most of the meat from the Amazon was being produced by small ranchers selling to local slaughterhouses. Very large commercial ranchers linked to supermarkets are now targeting the whole of Brazil and the global market" (quoted in Vidal, 2004, p. 3). Huge ranching operations organized by European supermarkets now dominate the beef export market (75 percent of Brazil's beef exports flow to Europe and the Middle East). At the same time, corporate-led factory farming is transforming the food sector – currently targeting Argentina, Brazil, China, India, Mexico, Pakistan, the Philippines, South Africa, Taiwan, and Thailand. Asia, whose global consumer class outstrips that of North America and Europe combined, leads the livestock revolution (French, 2004, p. 148). Two thirds of the global expansion of meat consumption is in the global South, sourced with Brazilian soybeans. As a Chinese middle class emerges, China has shifted from a net exporter of soybeans to the world's largest importer of whole soybeans and oils – even Brazilian pastures are converted to soyfields, pushing cattle herds deeper into the Amazon (Rohter, 2003, p. 3). In this way, biopolitical dynamics are expressed in dietary and ecological transformations.

Neo-liberal discourse represents the material integration of social reproduction as an expansion of market efficiencies through freedom of trade and enterprise. However, it is premised on the deployment of the price weapon, through dumping, to undermine local farming and incorporate local consumption relations into global circuits, as well as on agro-exporting, via structural adjustment measures, to displace publicly entitled foods. Given the extent of displacement and dispossession, what is being socially reproduced? The contradictory relations of the corporate food regime. The paradox of this food regime is that at the same time as it represents global integration as the condition for food security, it immiserates populations, including its own labor force. The perverse consequence of global market integration is the export of deprivation, as 'free' markets exclude and/or starve populations dispossessed through their implementation. In turn, dispossessed populations function as reserve labor, lowering wages and offering the possibility of labor casualization throughout the corporate empire.

More than simply a cumulative agro-ecological crisis (Moore, 2000), the corporate food regime is also realized through social crisis. For example, neo-liberal policies introduced in 1991 threaten India's tens of millions of small farmers, the livelihood source of 75 percent of the population. In 2000, the Indian Ministry of Agriculture observed: "The growth in agriculture has slackened during the 1990s. Agriculture has become a relatively unrewarding profession due to an unfavourable price regime and low value addition, causing abandoning of farming and migration from rural areas" (quoted in

Paringaux, 2000, p. 4). Corporate seed prices have inflated tenfold, cheap imports (notably of rice and vegetable oils) have undercut local farmers and processors, and policies promoting agro-exports of high-value commodities like farmed shrimp, flowers, and meat in the name of food security increase human insecurities. Every dollar of foreign exchange earned on meat exports destroys 15 dollars' worth of ecological capital stemming from the use of farm animals in sustainable agriculture, according to Vandana Shiva (2000, p. 14). In other words, a condition for the social reproduction of affluence is cultural displacement and unsustainable ecologies.

Is this an inevitable condition? Certainly not: the global integration of social reproduction is an immanent, rather than an absolute, process, in tendency and scope. The corporate food regime is a political construct, and its beneficiaries constitute only about a quarter of the world's population, despite the widening effects of social exclusion, through the appropriation of resources (material, intellectual, and spiritual), and the privatization of public goods. At the same time, these effects generate the conditions for overcoming the social and ecological crisis of the corporate food regime, in resistance movements dedicated to the social re-embedding of markets. Ultimately, the trajectory of the corporate food regime is constituted through resistances: both protective (e.g., environmentalism) and proactive, where 'food sovereignty' posits an alternative global moral economy.

THE FOOD SOVEREIGNTY MOVEMENT

Food sovereignty represents an alternative principle to food security, as currently defined by the corporate food regime. But it is not the antithesis of food security, rather, food sovereignty is a premise for genuine food security, since "food is first and foremost a source of nutrition and only secondarily an item of trade" (Vía Campesina, 2002, p. 8).

In the terms of the corporate food regime, 'food security' is to be achieved through trade, rather than through a strategy of self-sufficiency. The chairman of Cargill put it recently like this: "There is a mistaken belief that the greatest agricultural need in the developing world is to develop the capacity to grow food for local consumption. This is misguided. Countries should produce what they produce best – and trade" (quoted in Lynas, 2001). This definition frames the WTO's Agreement on Agriculture.

In this context, the concept of 'food sovereignty' was developed by the international farmers' movement, Vía Campesina, and introduced into public debate during the 1996 World Food Summit. Vía Campesina defines food sovereignty in the following way:

> In order to guarantee the independence and food sovereignty of all of the world's peoples, it is essential that food be produced through diversified, farmer-based production systems. Food sovereignty is the right of peoples to define their own agriculture and food policies, to protect and regulate domestic agricultural production and trade in order to achieve sustainable development objectives, to determine the extent to which they want to be self reliant, and to restrict the dumping of products in their markets. Food sovereignty does not negate trade, but rather, it promotes the formulation of trade policies and practices that serve the rights of peoples to safe, healthy and ecologically sustainable production (Vía Campesina, 2001).

It is important to emphasize that trade is not ruled out, under the Vía Campesina vision, rather it is a question of the regime under which trade occurs. The anti-capitalist resistance represented by the Vía Campesina does not reject the global for the local, rather it redefines the global in terms appropriate to democratic conditions of food production and distribution. As Judit Bodner emphasizes in her interpretation of the conflict between the French Farmers' Confederation and MacDonalds in 1999, Jose Bové and his followers destroy transgenic corn produced by global firms "not because the seeds are produced by 'others' but because of the way they are produced" (Bodner, 2003, p. 141). Under the slogan of 'the world is not for sale,' Bové and the Vía Campesina emphasize two central premises: first, that the international tensions surrounding the politics of food ultimately derive not from conflict between governments, but that between models of production and rural development – "a conflict that exists in both the North and the South" (Vía Campesina, 2003, p. 5); and second, that the struggle is global but decentralized in content and leadership. Bové articulates the latter point as follows:

> The strength of this global movement is precisely that it differs from place to place…. The world is a complex place, and it would be a mistake to look for a single answer to complex and different phenomena. We have to provide answers at different levels – not just the international level, but local and national levels too (Bové & Dufour, 2001, p. 168).

Embedded in this quote is the 'global' vision represented by the Vía Campesina, namely that an alternative modernity depends on rejecting the WTO/corporate move to privatize modernity and erase (shared) local knowledges (cf. Desmarias, 2003), and on reinstating "the right of peoples, communities and countries to define their own agricultural, labour, fishing, food and land policies which are ecologically, socially, economically and culturally appropriate to their unique circumstances" (quoted in Ainger, 2003, p. 11). Bodner's study emphasizes that, despite Bové's relative privilege in producing the internationally traded Roquefort cheese, as an artisan he represents a production model that appeals to farmers and consumers worldwide, striving for transparent production and distribution in opposition to the mass production model of industrial agriculture. In addition, the model elevates democratic economy and fair trade principles, as essential to a global civil society, over the reactionary "link between land and nation" (Bodner, 2003, pp. 141–143). QA :9

On the other side of the world, this sentiment echoes through another constituent of the Vía Campesina, the landless-workers' movement in Brazil, where exports of coffee, sugar, poultry, cacao, orange juice concentrate, and soy and corn destined for livestock in the global North leave behind 44 million chronically hungry Brazilians – as Candido Grzybowski (2004), director of IBASE in Rio de Janeiro, observed:

> Probably in Brazil there exists no greater taboo than that centuries-old question, the agrarian question. But there is no question that is more current because it is not limited to the countryside itself, to its population… . The modernity of the MST consists in questioning us about this, about the past of our agrarian origins and about the future in the use of our natural resources, with the question of land at the center… . We are, of the large countries of the world, the least demographically dense, the most privileged in terms of natural resources – land, water, biodiversity – and at the same time, the most unequal and tragically, the most predatory. For how long, in the name of an even more narrow vision, will we be able to maintain the right to act on this part of Planet Earth in a way that is so socially and ecologically irresponsible?

This appeal to a global movement against the uniformity of the corporate trade regime, in the interests of the future sustainability of the social and natural world, proceeds from an analysis of the power base of the neoliberal model. First, the Vía Campesina argues that a world market of agricultural products is non-existent, rather, the corporate food regime, accounting for 10 percent of world agricultural production, is:

> an international trade of surpluses of milk, cereals and meat dumped primarily by the E.U., the U.S. and other members of the CAIRNS group. Behind the faces of national trade negotiators are powerful TNCs such as Monsanto and Cargill who are the real beneficiaries of domestic subsidies and supports, international trade negotiations and the global manipulations of trade regimes (2001, p. 6).

Second, agro-industrialization is being rapidly globalized through the mobility of financial capital, and its ability to rapidly concentrate, centralize, and coordinate global agribusiness operations. According to Joao Stedile of the MST, world agriculture is dominated by 10 TNCs, such as Monsanto, Bayer, Cargill, Nestle, Syngenta, BASF, Novartis, and ADM, operating in and across distinct sectors related to agricultural production, and controlling commercial agriculture, agrobusiness, the agro-toxins, and seeds: "now capital is not content to buy labor and hold land as private property, but it also wants to turn knowledge, technology, farm technologies and seeds into private property" to increase productivity per acre, with the goal of developing a food model based in the unification of eating habits across the world (Vía Campesina, 2004c, p. 2). The power relation in the corporate food regime is expressed in the Vía Campesina claim that "multinational corporations want to manipulate our crops to be able to control all of the food chain around the world, requiring us to stop producing food and start consuming their products" (2004b, p. 3).

The mechanism realizing this world agriculture is the neo-liberal model, institutionalized in the WTO and structural adjustment policies. As the Vía Campesina's website observes:

> The specialisation of production in regions that can export at lowest costs, importation of agricultural products at prices below the cost of production in the importing country, the agreement by the WTO of public support that allows the rich countries to export at prices below their cost of production, is destroying food sovereignty in all regions. Prices called global, are artificial and result in dumping. They are disconnected from the reality of production. Many countries are forced to export because of their debt and the structural adjustment programs imposed by the IMF and the World Bank (http://ns.rds.org.hn/via/).

Within this context, the Vía Campesina reformulates the crisis of the corporate food regime, critiquing unequivocally the *representation* of the Cancun standoff as a North–South conflict. Maintaining that the real conflict is "between centralized, corporate-driven, export-oriented, industrial agriculture versus decentralized, peasant- and family farm-based sustainable production primarily oriented towards domestic markets," – a conflict invisibilized in global trade negotiations – the Vía Campesina argues that the WTO, a "totally inappropriate institution for democratic decision-making" regarding food sovereignty and social and ecological sustainability, should get out of agriculture (1999, p. 3). Through this critique the Vía Campesina separates itself from the 'freer trade' bid by the G-20, which it views as promoting agro-export interests in the South at the expense of the majority of domestic producers:

> they too are demanding the abolition of 'trade distorting' subsidies and more access to markets, both in the North and in the South, without acknowledging that it is in fact the unbalanced focus on exports and corporate interests which is the main problem… . Increased liberalization and generalized market access will serve only to strengthen the

> grip of multinational agribusiness cartels, deepening the problems of poverty and social exclusion of millions of people in the world (2003, p. 5).

The Vía Campesina opposes the WTO's neo-liberal project of constructing a world agriculture based in 'comparative advantage,' because it is not about strategies of regional differentiation so much as about corporate global sourcing strategies, premised on the existence of a reserve army of cheap labor. Noting that ''the massive movement of food around the world is forcing the increased movement of people,'' the Vía Campesina offers a new paradigm based in self-reliance at the national or community scale, as the anchor of an alternative globalization. Here, food sovereignty depends on access to credit, land and fair prices to be set via rules negotiated in a reformed UN and alternative multilateral institutions such as a Convention on Food Sovereignty and Trade in Food and Agriculture, an International Court of Justice, a World Commission on Sustainable Agriculture and Food Sovereignty, and so forth (2001, p. 8). As Bové asks, ''Why should the global market escape the rule of international law or human rights conventions passed by the United Nations?'' (Bové & Dufour, 2001, p. 165). The premise, of course, is ''the active participation of farmers' movements in defining agricultural and food policies within a democratic framework.'' The specificity of this politics is that, while the consumer movement has discovered that ''eating has become a political act,'' articulating the health/transparency relations of food, Vía Campesina adds the social/ecological and historical dimension: ''producing quality products for our own people has also become a political act… this touches our very identities as citizens of this world'' (www.ns.rds.org.hn/via/).

In sum, the coherence of the Vía Campesina vision, uncompromising in its relationship with the growth paradigm of neo-liberalism, and with NGOs and multilateral institutions (Desmarais, 2002), constitutes a distinctive QA :10 politics of modernity rooted in a global moral economy. Echoing the early twentieth-century argument by Peter Kropotkin that the preminent social question is the 'question of bread,' Amory Starr proposes that the global anti-capitalist movement for 'diversity' is best summarized as 'agricultural:'

> encompassing first world farmers seeking market protection, farmers resisting genetic engineering, indigenous sovereignty movements seeking to control land and practices, sustainable development, localist economic visions, and third world peasant movements reacting to the failures of urbanization and neoliberalism by insisting on rights to land and subsistence. These movements have a variety of relationships to political economy, formal democracy and existing nations. But none imagines that growth, modernization or technology provide answers to their problems; indeed they see corporate technology as economically and ecologically dangerous (2001, p. 224).

And just as Starr characterizes the core of the anti-corporate globalization movement as centered on agricultural issues, so the Vía Campesina can be viewed as the core of the resistance to the corporate food regime by articulating that which it seeks to eliminate. There are many strands of resistance to the corporate food regime, from environmentalists through seed savers to community supported agricultures, but the Vía Campesina's unique method of uniting the diversity of agrarian producers across the world unifies a heterogeneous resistance in which social, economic, cultural, and environmental relations feature in different configurations across the world.

GLOBAL CAPITALISM AND THE CORPORATE FOOD REGIME

The phenomenal dynamics of the corporate food regime, namely global dispossession of farmers, reorganization of food supply chains, and centralization of agri-food relations, express the immanence of capital and its drive to deepen commodity relations. The question is how these dynamics also specify the world-historical conjuncture? The answer lies in the politics of the corporate empire, that is, how a reconfigured state system accommodates the strategy of corporate globalization, centered on a U.S. imperial strategy.

The origins of corporate globalization stem from the de-regulation of financial relations in the 1970s, as a U.S. strategy to unburden itself of rising claims on the dollar, relocate debt to weaker states in the currency hierarchy, and reassert U.S. power within an emergent neo-liberal framework (Helleiner, 1996, pp. 111–119). Decoupling the dollar from gold in the early 1970s allowed currencies to float, and facilitated a rapid expansion of the offshore dollar market and global banking institutions. The era of 'financialization' expressed a hegemonic crisis (Arrighi, 1994; Panitch & Gindin, 2004) as the U.S. state moved to reconstitute its power through eliminating capital controls, and laying the conditions for gaining access to global savings by liberalizing capital markets, with lowered trade and investment barriers benefiting U.S. transnational corporations. This strategy was the condition of and for a counter-mobilization of capital to disorganize labor, globally. It shaped a general reconstitution of states, via structural adjustment and free trade agreements, to institutionalize 'financialization' in the WTO and GATS protocols, and, more recently, has governed U.S. 'pre-emptive' neo-liberal development policies for 'failing' states (Soederberg, 2004; Panitch & Gindin, 2004).

Financial liberalization encouraged securitization (tradable debt) and the proliferation of a variety of financial instruments, creating new money out of expected future income. As argued elsewhere, under this regime the value of money is determined increasingly by its ability to command credit, rather than by creating value through the wage relation (McMichael, 2000). This is consistent with Harvey's concept of 'accumulation by dispossession,' where capital expands through releasing, and centralizing, assets. The decomposition of the wage relation (casualization) is directly related to the decomposition of the nation-state, as capital undermines its foundation in a wage–labor order (embedded in the modern social-democratic state) by seeking to evade or weaken organized labor through access to a world market in labor. Since the wage form no longer *governs* valorization, various forms of labor are valorized directly through political/non-market mechanisms as corporate globalization reconstitutes its labor force on world scale, through dispossession, casual contracts, and the recursive 'race to the bottom' dynamic. The reproduction of money, via global financial relations, supplants capitalism's earlier focus on the reproduction of wage–labor in the consolidation of the nation-state (cf. Hoogvelt, 1997; Polanyi, 1957). QA :11

An emergent 'world agriculture' is premised on three key dynamics. First is the reconstitution of capital through financialization, such that corporate strategies intensify vertical integration (from seed to supermarket) with flexible horizontal mergers and alliances, on a global scale. Vía Campesina has noted that agri-power no longer resides in control over land, rather it resides in the relations that surround agricultural production – those that "control loans, materials supply, the dissemination of new technologies, such as transgenic products, on the one hand, and those that control national and international product warehousing systems, transportation, distribution and retail sales to the consumer, on the other hand, have real power" (Vía Campesina, 2004a, p. 5). As Burch and Lawrence (2004) have QA :12 shown, one pertinent form of this reconstitution is the rise of highly innovative and flexible (generic) 'own brand' agri-food manufacturers serving supermarket chains (with specialty foods, including home meal replacements, organic foods, functional foods and prepared dietary products) and challenging the independence of brand-based manufacturing capital in the supply chain stemming from the so-called Fordist era.

Second, the privatization of states via the relations of financialization, including WTO trade and investment rules, reconstitutes capital on a global scale, and the transformation of food security into a private relation

(McMichael, 2004b). Under this dynamic, agricultural protections mutate from a public food security/self-sufficiency goal into a goal of subsidizing corporate agriculture, agro-exporting, and global sourcing, facilitated by the power relations within the WTO, as well as currency devaluations induced by structural-adjustment policies in the global South.

Third, the priority given to the reproduction of money has specific political and social consequences. The preservation of money value increasingly governs institutional politics in global and national arenas, generalizing a cycle of liberalization and crisis management through structural adjustment, at the expense of sustained social policies. Globally, the casualization of labor through redundancy and flexibility practices is linked to, and conditioned by, peasant expropriation. This reserve army of labor, within a transnational space governed by WTO principles of liberalization, is the foundation for capitalist development on a global scale.

CONCLUSION

The argument of this chapter is that the 'food regime' is a vector of social reproduction of capital on a world scale. As such, it expresses the genetic structure of capitalism in the accumulation/dispossession dynamic, and the political structure insofar as states govern transnational circuits of food, and their role in subsidizing the wage relation. Nonetheless geo-politics and the accumulation/legitimation dialectic order the political history of capitalism in distinct ways. The moment of world capitalism that defines the corporate food regime is realized through the construction of a world agriculture. The discursive element of this construction is akin to Cameron and Palan's "imagined economies of globalization" (2004, p. 15), where authority and sovereignty no longer inhabit the same space. These imagined economies inhabit "different normative and cognitive spaces whereby the boundaries of the state … are rendered multiple, complex and dynamic" (*ibid.*, pp. 15–17), and while they have an ontological force, "their importance lies less in what they describe than in what they narrate. In representing a dynamic respatialization of social and economic relations, the discourses of globalization and exclusion posit the immanent development of new spatial forms to which policy-makers, industrialists, jurists and ordinary people must adapt" (*ibid.*, p. 20). Such construction of a world agriculture serves to legitimize this transnational circuit and its assault on peasant cultures, as a condition for global food security.

The immanence of a world agriculture is ultimately shaped by the world-historical conjuncture, which I specify via analytical comparison. Polanyi viewed the institution of the self-regulating market as an attempt to commodify land, labor and money, and the protectionist movement as a counter-movement of regulation of each of these social substances. The counter-movement involved a cumulative politics of nation-state formation, whereby labor legislation, agrarian protectionism, and central banking attempted to re-embed the market in society. But this was a nineteenth and early twentieth-century double movement that configured the modern welfare/development state (McMichael, 2005b). In the twenty-first century, this trinity no longer operates through the same double movement. Rather, the regulation of money is no longer vested in the state per se, but in instrumentalities such as the IMF, whose task has become a generalized imperative to reproduce (corporate) money through expending labor and land across the world with decreasing regard for their sustainability. The construction of a world agriculture, deepening the instrumental use, misuse, and abandonment of natural and social resources, unfolds within this general imperative.

Arguably, the food sovereignty movement is the most direct symptom of this socio-ecological crisis, especially insofar as it embodies a diversity of responses corresponding to the re-spatialization of social and economic relations in the corporate food regime. As an expression of the corporate food regime, it reveals both the immanent, *and* the historical, conditions governing the politics of capitalist development in the twenty-first century. That is, in the crisis of the Doha Round, the discourse of development is most clearly framed by the dialectic of 'food security' versus 'food sovereignty.'

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NOTES

1. In relation to Harriet Friedmann's chapter in this volume, which reworks the 'food regime' concept in politico-normative terms, I offer a complementary use of the food regime as a vector of the social reproduction of capital on a world scale, and as a lens focusing on the social fact of dispossession. While a 'price-governed market' is

the common feature of food regimes, the construction of this relationship is specific to the historical conjuncture in which each operates.

2. By the mid-1990s, 80 percent of farm subsidies in the OECD countries concentrated on the largest 20 percent of (corporate) farms, rendering small farmers increasingly vulnerable to the vicissitudes of a de-regulated (and increasingly privately managed) global market for agricultural products. U.S. farm income declined by almost 50 percent between 1996 and 1999 (Gorelick, 2000, pp. 28–30), and Europe lost half of its full-time equivalent agricultural employment between 1980 and 2001, with the equivalent of 1 million farm jobs disappearing in the latter half of the 1990s (Herman & Kuper, 2003, pp. 29–40).

3. Dumping was institutionalized within the WTO, via what is know as the 'Blair House Agreement,' concerning exports, negotiated between the U.S. and the E.U. The agreement "tied reductions in both domestic support and export subsidies to baseline levels of 1986, when stocks and subsidies were at their peak, thus giving both the E.U and the U.S. ample flexibility in meeting their obligations," and established a 'peace clause' regarding action against farm support programs and export subsidies (Dawkins, 1999). The legitimation of export subsidies (for 25 of 132 WTO members) perversely allowed the U.S. and the E.U to intensify export dumping such that "just 3 (members) are responsible for 93% of all subsidized wheat exports and just 2 of them are responsible for subsidizing 94% of butter and 80% of beef exports" (Dawkins, 1999).

4. Thus, in 2001, President Bush proclaimed, on the eve of the WTO Doha Ministerial, 'I want America to feed the world … It starts with having an administration committed to knocking down barriers to trade, and we are' (quoted in IUF 2002, p. 4). The associated U.S. vision of a 'global agriculture' is premised on the superiority of a corporate-dominated world market for foodstuffs over domestic food systems (Peine & McMichael, 2005).

5. "Typically, a crop development conglomerate is organized around one OECD-based transnational enterprise (TNE), rooted in the chemical, pharmaceutical, or food processing industry. This TNE maintains a network of linkages with one or more plant breeding firms, new biology firms, genomics and software firms, and also with public research institutes. The nature of the linkages is diverse and varies from temporary research collaboration to complete take-overs" (Pistorius & van Wijk, 1999, p. 118).

6. The TRIPs protocol requires states to regulate biological resources, whether through patenting or an effective *sui generis* system, deriving from the 1992 Convention on Biological Diversity. Although the protocol is yet to be universally implemented, states choosing the latter path remain under pressure to market their genetic resources for foreign exchange (McMichael, 2003, pp. 183–184).

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