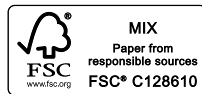
Constructing and Contesting Food Sovereignty: Food Lines, Fault Lines and Seeds of Transformation in Venezuela

Christina McGee Schiavoni

529827-L-bw-Schiavoni
Processed on: 15-3-2019

This dissertation is part of the research programme of CERES, Research School for Resource Studies for Development.

This research was funded by the Netherlands Organisation for Scientific Research (NWO).



© Christina McGee Schiavoni 2019

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted, in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise, without the prior permission by the author.

ISBN 9789402814477

529827-L-bw-Schiavoni
Processed on: 15-3-2019
PDF page: 2

CONSTRUCTING AND CONTESTING FOOD SOVEREIGNTY: FOOD LINES, FAULT LINES AND SEEDS OF TRANSFORMATION IN VENEZUELA

VOEDSELSOEVEREINITEIT: IN ONTWIKKELING EN OMSTREDEN. VOEDSELLIJNEN, BREUKLIJNEN EN ONTKIEMENDE TRANSFORMATIE IN VENEZUELA

Thesis

to obtain the degree of Doctor from the
Erasmus University Rotterdam
by command of the Rector Magnificus

Prof.dr. R.C.M.E. Engels

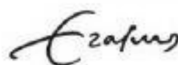
and in accordance with the decision of the Doctorate Board

The public defence shall be held on
Monday 29 April 2019 at 16.00 hrs

by

Christina McGee Schiavoni
born in Boston, United States of America

International Institute of Social Studies



Erasmus University Rotterdam

Doctoral Committee

Doctoral dissertation supervisor

Professor dr. M.N. Spoor

Other members

Professor dr. H. Wittman, The University of British Columbia

Dr. P. Claeys, Coventry University

Dr. A. Visser

Co-supervisor

Dr. M. Schneider

529827-L-bw-Schiavoni
Processed on: 15-3-2019

al bravo pueblo venezolano

529827-L-bw-Schiavoni
Processed on: 15-3-2019

Contents

List of Tables, Figures and Boxes *ix*
Acronyms *x*
Acknowledgements *xiii*
Abstract *xvii*
Samenvatting *xix*

INTRODUCTION 1
1.1 Overview 1
1.2 Confronting, contesting and transforming power through the construction of food sovereignty: context and problematique 6
1.3 Research objectives 11
1.4 Research questions 12
1.5 Research design 12
1.5.1 Overview 12
1.5.2 Data sources 14
1.5.3 Data collection methods 15
1.5.4 Fieldwork overview 23
1.6 Ethical considerations 30
1.7 Limitations and disclaimers 32
1.8 Chapter overview 34

PROLOGUE TO CHAPTER 2 37

CHAPTER 2: THE CONTESTED TERRAIN OF FOOD SOVEREIGNTY CONSTRUCTION: TOWARD A HISTORICAL, RELATIONAL AND INTERACTIVE APPROACH 43
Abstract 43

529827-L-bw-Schiavoni
Processed on: 15-3-2019 PDF page: 6

2.1 Introduction 44
2.2 Food sovereignty construction in Venezuela 48
2.3 Food sovereignty construction through time: a historical approach 52
2.4 Food sovereignty construction as process: a relational approach 64
2.5 State-society relations in food sovereignty construction: an interactive approach 76
2.6 Toward a historical, relational and interactive approach to food sovereignty research 86

PROLOGUE TO CHAPTER 3 91

CHAPTER 3: FOOD POLITICS IN VENEZUELA 95
Abstract 95
3.1 Introduction 96
3.2 Colonial period and continuation of colonial patterns of production and consumption 102
3.3 Modernization period 105
3.4 Neoliberal reform and the rise of the Bolivarian Revolution 115
3.5 Contemporary period: food as control 122
3.6 Contemporary period: food as resistance ("En guerra hay que comer") 134
3.7 Conclusion 145

PROLOGUE TO CHAPTER 4 149

CHAPTER 4: EXPLORING THE "GRAY AREAS" OF STATE-SOCIETY INTERACTION IN FOOD SOVEREIGNTY CONSTRUCTION: THE BATTLE FOR VENEZUELA'S SEED LAW 155
Abstract 155
4.1 Introduction 156
4.2 State-society interaction, political opportunity and *gorras multiples* in the seed law battle 160
4.3 Getting to the gray: the political backdrop of the seed law battle 163
4.4 Antecedents: competing agendas in Venezuelan seed policy 166

4.5 The stages of the Seed Law battle 172
4.5.1 Moment zero: uniting forces 172
4.5.2 Moment 1: politicizing the GMO debate 174
4.5.3 Moment 2: merging legislative and popular law creation 176
4.5.4 Moment 3: public consultation vs. popular constituent debate 177
4.5.5 Moment 4: competing agendas, competing laws 180
4.5.6 Moment 5: passage in the nick of time 183
4.5.7 Moment 6: back to the grassroots 184
4.6 Conclusion 186

PROLOGUE TO CHAPTER 5 191

CHAPTER 5: THE DYNAMICS OF BUILDING AND DISMANTLING IN FOOD SOVEREIGNTY CONSTRUCTION 193

Abstract 193
5.1 Introduction 194
5.2 Food sovereignty construction through a dialectical lens 198
5.3 Logics of food system transformation and emergent areas of inquiry 200
5.3.1 Everyday life 203
5.3.2 Prefigurative politics 204
5.3.3 Societal reach 206
5.4 Crisis and transformation in Venezuela 207
5.4.1 "Prosumer" efforts 208
5.4.2 Seed Law and the Popular Seed Plan 212
5.4.3 Ministry of Urban Agriculture 215
5.4.4 CLAPs 218
5.5 Conclusion 222

CONCLUSION 227

REFERENCES 236

List of Tables, Figures and Boxes

Tables:

Table 1.1: Participant observation, tier 1: everyday life in El Valle, Caracas……………………………………………………………….19

Table 1.2: Participant observation, tier 2: engaged research with Social movements………………………………………………….20

Table 1.3: Participant observation, tier 3: site visits & attendance of organized events.………………………………………………...22

Table 4.1: Highlights of efforts toward food sovereignty in Venezuela that paved the way for the eventual passage of the Seed Law of 2015…………………………………………………170

Figures:

Figure 4.1: Visual representation of the “moments” of the Seed Law process identified during group systematization process in October 2016……………….………………...….......153

Boxes:

Box 1.1: Everyday life in El Valle…..……………………………….24

Box 1.2: Engaged movement scholarship with Semillas del Pueblo….26

529827-L-bw-Schiavoni
Processed on: 15-3-2019
PDF page: 9

Acronyms

AD	Acción Democrática (Democratic Action)
AIA	American International Association
ALBA	Alianza Bolivariana para los Pueblos de Nuestra América (Bolivarian Alliance for the Peoples of Our America)
BOP	Bottom of the pyramid
CADA	Compañía Anónima Distribuidora de Alimentos (Wholesale Food Company)
CAN	Comunidad Andina (Andean Community or Andean Community of Nations)
CIA	Central Intelligence Agency (U.S. government)
CFS	United Nations Committee on World Food Security
CLAP	Comité Local de Abastecimiento y Producción (Local Provisioning and Production Committee)
ERPI	Emancipatory Rural Politics Initiative
FGD	Focus group discussion
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
FEDEAGRO	Confederación de Asociaciones de Productores Agropecuarios (Confederation of Associations of Agricultural Producers)
FUNDARROZ	Fundación Nacional del Arroz (National Rice Foundation)
GM	Genetically modified
GMO	Genetically modified organism
HRI	Historical, relational and interactive
IALA	Instituto Universitario Latinoamericano de Agroecología Paulo Freire (Paulo Freire Latin American University Institute of Agroecology)
IBEC	International Basic Economy Corporation

529827-L-bw-Schiavoni
Processed on: 15-3-2019
PDF page: 10

IMF	International Monetary Fund
INIA	Instituto Nacional de Investigaciones Agrícolas (National Institute of Agricultural Research)
INN	Instituto Nacional de Nutrición (National Institute of Nutrition)
IPC	International Planning Committee for Food Sovereignty
IPR	Intellectual property rights
ISI	Import substitution industrialization
IVIC	Instituto Venezolano de Investigaciones Científicas (Venezuelan Institute of Scientific Research)
JAPs	Juntas de Abastecimiento y Control de Precios (Provisioning and Price Control Boards (Chile))
LPIA	Local, peasant, Indigenous and Afro-descendant
MPA	Movimento dos Pequenos Agricultores (Small Farmers Movement of Brazil)
MST	Movimento dos Trabalhadores Sem Terra (Landless Workers Movement of Brazil)
MUD	Mesa de la Unidad Democrática (Democratic Unity Roundtable)
NGO	Nongovernmental organization
ONDB	Oficina Nacional de Diversidad Biológica (National Office of Biodiversity)
OSSI	Open Source Seed Initiative
PACA	Productora Agropecuaria Compañía Anónima (Agricultural Products Company)
P.A.N.	Productos Alimenticios Nacionales (National Food Products)
PDVSA	Petróleos de Venezuela, S.A. (Petroleum of Venezuela)
PESCA	Pesquerías Caribe Compañía Anónima (Caribbean Fisheries Company)
PL 480	Public Law 480
PSUV	Partido Socialista Unido de Venezuela (United Socialist Party of Venezuela)
PT	Partido dos Trabalhadores (Workers Party of Brazil)
REMAVENCA	Refinadora de Maíz Venezolana, C.A. (Venezuelan Corn Refinery)

529827-L-bw-Schiavoni
Processed on: 15-3-2019

SAPI	Servicio Autónomo de la Propiedad Intelectual (Autonomous Intellectual Property Service)
SUNDDE	Superintendencia Nacional para la Defensa de los Derechos Socioeconómicos de Venezuela (National Superintendence for the Defense of Socioeconomic Rights of Venezuela)
TRIPS	Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights
UN	United Nations
UNELLEZ	Universidad Nacional Experimental de los Llanos Occidentales 'Ezequiel Zamora' (The Ezequiel Zamora National Experimental University of the Western Plains)
UPOV	International Union for the Protection of New Plant Varieties
USD	United States Dollar
USFSA	United States Food Sovereignty Alliance
VBEC	Venezuela Basic Economy Corporation

529827-L-bw-Schiavoni
Processed on: 15-3-2019
PDF page: 12

Acknowledgements

This work is the product of a collective undertaking, both in terms of those who have contributed to it directly and those who have supported me through it.

I'm very fortunate to have had the fantastic advisory team of Max Spoor and Mindi Schneider. Max, thank you so much for accompanying me on this journey from the start. Your calming and supportive presence has been deeply appreciated. Mindi, my deepest gratitude for your insightful guidance, your patience, and all your tireless work to help me get to this point. You are an inspiration, and I couldn't have done this without you. I'm also grateful to others in the Political Ecology research group who have made this possible. And a deep thanks to a third unofficial yet critical member of my advisory team, my research coach and friend Wendy Godek.

Those both inside and outside ISS who have provided input into this dissertation or earlier pieces of it (excluding my Venezuelan comrades, who I'll come to next) include Alberto Alonso-Fradejas, Daniela Andrade, Murat Arsel, Zoe Brent, John Cameron, Siena Chrisman, Marc Edelman, Julien-Francoise Gerber, Ben McKay, Harriet Friedmann, Wendy Godek, Helen Hintjens, Giulio Iocco, Fred Magdoff, Mai Maheigan, Almas Mahmud, Natalia Mamonova, Fred Mills, Mariam Morid, Cathy Ponte, Jess Powers, Wittawat Prayookwong, Nadine Reis, Antonio Roman-Alcalá, Annie Shattuck, Salena Tramel, Hannah Twomey, and Yunan Xu, among others – thank you all so very much. Thanks as well to Whitney Richardson, Mai Maheigan and Wittawat Prayookwong for your stellar editing and formatting support.

Onto Venezuela, this PhD pursuit would be meaningless without the many people and efforts there that have inspired and informed this work. William Camacaro, much of the inspiration for this project arose out of our work together, and you continue to be a political and intellectual compass as well as comrade and co-author. Thank you. And thanks to the wonderful Camacaro/Padrino/Rojas family. Ana Felicien, my brilliant co-author and co-conspirator extraordinaire, half of the degree coming out of this work really belongs to you. I'm so grateful to you for *so much* and am both comforted

529827-L-bw-Schiavoni
Processed on: 15-3-2019
PDF page: 13

and overwhelmed to think of all the joint work ahead of us! Thanks also to my other bright and inspiring co-authors whose work appears in this dissertation: Eisamar Ochoa, Esquisa Omaña, Adrianna Requena, Liccia Romero and Silvana Saturno. Yajaira Hernández and Johnny Moreno, thank you for taking me into your home and making me part of your family, and thanks also to Genesis, Yesica, Concho, Zulay, Ruben, Sofia, Yaji, Damaris, los camaradas and the many other friends, neighbors and family members who made my stay in El Valle so meaningful. Miguel Angel Nuñez, you've been a critical reference point from my first trip to Venezuela onward. Thanks for your friendship, guidance and hosting.

Major thanks also to Carlos Méndez and the team at the Laboratorio de Ecosistemas y Cambios Globales (including Pedro Borges, Noemi Chacón, Ana Felicien, Meimalin Moreno, Mariela Lopez and Adriana Silva) and others at the Ecology Center of el IVIC for hosting me, and thank you, Ana, for making it all happen. Deepest thanks as well to Semillas del Pueblo, Feria Conuquera, Pueblo a Pueblo and the students and staff of the IALA and of the National Experimental Indigenous University of Tauca for allowing me to accompany, observe and collaborate with you. While it is impossible to name all the individuals who helped and supported me in the research in Venezuela, special thanks go to Cesar Aponte, Liliana Buitrago, Marianela Carrillo, Carla Chacón, Pablo Characo and family, Yeli Contreras, Pasqualina Curcio, Ulises Daal, John Davila, Nelly Díaz, Olga Domené, Miguel Franco, Lorena Freitez, Jaheli Fuenmayor, Gabriel Gil, Hernán González, Gabriela Jiménez, Laura Lorenzo, Yasmina Marrero, Yoandy Medina, Alfredo Miranda, Ricardo Miranda, Mibric Navarro, Mónica Pérez, Jesus Rojas, Josefina Rojas, Sarai Rodriguez and Alex Villas, among many others. Thanks also to the dedicated team of Venezuelanalysis for making my work easier. And thank you to Rosa Maria de la Torre and John Ramirez for inspiration early on. Special thanks to Robinson Moreno, with support from Adrianna Requena, for the cover art that will eventually accompany this text.

Also inspiring this project is my earlier activism with some incredible groups and individuals. Thanks so much for the support and inspiration from my comrades of the US Food Sovereignty Alliance, the Alberto Lovera Bolivarian Circle of New York, La Finca del Sur, my broader NYC activist community, the IPC and the CSM, among others. Sorry not to name you all, but you know who you are, and you have been a key part of this. I also wish to thank some key mentors, including Mike Vivea, Peter Mann, Phil McMichael, Karen Washington, Maria Aguiar, Molly Anderson, Ceci Charles-King, Fred Magdoff and Suzanne Ross. Sadly, I lost some mentors who passed away over

529827-L-bw-Schiavoni
Processed on: 15-3-2019 PDF page: 14

the course of my PhD process, including Kathy Ozer, Brother David Andrews, Cathleen Kneen and John Kinsman, all of whom are very much present in this, as is my fallen USFSA comrade Charity Hicks.

Returning to the Netherlands for a moment, I am grateful to the NWO for funding support, and to many others at ISS who provided me with critical support, including Karin Arts, Sanchita Bakshi, Sharmini Bisessar-Selvarajah, Arjun Bedi, Andre Blokzijl, Ome Chattranond, Kristin Cheney, Dita Dirks, Tim Feodoroff, Andrew Fischer, Jacquie Gaybor Tobar, Gita Gadjri, Georgina Gomez, Nika Goussatchenko, Cape Kasahara, Elyse Mills, Tsegaye Moreda, Didi Mulder, Clara Park, Juan David Parra, Lee Pegler, Jane Pocock, Chaya Raghoenath, Valeria Recalde, Blas Regnault, Martha Robbins, Brenda Rodriguez, Umbreen Salim, Christina Sathyamala, Karin Astrid Siegmann, Emile Smidt, Anggun Susilo, Lize Swartz, Feroza Tedja, Sat Trejo Mendez, Peter van Bergeijk, Oane Visser, Bayu Wijayanto, Mario Willemsen, the ISS Counseling Team and the staff of the Library, Facilities, Canteen, Butterfly Bar, Finance, Communications, HR, Maintenance and others providing critical support functions – thank you! I also want to give a heartfelt thank-you to the amazing and supportive PhD community at ISS. There are too many of you to name, but you know who you are – those who shared your wisdom, encouraging words, smiles, hugs, etc. – and I thank you deeply. And a shout-out to my ISS MA batch for your support, as well as my MA friends from subsequent batches. Tamuna, you've remained very much present (and I'm deeply grateful for her bringing us together, Almas, and grateful for all your support).

I have also benefitted tremendously from a supportive community of colleagues outside of ISS. Those who lent support at critical moments include Max Ajl, Saulo Araujo, Stephen Bartlett, Bosman Batubara, Josh Brem-Wilson, Matt Canfield, Jahi Chappell, Priscilla Claeys, Scott Codey, Alison Cohen, Rosalinda Guillen, Andrew Kang-Bartlett, Eric Holt-Giménez, Alastair Iles, Larry and Jane Levine, Maywa Montenegro de Wit, Sophia Murphy, Tristan Quinn-Thibodeau, LaDonna Redmond, Annie Shattuck, Nettie Wiebe and Monica White. Thank you. And thanks to many others who go unnamed.

My family has been an absolute pillar of support. Mary McGee and Thomas Schiavoni, not only have you given me everything, starting with life, but you also continually inspire me with your activism (along with David, Sue, Sanjoy and co.). May Delaney, thank you for showing me what unconditional love is. Natalie McGee (aka Grandma), thanks for being my biggest fan, even keeping the definition of food sovereignty in your address book so you can explain what I work on! Thank you too to all my loving aunts, uncles and

529827-L-bw-Schiavoni
Processed on: 15-3-2019
PDF page: 15

cousins (Aunt Mary Liz, you envisioned this PhD long before I did!). My beloved grandmother Mary Lou Schiavoni left us over the course of my PhD process, but her love and example continue to guide me. Thanks also to my new family members, the Prayookwongs, for your love, support and care here in Bangkok as I write (and re: care in Bangkok, special thanks to My Coffee for providing a wonderful work environment (and thanks, Annie!) and to the fabulous Kruu Bong for brightening my weeks. Clara, it was so meaningful to share the final leg of our journeys, and thanks for your support!).

I'm grateful to those who held me up and kept me going through some of my hardest moments. Wendy, thank you for jumping in and staying the course. Soumita, thank you for your profound wisdom, love and around-the-clock support. And thanks to you, Jacquie and Cinthia for our intercontinental support network! Suzanne, thanks for providing a warm and protective blanket of fierce love. Siena, thank you for always being there and getting it, and for all the love, care, hosting and overall support. Mai and Michael, thanks for so very much, including a safe and snug nest to land in. Cathy, thanks for providing a space of refuge, for the excellent life coaching and for helping to save the dissertation. Hannah, thanks for being a healing soul sister :) Kirsy, hermana, thank you for your love, and thanks also to Alan. Jess, thanks for being a trusted friend and confidante, as well as the hosting. Salena and Wei-Li, thank you both for your sisterhood and support, and for our shared dinners that nourished body and soul. Zoe and Martha, thanks for your sisterhood and support as well, and for our collaborations. Umbreen, Yunan (+Fengfeng), Al, Nat and Dani, you've saved me on more than one occasion – thank you so much for everything. Justin, Emmanuel, Joe, Michael-Vincent, Shauna, Rebecca, Naomi, Utri, Rosanna, Frances, Lesley, Gil, Jim, Sophia and Maria, each of you has seen me through a lot – thank you. Love you all, and these words pale in comparison to your support. Speaking of which, there are no adequate words for you, Mai, as you join me in the depths of this down to the last painful second (literally!), simultaneously providing technical and emotional support, vicariously experiencing so much of this in a way I wouldn't wish on anyone. Thanks, and please get some rest now!

Wittawat Prayookwong, my beloved Nut, I'd do it all again (though differently and better!) to get to come out of this with you as my husband. You've suffered through this more than any partner should have to and you've shown your extraordinary love and integrity through it all. Thanks for your support, understanding and revolutionary love. The rest of our lives await us now.

529827-L-bw-Schiavoni
Processed on: 15-3-2019

Abstract

An alternative proposal for social and ecological transformation in the face of a converging set of global crises, food sovereignty serves as a galvanizing concept for a growing number of movements across the globe. As scholars grapple with the concept, however, certain issues, such as questions of the role of the state in food sovereignty construction, have surfaced as recurring sticking points, or areas of seeming irreconcilable tension. It is argued here that key to theorizing about food sovereignty is drawing lessons from its attempted construction on the ground, as movements and other actors are forced to confront its contradictions, inconsistencies and many gray areas head-on. Toward such ends, this study advances a *historical, relational and interactive* (HRI) framework that approaches food sovereignty construction as a historically embedded, continually evolving set of processes that are interactively shaped by state and societal forces, reflecting competing paradigms and approaches.

The HRI framework is applied to the case of Venezuela, home to one of the longest-running national-level experiments in food sovereignty construction since the start of its political process known as the Bolivarian Revolution in 1999. While this experiment has seen some important gains over the years, including in the areas of agrarian reform, nutrition and agroecology, today, ongoing shortages of key food items expose cracks in Venezuela's food system and highlight both the enormity and urgency of the task of food sovereignty construction, as well as the limitations of efforts to date. Examination of the challenges at present gives rise to the question of whether a push for alternatives in efforts to construct food sovereignty may have taken precedence over attempts at dismantling or otherwise transforming Venezuela's dominant agrifood system. This underscores that part of what gives food sovereignty its transformative potential is its dual focus on dismantling the structures fostering injustice in the food system while at the same time striving to build viable alternatives. Arguably one cannot come before the other, or without the other, as the persistence of dominant structures will serve as an impediment to the full operationalization and scaling of alternatives, at the same time that if these structures are to be dismantled, something must be there to replace them. These dual processes are inherently relational, each shaping and

529827-L-bw-Schiavoni
Processed on: 15-3-2019 PDF page: 17

shaped by the other in attempts to construct food sovereignty. From this standpoint, an additional framework of *the dialectics of building and dismantling* in food sovereignty construction is put forward as a springboard into further inquiry. Additionally, this study has sought to advance forms of co-generation of transformational knowledge bridging the traditional divide of scholarship and activism, while pointing to the need for further and deeper work in this area.

529827-L-bw-Schiavoni
Processed on: 15-3-2019

Voedselsoevereiniteit: in ontwikkeling en omstreden. Voedsellijnen, breuklijnen en ontkiemende transformatie in Venezuela

Samenvatting

Als alternatief voorstel voor sociale en ecologische transformatie ten tijde van een samenloop van wereldwijde crises dient voedselsoevereiniteit als een inspirerend begrip voor een groeiend aantal bewegingen over de hele wereld. De wetenschappelijke discussie over dit begrip heeft echter bepaalde knelpunten en spanningsvelden aan het licht gebracht, zoals vragen over de rol van de overheid bij de ontwikkeling van voedselsoevereiniteit. Hier wordt betoogd dat de sleutel tot het theoretiseren over voedselsoevereiniteit ligt in het trekken van lessen uit de praktijk, omdat bewegingen en andere actoren bij de ontwikkeling van voedselsoevereiniteit direct geconfronteerd worden met tegenstrijdigheden, ongerijmdheden en vele grijze gebieden. Daarom introduceert dit onderzoek een historisch, relationeel en interactief (HRI) kader waarin de ontwikkeling van voedselsoevereiniteit wordt benaderd als een in de geschiedenis verankerde, voortdurend evoluerende reeks processen die interactief worden gevormd door de overheid en maatschappelijke krachten, en die concurrerende paradigma's en benaderingen weerspiegelen.

Het HRI-kader wordt toegepast op de situatie in Venezuela, waar op landelijk niveau een van de langst lopende experimenten op het gebied van de ontwikkeling van voedselsoevereiniteit plaatsvindt. Dit experiment is in 1999 begonnen ten tijde van de Bolivariaanse Revolutie en heeft in de loop der jaren belangrijke vooruitgang gebracht, onder meer op het gebied van landbouwhervorming, voeding en agro-ecologie. Desondanks zijn er vandaag de dag voortdurend tekorten aan belangrijke voedingsmiddelen. Dit brengt barsten in het voedselsysteem van Venezuela aan het licht en hieruit blijkt wat een enorme opgave en hoe urgent de ontwikkeling van voedselsoevereiniteit is. Ook wijst dit op de beperkingen van de inspanningen die tot op heden zijn gedaan.

Gezien de huidige uitdagingen rijst de vraag of het zoeken naar alternatieven in een poging om voedselsoevereiniteit te ontwikkelen voorrang kan hebben gekregen boven pogingen om het dominante agro-voedselsysteem van Venezuela te ontmantelen of op een andere manier te

529827-L-bw-Schiavoni
Processed on: 15-3-2019
PDF page: 19

transformeren. Dit wijst erop dat het transformatieve potentieel van voedselsoevereiniteit deels gelegen is in een tweeledige gerichtheid op de ontmanteling van de structuren die onrechtvaardigheid in het voedselsysteem bevorderen en op de ontwikkeling van levensvatbare alternatieven. Deze twee aspecten kunnen niet na elkaar of zonder elkaar plaatsvinden, omdat het voortbestaan van dominante structuren een belemmering vormt voor de volledige operationalisering en opschaling van alternatieven, terwijl er tegelijkertijd vervanging voor deze structuren moet zijn als ze ontmanteld worden. Deze tweeledige processen zijn inherent relationeel van aard en beïnvloeden elkaar wederzijds bij het ontwikkelen van voedselsoevereiniteit. Vanuit dit gezichtspunt wordt een aanvullend kader geïntroduceerd als springplank naar verder onderzoek: de dialectiek van het bouwen en ontmantelen in de voedselsoevereiniteitsontwikkeling. Daarnaast is het doel van dit onderzoek om bij te dragen aan het genereren van transformationele kennis om de traditionele kloof tussen wetenschap en activisme overbruggen, en tegelijkertijd te wijzen op de noodzaak van verder en diepgaander onderzoek op dit gebied.

529827-L-bw-Schiavoni
Processed on: 15-3-2019

1 Introduction

1.1 Overview

Food sovereignty is the right of peoples to healthy and culturally appropriate food produced through ecologically sound and sustainable methods, and their right to define their own food and agriculture systems. -Declaration of Nyéléni 2007

The above excerpt from the Declaration of Nyéléni (Nyéléni 2007a), the most commonly referenced definition of food sovereignty to date, represents an important snapshot in time for a dynamically co-evolving concept and assemblage of movements. A decade after movements of small-scale food producers first launched food sovereignty onto the international stage outside the 1996 World Food Summit in Rome as free trade policies were further threatening their already precarious existence, an increasingly diverse set of constituencies, urban as well as rural and consumers as well as producers, had joined them (Patel 2009, Claeys and Duncan 2018). Food sovereignty had become a shared mobilization frame in response to a food system in which hunger persists despite there being more than enough calories to go around (Lappé and Collins 2015; Chappell 2018); the majority of the hungry are, paradoxically, food producers and food chain workers themselves (De Schutter and Cordes 2011); the population is left both "stuffed and starved" (Patel 2007); and exploitation, inequality, pollution and waste abound from production to plate (Magdoff and Tokar 2009). Attended by social movements from more than 80 countries, the Nyéléni forum was an opportunity to build unity and coherence through articulating a shared vision and framework for action (Schiavoni 2009). This was on the cusp of the food price crisis of 2007-2008 that would soon rock the globe, revealing an ongoing "structural and even systemic crisis" of the food system (Vanhaute 2011: 61), with significant new openings for food sovereignty (Holt-Giménez et al. 2009, Patel and McMichael 2009). Today, food sovereignty continues to serve as a galvanizing concept for an ever more diverse array of movements in the face of converging global crises, while countless experiments in food sovereignty construction, across multiple scales, exist in many corners of the globe. This

529827-L-bw-Schiavoni
Processed on: 15-3-2019
PDF page: 21

work of critical scholarship provides a glimpse into one such experiment while offering insights into some of the main theoretical and practical sticking points of food sovereignty at this point in its evolution.

A focus of this study is the *how* of food sovereignty, or the processes involved in attempting to put a dynamically evolving social movement vision into practice in the here and now. Of particular interest are the negotiations involved in attempted institutionalization of food sovereignty and the role of the state therein. As pointed out by numerous scholars (e.g., Patel 2009, Edelman 2014, McKay et al. 2014, Clark 2015), in their various communications, food sovereignty movements have not been particularly clear or consistent regarding the state. Some scholars have suggested a shift over time from more to less of a focus on the state, pointing, for instance, to food sovereignty being described as a *right of nations* in its original 1996 definition (Via Campesina 1996) versus a *right of peoples* in the Nyéléni Declaration. McKay et al. (2014: 1176) argue that "This subtle change in the scale and location of sovereignty – from the national to the local and from the accrual of sovereignty in the hands of the nation-state to those of 'peoples' – marks an important definitional shift in mobilizing food sovereignty as a tool for political change". While an important point, there is more room for nuanced thinking on the role of the state built into earlier conceptions of food sovereignty than tends to be attributed to them. Following the line on the right of nations in the 1996 declaration, for example, is the statement "We have the right to produce our own food in our own territory", while further down is an emphasis on democratic control as integral to food sovereignty (Via Campesina 1996, no page). The implication is that while food sovereignty arose out of a call to wrest power in the food system back from multinational corporations and international financial institutions into the national realm, the vision never stopped there. Similarly, while the Nyéléni Declaration emphasizes local control, it also includes several key references to the nation and the national level.

It would appear that from the start and into the present, food sovereignty has implied more of a *both/and* than *either/or* approach to state power and popular power. And yet the question of how this is to be practically navigated has remained wide open, attracting extensive debate. Raj Patel (2009: 668) gets to the crux of the matter:

> . . . one of the most radical moments in the definition of food sovereignty is the layering of different jurisdictions over which rights can be exercised.

529827-L-bw-Schiavoni
Processed on: 15-3-2019

> When the call is for, variously, nations, peoples, regions, and states to craft their own agrarian policy, there is a concomitant call for spaces of sovereignty. Food sovereignty has its own geographies, one determined by specific histories and contours of resistance [...] In blowing apart the notion that the state has a paramount authority, by pointing to the multivalent hierarchies of power and control that exist within the world food system, food sovereignty paradoxically displaces one sovereign, but remains silent about the others . . .

Is such ambiguity regarding the role of the state in food sovereignty construction a strategic flaw in the conceptualization of food sovereignty? Some have argued so. Hospes (2014: 122-124) deems the matter an area of "deadlock" for food sovereignty movements, while Bernstein (2014: 1054) describes the state as "the elephant in the room" of food sovereignty movements. Such characterizations, however, are not entirely fair or accurate. Food sovereignty movements have, out of necessity, been grappling with these very issues for more than two decades now. Through a tireless combination "inside" and "outside" strategies, they have achieved unprecedented access to global policy deliberation spaces, most notably via reform of the United Nations (UN) Committee on World Food Security (CFS) in 2009, through which they now negotiate directly with state actors on matters of global agrifood governance (McKeon 2015, Brem-Wilson 2015, Claeys and Duncan 2018). They have put food sovereignty on the national agenda in many of their respective countries, and have achieved national legislation supportive of food sovereignty in at least fifteen of them (*see*, e.g., Desmarais et al. 2017, Wittman 2015, Godek 2015). At the local level, countless initiatives are bringing grassroots actors into negotiations with local officials, with local food sovereignty ordinances passed in 47 municipalities in the U.S. state of Maine alone as of 2018 (Local Food Rules 2018).

The reality is that what have oftentimes been deemed in academia as areas of seemingly irreconcilable contradiction are already being actively navigated on the ground, often in highly nuanced ways. And yet, some of these developments have been slow to make their way into the literature, especially up until recently. This apparent gap between food sovereignty discourse and debate in the academic literature versus at the level of practice is precisely what struck me when I entered academia in 2012 after more than a decade of food movement activism. This study was born out of the conviction that key to theorizing about food sovereignty is drawing

lessons from its attempted construction on the ground, where movements and other actors have been forced to confront its contradictions, inconsistencies and many gray areas head-on. The intention has been that such bridging of theory and practice not only help to deepen and nuance academic pursuits of food sovereignty but also provide useful tools for activists and practitioners. This has been a main motivation of this work, which seeks to feed back into real-life attempts to construct food sovereignty at the same time that it draws from them to advance food sovereignty scholarship, all towards furthering the broader political project of food sovereignty in response to the injustices wrought by our food system. In doing so, an ultimate goal is not simply generating deeper critique, as important as that is, but also generating what Gaventa (2016: 10) describes as *transformational knowledge*:

> …as development researchers we are often far better at producing critical knowledge and critical thinking than we are at producing transformational knowledge. While exposing and critiquing systems of power and meanings of development is important, do we do enough in our work to highlight emerging alternatives and to understand their transformative potential?

A defining feature of this contribution is its vantage point spanning the traditional divide between scholarship and activism. Toward such ends, there are several fundamental positions taken in this study that have guided the overall research approach. First, food sovereignty is approached neither as an ephemeral vision nor as a typified notion but as a "living, breathing process" (Shattuck et al. 2015: 429) that social movements together with a variety of other actors are actively advancing in many corners of the globe. One implication of this approach is that efforts to put food sovereignty into practice are to be taken seriously and recognized as essential to food sovereignty theorizing, such as on the question of food sovereignty vis-à-vis the state. Another implication is that efforts toward food sovereignty are too dynamic, complex and context-specific for predetermined frameworks to be superimposed upon them. While this might be considered common sense in social movement circles, this has not necessarily been the case across the board in academia. One indication is the tendency in the literature of going back to old definitions and frameworks and pointing to discrepancies between these and real-life efforts toward food sovereignty, as opposed to recognizing the former as "goalposts" at best of a dynamically evolving concept that will take on a myriad

529827-L-bw-Schiavoni
Processed on: 15-3-2019

of different expressions as globally articulated ideas and strategies interact with local realities (Shattuck et al. 2015). This is why it is argued here that embedding research firmly in practice, and in collaboration with those on the front lines of struggle – a second fundamental tenet of this study – can make for deeper, more nuanced and sharper critique. It can also allow for more space to witness the unexpected, including important inroads toward food sovereignty that may depart from prior conceptions, pushing the bounds of how it is understood and practiced.

A third defining position of this study has been to eschew notions of supposed scientific neutrality, instead prioritizing relationship building, sensitivity to the research context and questions of positionality, as elaborated upon further on. This has involved following traditions of social science scholarship that "repudiate the idea of the detached and 'objective' or 'neutral' observer", instead recognizing the researcher as "an active social agent who struggles to enter social processes through entering the life-worlds of local actors who, in turn, actively shape the researcher's own fieldwork strategies, thus molding the contours and outcomes of the research process itself" (Long 1992a: ix-x). Given my background in food sovereignty movement-building and the prior relationships that have formed the basis for investigation, there is no pretense of being a neutral observer. Instead I take an unapologetic stance in solidarity with those in the struggle for food sovereignty. However, to do so has not been to do so uncritically. To the contrary, this study aims to demonstrate that no one is more aware of the theoretical and practical limitations of food sovereignty than those in the trenches actually working to construct it, and this is in fact where the deepest, most nuanced and most challenging critiques are to be found. This brings us to a fourth guiding principle of this study, which has been to embrace complexity. This has meant drawing from practices of critical scholarship that move beyond binaries, lean into contradiction, avoid clear-cut narratives and work to reveal the shades of gray in a given scenario, with the aim of generating – and, critically, co-generating with those on the front lines of struggle – research that is rigorous, relevant and contributive toward transformational knowledge.

529827-L-bw-Schiavoni
Processed on: 15-3-2019

1.2 Confronting, contesting and transforming power through the construction of food sovereignty: context and problematique

While concerned with food sovereignty pursuits writ large, this work draws from the case of Venezuela, which is home to one of the longest-running national-level experiments in food sovereignty construction since the start of its political process known as the Bolivarian Revolution in 1999. At first glance, this might appear to be a study of food sovereignty and the state. This is only partly the case, however. While recognition of food sovereignty by the state and its adoption into state policy have been among the central demands of food sovereignty movements since their inception, never were these the end goals. That is, while food sovereignty is a policy aspiration for many social movements, it is not *reduced* to a policy aspiration, but rather policy is seen as one means to an end toward a shared vision of social and ecological transformation (*see*, e.g., Claeys 2015), as exemplified in the Declaration of Nyéléni. The adoption of food sovereignty into state policy, then, far from a surrendering of the task of food sovereignty construction to the state, is perhaps best understood as shifting efforts toward food sovereignty into a new and contested terrain. A question of interest, particularly once food sovereignty is adopted into state policy, thus becomes *how are movements navigating this terrain*, including in their interactions with state actors? This question gets to the heart of this study and has inspired the research questions described below.

In framing the above question as such, an intention is to try to help nudge the literature on national-level food sovereignty efforts away from what has thus far been a largely state-centric emphasis. That is, once food sovereignty is adopted into state policy in a given location, we start seeing studies framed around questions such as "Can the state create campesinos?" (Page 2010) that arguably ascribe a greater prominence to the state in the construction of food sovereignty than is due, as elaborated upon in Chapter 2. The urge to focus on the state is understandable given that official state engagement with food sovereignty at the policy level is still the exception to the norm, meriting attention and examination if and when it does occur (Desmarais et al. 2017, Wittman 2015, Godek 2015). And the state is indeed critical to look at and engage with if food sovereignty is to move beyond isolated pockets of change, as many have pointed out.

529827-L-bw-Schiavoni
Processed on: 15-3-2019

However, it is important not to lose sight that at its essence, food sovereignty is about a deepening/radicalization of citizen participation in and control over the agrifood system and about fundamental shifts in power (Wittman 2015, Menser 2014, Roman-Alcalá 2016, Holt-Giménez and Shattuck 2011). While state discourses, policies and programs can support such transformation, mobilization "from below" is an essential, or arguably *the* essential, element. To center one's lens too firmly upon the state is thus to miss the fuller picture, for it may well be outside the official institutions of the state – or at the margins of state and society – where in fact the deepest advances toward food sovereignty are happening in a given context. This is where an interactive lens focused on state-society relations is one of several critical lenses for understanding food sovereignty efforts, as elaborated upon in the chapters to follow.

At this point it bears discussing *why Venezuela* out of a number of other possible national-level food sovereignty experiments to draw from. Most fundamentally, I narrowed in on Venezuela out of a conviction that there was an important story, or multiple stories, there yet to be told. This realization was first sparked in 2006 after traveling to Caracas to attend the World Social Forum on behalf of the U.S.-based NGO I was working for at the time. Far more illuminating than the official sessions of the Forum were my informal chats with grassroots activists from throughout the country, who spoke animatedly about how social movements had managed to get food sovereignty onto the agenda of the state and how they were working to leverage this to advance local grassroots agendas while simultaneously feeding into a broader national effort toward food sovereignty, in coordination with the government. Movements appeared focused on proactive agenda setting toward food sovereignty as opposed to putting out fires, as had largely been my experience in the U.S. and in global policy spaces. However partial, messy and still nascent these efforts were, the sense of possibility and empowerment that many grassroots movements seemed to feel – and their energy, enthusiasm and momentum towards food sovereignty – were palpable. While food sovereignty was largely regarded as aspirational among movements in the other settings I had witnessed, here its construction was being actively worked toward, supported in part by an enabling policy environment.

What I had witnessed in Venezuela appeared to hold important insights into what Gibson-Graham (2006: xxvii) have described as the *politics of possibility* involving "the everyday temporality of change and the vision of

529827-L-bw-Schiavoni
Processed on: 15-3-2019

transformation as a continual struggle to change subjects, places, and conditions of life under inherited circumstances of difficulty and uncertainty". There seemed much to be gleaned from this national-level experiment in food sovereignty construction, both from its advances and set-backs, and yet, as far as I could see, it was hardly being discussed in the circles I was involved in. I grew increasingly aware of what appeared to be a general discomfort and ambivalence regarding Venezuela among U.S. progressives, including within the NGO I worked for, where I would eventually be asked to distance my work on Venezuela from my work for the organization (helping to inspire this PhD pursuit). Such sentiments toward Venezuela and its Bolivarian Revolution, which I have similarly encountered in progressive academic circles, are captured well by Smucker (2017: 133) in his activist handbook *Hegemony How-To: A Roadmap for Radicals*:

> Most of us accept that some level of coercion is necessary in the realm of collective action and politics, and we also make distinctions between levels and kinds of coercion. […] Yet lack of clarity and nuance on such questions often results in an ambiguous kind of gravitational force that pulls our energy and emphasis towards certain forms of collective action and away from others. This "gravity" operates in the service of a moralizing narrative. It might help to explain why, for example, so many young radicals in the United States love to talk about the Zapatistas in Mexico or the horizontally organized recuperated factory movement in Argentina, but are silent about the Chavistas in Venezuela. Is it not because the latter have succeeded in winning some level—however limited a degree—of state power, while the former have appeared to stay neatly outside of the "corrupt system"?

What Smucker's insights drive home for me is that the reasons some prefer not to engage with Venezuela are the very reasons why we *ought to* engage with Venezuela, including as related to food sovereignty construction. If food sovereignty is to move from vision to reality, reaching a significant scale and societal impact, as many are working towards, then we must be ready to confront uncomfortable issues of power. If we aspire to gain some degree of access within the state, then we must be prepared for if and when we achieve as much and the state shifts "from simply an enemy to something more complicated" (Wolford and French 2016: 5).[1] This

[1] Thanks to Ana Felicien for her part in crystalizing these thoughts in one of our late-night writing sessions.

is precisely what food sovereignty movements in Venezuela have been grappling with for the past nearly two decades, providing a wealth of experience for those interested in food sovereignty construction to be able to learn from.

If these efforts are to be investigated, however, the above-mentioned importance of applying an interactive lens to state-society relations cannot be overstated. While the attempted transformation of the state through the Bolivarian Revolution is part of what makes Venezuela so interesting and instructive to look at, a state-centered focus risks missing the movements that have been the main drivers of food sovereignty efforts in Venezuela both before and during the Bolivarian Revolution, and missing the spaces and processes, both in the realm of everyday life and at the level of grassroots organizing, where some of the richest insights are to be gleaned. The limited literature existing on food sovereignty efforts in Venezuela to date, however, for the most part reflects the state-centric trend mentioned above (e.g., Page 2010, Clark 2010, Kappeler 2013, Enríquez and Newman 2016, Purcell 2017). As explored in the following chapter, this has stymied the analysis by underplaying key actors outside of the state. Regarding this phenomenon, a Venezuelan grassroots food sovereignty activist commented to me, “You can say anything you want about us, but don’t say we don’t exist”. This activist is a vocal critic of many of the government’s food and agricultural policies and practices at the same time that she is an adamant defender of the Bolivarian Revolution, and oftentimes, of the Bolivarian government. She, like many others, sees the government as holding a critical space within the state by popular mandate, a space intended to be transformed over time through citizen mobilization, and it is within these broader efforts toward transformation that she sees her food sovereignty activism embedded. Indeed, the diversity of grassroots movements involved in food sovereignty efforts in Venezuela and their complex relationships with both the government and the state defy any simplistic narratives, and this is precisely what makes their voices so essential. Among the goals of this work has been to bring these key perspectives to light, toward richer analysis.

What has been described up to this point captures, in broad brushstrokes, what led me to this investigation and what I indeed went on to examine. The context of the research grew ever more fascinating and complex over the course of this study, however, as Venezuela’s food system appeared to unravel before my eyes. Moderate shortages of key staple

foods and other essential items, seen at other moments both before and during the Bolivarian Revolution, gave way to sustained, intensified shortages against a backdrop of growing economic instability, the reverberations of which were felt, and continue to be felt, throughout society. Such events have vividly exposed the cracks in the existing system and have underscored both the enormity and the urgency of the task of food sovereignty construction, as well as the limitations of efforts to date. To give an indication of how rapidly these events transpired, as I prepared my research design in 2015, Venezuela had just been recognized for another consecutive year by the UN Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) for its advances against hunger, including having surpassed the first Millennium Development Goal (of halving hunger and poverty) ahead of time (FAO 2015, Koerner 2015). The most widely discussed food-related public health concerns at that time were issues of overconsumption and cardiovascular disease, as the leading cause of death in the country (World Health Organization 2018).[2] While the shortages were beginning to intensify at this time, the overall food situation of the country was marked by an abundance, not lack, of calories.[3]

The rapid transition that Venezuela's food situation has undergone in the past few years is well captured in an image seared in my memory, if not my memory card. As part of a public health campaign entitled "*¡Agarra dato, come sano!*" (roughly, "Get on it, eat healthy!") initiated in 2014 by the Instituto Nacional de Nutrición (National Nutrition Institute, INN) in the face of rising rates of diet-related health problems, a series of billboards appeared in public spaces throughout Caracas in which junk foods such as fries, burgers and soft drinks were likened to time bombs and other types of explosives. On one such billboard likening the average amount of sugar in a can of soft drink a to a grenade, graffitied over the sugar were the words "*¡NO HAY!*" ("THERE'S NONE!"). This was in the Plaza

[2] Approximately 25 percent of the adult population was characterized as obese at this time (World Health Organization 2018) and nearly 40 percent of the population aged 7 to 40 was characterized as overweight or obese as of the most recent national study conducted by Venezuela's National Institute of Nutrition (Instituto Nacional de Nutrición 2013).

[3] It is critical to note, however, that caloric intake is not to be equated with being well nourished, as widely documented and as recognized by Venezuela's National Institute of Nutrition (Instituto Nacional de Nutrición 2013).

Venezuela metro station in early 2016, during what could be considered the height of the food shortages (before any widespread responses had kicked in), in which sugar was among the products missing from supermarket shelves, even as soft drinks and other sugary beverages in fact continued to abound. This image stood out to me for the multiple layers of complexity surrounding agrifood politics in present-day Venezuela that it conveyed. It also reinforced the importance of having sufficiently nuanced analytical tools and sufficiently flexible research methods in order to capture the events that were dynamically unfolding over the course of the investigation, as will be described next.

1.3 Research objectives

This study has two broad primary objectives, already alluded to above. The first is to address some of the above-described shortcomings of the food sovereignty literature to date by offering an analytical framework to support more effective empirical research into food sovereignty construction. Such is a framework for studying food sovereignty activism and practice that is directly informed by food sovereignty activism and practice, thus intended to capture some of the nuances that tend to be missed. In doing so, I hope to add to the growing but still limited analytical toolbox available to researchers of food sovereignty. This involves a call to move from analysis of food sovereignty toward analysis of *efforts toward food sovereignty*, as elaborated upon in Chapter 2. More specifically, I hope to advance understandings of and encourage further research into the ways in which food sovereignty construction is:

- embedded in history and unfolding through time;
- conditioned by competing paradigms and approaches that shape the very meanings of food sovereignty and the strategies toward building it; and
- shaped by the dynamic interactions of state and societal forces and the relations of capital therein

The second main objective is to draw insights from the largely untapped wealth of empirical material offered by Venezuela's longstanding experiment in food sovereignty in order to contribute to both broader theoretical understandings of food sovereignty and practical pursuits toward it. In particular, I aim to shed light into the *how* of food sovereignty

construction – that is, how is it being advanced, constrained and/or blocked? And what lessons can be drawn from this toward a further deepening of food sovereignty pursuits both within Venezuela and beyond?

1.4 Research questions

The central research question that has guided this study is:

How are state and societal actors interacting over time to shape the construction of food sovereignty in Venezuela in the context of competing approaches to and paradigms of food system transformation?

This main research question has been disaggregated into three sub-questions. For each area of food sovereignty construction (which in this study is anchored on the *6 pillars of food sovereignty* articulated by transnational social movements – see Chapter 2), I have asked:

- What is the main state of affairs, including key challenges, at this current conjuncture and how did it come to be that way?
- What are the competing paradigms and approaches shaping the construction of food sovereignty?
- How do state and societal actors interact in shaping (including facilitating, constraining and/or blocking) efforts toward food sovereignty?

1.5 Research design

1.5.1 Overview

Building from the research questions, the research design reflects the qualitative nature of this study, allowing for research that is "fluid, evolving and dynamic" (Corbin and Strauss 2008: 13); that stresses the social construction of reality (Denzin and Lincoln 2003); and that examines complex social phenomena in ways that are contextual, emergent and interpretive (Rossman and Rallis 2003). The main unit of enquiry for this study is political processes – or the contentious processes through which power is negotiated – in and in relation to the construction of food sovereignty. I

529827-L-bw-Schiavoni
Processed on: 15-3-2019 PDF page: 32

have studied these political processes principally at the national level in Venezuela, but with an appreciation of the multi-scalar nature of food sovereignty, recognizing the ways in which both global and local processes condition what is possible nationally, and vice versa (Iles and Montenegro 2014, Iles and Montenegro de Wit 2015). Studying the political construction of food sovereignty at the national level has thus required an understanding of both macro-level international political economic processes, as well as what happens on the ground, or the micro level. This is not an either/or scenario, but rather has involved both attention to broader global patterns (e.g., capital accumulation, colonization and political movements) and "careful attention to local contexts [and] local fields of power" (Roseberry (1991: 353).

While taking place in the discrete time period of 2015-2018, the inspiration for this study traces date back to my first visit to Venezuela in 2006. From that time, I went on to co-organize a number of exchanges among Venezuelan and U.S. food sovereignty activists and scholars; conduct independent investigation on food sovereignty efforts in Venezuela (e.g., Schiavoni and Camacaro 2009); and take part in Venezuela solidarity efforts in New York City. Such activities afforded me relationships with key actors involved in food sovereignty construction there, who, as described further on, would play an essential role in this study. My past experience in Venezuela also afforded me a certain level of *sensitivity* described by Corbin and Strauss (2008) as essential to qualitative research. They explain: "Sensitivity stands in contrast to objectivity," adding that, "It requires that a researcher put him- or herself into the research. Sensitivity means having insight, being tuned in to, being able to pick up on relevant issues, events, and happenings in data. It means being able to present the view of participants and taking the role of the other through immersion in data" (Corbin and Strauss 2008: 32).

Coming to this research as neither quite an "insider" nor "outsider", but with a foot in both positions, having intently followed food sovereignty efforts in Venezuela for more than a decade while remaining somewhat removed from them, has enabled me to make certain observations, ask certain questions and connect certain dots from a unique vantagepoint. Such a vantagepoint has deeply influenced the analytical framework guiding this study, a

historical, relational and interactive (HRI) framework, in which food sovereignty construction is approached as "a historically embedded, continually

evolving set of processes that are interactively shaped by state and societal forces, reflecting competing paradigms and approaches" (see Chapter 2). This analytical framework, detailed in the next chapter, has guided the overall design of the study.

1.5.2 Data sources

Mason (2002: 53) makes a distinction between collecting and generating data, suggesting that the latter is more accurate framing for qualitative research in that "as a researcher, you do not simply work out where to find data which already exist in a collectable state", but rather "you work out how best you can generate data from your chosen data sources". Attention to data sources is therefore an important step in carrying out methods. Following the categories suggested by Mason, the data sources for this study have included:

People (as individuals, groups, or collectives)**:** People with whom I engaged both through interviews and informal chats as a participant observer included social movement activists and community-based activists involved in food sovereignty efforts (both those in leadership positions as well as rank and file members); government officials (ranging from high-ranking officials such as the Minister of Urban Agriculture and the Vice Minister of Health to those at the interface with communities); urban and rural farmers and other food providers; members of my household, neighbors, shopkeepers and street vendors in the community where I resided; and researchers, journalists, and others working on various angles of agrifood issues.

Organizations, institutions and entities: These included government agencies involved in agrifood issues (including in the areas of agriculture, nutrition, trade, industry and environment); citizen-led social institutions such as communal councils and *comunas* (described further on); social movements including peasant, agroecology, anti-GMO and urban food and farming movements; research and educational institutions; private sector associations; and national citizen bodies such as the Presidential Council of Comunas and the National Constituent Assembly.

Texts (published and unpublished sources, including virtual ones): Secondary data in the form of texts included popular and scholarly writing on Venezuelan agrifood politics; historical texts such as those from domestic and international newspaper archives and government archives;

529827-L-bw-Schiavoni
Processed on: 15-3-2019

government, civil society, academic and private sector websites, as well as relevant web material of the UN, World Bank, and other international agencies; newspapers; relevant pieces of legislation; government plans, proposals, and educational/outreach materials; and civil society plans, proposals, declarations, educational/outreach materials, email list communications and meeting minutes.

Settings and environments (material, visual/sensory and virtual): These included open-air markets; community feeding and food distribution sites; supermarkets; urban agriculture sites; rural cooperatives, state agricultural enterprises, and other sites of food production and provisioning. As social media also serves as an important virtual setting for a number of both grassroots and government-supported food sovereignty efforts, I followed the Facebook pages of several of these, drawing from them as a form of secondary data. I also joined an email listserv of one of the grassroots groups I was involved with as a participant observer (the Feria Conuquera), which enabled me to track activities and follow internal dialogue and debate.

Objects, artefacts, and media products: These included TV news programs, which are a popular news source in Venezuela; billboards (such as those of the above-mentioned *¡Agarra dato, come sano!* nutrition campaign); and murals and graffiti related to the theme of food sovereignty, as a popular form of political expression in Venezuela.

Events and happenings: These included a wide range of social movement gatherings; meetings and events sponsored by various government agencies; gatherings and talks in academic settings; community gatherings, both planned and spontaneous; farmer-to-farmer exchanges; political rallies; and an activity organized by representatives of the agribusiness sector and the political opposition to the government.

1.5.3 Data collection methods

As pointed out by Rossman and Rallis (2003), a hallmark of qualitative research is use of multiple methods, or what Denzin and Lincoln (2005: 4) characterize as "a wide range of interconnected interpretive practices". Mason (2002: 52) adds that "the term method in qualitative research is generally meant to imply more than a practical technique or procedure […]. It also implies a data generation process involving activities that are intellectual, analytical, and interpretive". Here I will give a brief overview

of the main methods employed in this study, which are semi-structured interview; observation and participant observation; review of secondary data; and, to a lesser degree, focus group discussions, which were employed on several occasions.

Interviews: Interviews were conducted with key informants who were purposively sampled based on their involvement in/relationships to processes of food sovereignty construction. An initial list of key informants comprised of both state and societal actors was developed ahead of the fieldwork based on pre-existing relationships. Additional interviewees were identified through snowball sampling, following referrals from these initial interviewees and through other key contacts. Priority was given to interviewing government officials, as I had less access to them on a regular basis compared to the social movement activists and community activists with whom I interacted more regularly through participant observation. In my interviews of social actors, I prioritized leaders and elders for their historical memory, while hearing from rank and file members via participant observation and focus groups. Interviews were open-ended and semi-structured to allow for in-depth exchanges in such a way that built upon the situated and contextual knowledge and experience of the interviewees (Mason 2002). These were generally individual interviews but in a limited number of cases, two to four people were interviewed together. All interviews were conducted in Spanish, and, pending consent of the interviewees, were recorded via audio recorder. Interviewees received an overview of the research beforehand, in the form of a two-page research summary in Spanish, which was also reiterated verbally, and confirmed their consent to participate prior to the interview and their consent (or not) to be quoted following the interview. Fifty key informants were interviewed for this study. In four cases, two or more people were interviewed together and seven people were interviewed more than once, with 54 interviews conducted in total. With the exception of a few interviews with high-profile government officials, interviewees have been kept anonymous to protect their privacy.

Focus group discussion: In addition to the interviews, three focus group discussions (FGDs) were carried out with groups of 10-15 people each. While FGD was not anticipated as a main form of data collection, it had been built into the research design to be employed as the opportunity presented itself, such as at social movement gatherings and during visits to community food initiatives. These were informal and discussion-based,

attempting to draw out the insights of participants. As with the interviews, these were conducted in Spanish and audio recorded, upon consent of participants. One of the benefits of the FGDs was to hear the perspectives of a variety of rank and file participants of social movements and community food initiatives, in addition to hearing from leadership via interviews. I attempted to pay attention to who was speaking more and less in each FGD and to ask questions aimed at bringing some of the quieter participants more into the discussions. I found the few FGDs I held to be helpful in getting a well-rounded sense of how certain initiatives operated by hearing from those who performed different roles (e.g., in the case of a food distribution effort), while I found them less helpful in drawing out critical perspectives as compared to one-on-one and small group interviews and conversations.

Observation and Participant Observation: I employed both non-obtrusive forms of observation (e.g., observing inventories and prices at grocery stores and on the street) as well as a variety of forms of participant observation. Regarding the latter, Tables 1.1, 1.2 and 1.3 provide overviews of three tiers of participant observation. The first tier is participant observation in the form of being part of a household in the working-class community of El Valle, Caracas, described in the fieldwork overview and in Box 1.1. The second tier is participant observation as an engaged researcher in collaboration with social movements. The third tier consists of organized events and site visits spanning twelve states. The organized events were activities that I simply attended as a participant (e.g. conferences, workshops, rallies), sometimes as a silent observer and other times as more of an active participant, for instance, taking part in break-out group discussions. The site visits were one-time visits to sites of food production and distribution that I either arranged myself or were arranged for me by one of my contacts. While participant observation had been built into the research design as one of the primary data collection methods, it took on an increased level of importance in this study over the course of the fieldwork, as described next in the fieldwork overview. Aside from cases in which it was clearly not ethically necessary (e.g., walking through supermarkets, attending public events), I made my presence as a (participant) observer known to those present. In some cases, I was invited to internal events of social movements or community groups through personal contacts, but my participation was contingent upon making an initial presentation on my research to the group and seeking group consent for

my participation. A key tool in the observation was note-taking, both jotting down handwritten notes in a notebook carried with me at all times and the keeping of a daily fieldwork journal in the form of a google document.

Review of secondary data: Secondary data was used to complement primary data in four main ways. First, it was used to contextualize the current state of affairs with respect to food sovereignty construction in Venezuela in terms of production, distribution, health statistics, etc. Such information was gathered from government websites and reports (including those of the National Nutrition Institute, the Ministry of Health, and the agricultural ministries) and from a variety of UN agencies, such as the Food and Agriculture Organization and the World Health Organization. Some World Bank data was also used, particularly in regard to urban and rural demographics. Information gathered from these various sources was triangulated via interviews and observation. Second, review of historical texts was used to get a sense of the ways in which current trends are connected to historical ones. These included archives of Venezuelan newspapers as well as those of the *New York Times*; a variety of books and articles on the history of food and agriculture in Venezuela; and the text of past laws. Third, recent texts were used to inventory and analyze dominant narratives surrounding agrifood politics in Venezuela, drawn from sources including international media outlets, thinktanks such as Transnational Institute (TNI) the North American Congress on Latin America (NACLA) and scholarly forums, such as a special forum on Venezuela in the Fall 2017 issue of *LASA Forum*. Lastly, recent texts were also used to explore the ways in which food sovereignty is being constructed through discourse, looking at key documents coming from both state and society in Venezuela, with an eye to competing paradigms and approaches. These texts included texts of current laws (e.g., the 2017 Law of CLAPs); declarations, social media posts and press releases by social movements, private sector agricultural federations and government ministries; and speeches by the president and other public figures.

529827-L-bw-Schiavoni
Processed on: 15-3-2019 PDF page: 38

Table 1.1

Participant observation, tier 1: everyday life in El Valle, Caracas	
Activities	**General frequency**
Purchasing from and interacting with local street vendors	Daily to every other day
Grocery shopping at supermarket	Weekly to biweekly
Shopping at farmers markets and other open-air markets	Once to twice weekly
Preparing fresh corn dough by cooking and hand-grinding corn	Once to several times monthly
Attending government-sponsored sardine caravan and/or preparing sardines brought home by hosts	Monthly
Receiving CLAP food distribution	Monthly
Attending community gatherings (e.g., community "*sancochos*" (gatherings around a big pot of stew called *sancocho*); political rallies; cultural events; and community wellness events	Once or more weekly
Tending to windowsill garden	Daily to every other day
Sharing and exchanging food and food-related tips with neighbors	Once to several times weekly

529827-L-bw-Schiavoni
Processed on: 15-3-2019

Table 1.2

Participant observation, tier 2: engaged research with social movements	
Movement/Initiative	**Duration and nature of engagement**
Semillas del Pueblo (Seeds of the People)	Over the entirety of the fieldwork period, regularly attended internal and public meetings/activities (e.g., seed multiplication workshops; planning meetings for the Popular Seed Plan; public events with the Vice President and Minister of Urban Agriculture) in the capital district and the states of Vargas, Miranda, Yaracuy, Anzoátegui and Mérida. Among various joint projects, collaborated on the publication of an academic article, forming Chapter 4 of this dissertation (*also see* Box 1.2).
Feria Conuquera (Agroecological Fair)	Over the entirety of the fieldwork period, attended monthly fairs, taking part in activities and chatting with participants, as well as purchasing goods for my household; attended several internal meetings; joined internal email listerv; attended 3 horizontal farmer-to-farmer exchanges in the capital district and in peri-urban zones of the states of Vargas and Miranda.
Plan Pueblo a Pueblo (People to People Plan)	In April 2016, spent a week shadowing the coordinating team of the Plan Pueblo a Pueblo producer-consumer initiative in the states of Lara and Táchira. Met with growers; witnessed the growing, harvesting and transport of goods; conversed with those involved in both production and distribution components. Also visited food distributions and attended organizing meetings in three urban *comunas* in Caracas from April-May 2016. Remained in regular communication with the Pueblo a Pueblo coordination team over the remainder of the fieldwork period.
Peasant sector representatives of the National Constituent Assembly	In November and December of 2017, served as an advisor to a group of peasant leaders who had been elected to serve as members of a National Constituent Assembly established in July 2017. This team was charged with a number of policy-oriented tasks, including the drafting of new legislation with input from their

	constituencies. Observed and made interventions, including one formal presentation, in weekly internal meetings.
(Instituto Universitario Latinoamericano de Agroecología Paulo Freire (Paulo Freire Latin American University Institute of Agroecology, IALA)	During a month of exploratory fieldwork in July 2015, spent one week at this institute jointly founded by the Via Campesina global peasant movement, the Landless Workers Movement (MST) of Brazil and the Venezuelan government. Shadowed its then-director in daily activities; spoke with students and staff; observed classes and production on premises; observed a community workshop organized by students; participated in visits to surrounding local farms; met with '*maestros pueblos*' (producers recognized for their agroecological expertise); spoke on student-run radio program.

529827-L-bw-Schiavoni
Processed on: 15-3-2019

Table 1.3

Participant observation, tier 3: site visits & attendance of organized events			
Type of event	**No. attended**	**Type of site**	**No. visited**
Agroecology conference	2	Farm (rural, urban, periurban)	21
Urban agriculture conference	1	Fundo (cooperative on land recovered via agrarian reform process)	2
Food sovereignty research conference	1	Comuna	6
Nutrition workshop	3	School food distribution site	1
Gardening workshop	2	School garden	1
Skills sharing workshop (other)	4	Food distribution to emergency shelters (joined drop-offs by truck)	1
Public talk/workshop	8	CLAP distribution[1]	1
Academic talk/workshop	6	CLAP organizing meeting	2
Political rally/mobilization	3	Agricultural school	1
Horizontal learning exchange	6	Alternative food distribution	21
Agricultural fair/festival	20	Farm equipment distribution center	1
Community gatherings and organized activities[2]	75+	Farm supply distribution center	1

[1] This was a CLAP distribution (in the *parroquia* (parish) of Antímano, Caracas) where I spent a day officially involved as a participant observer, as opposed to the additional CLAP distributions I informally accompanied my hosts to in El Valle, mentioned in Table 1.1 (an overview of CLAPs is provided in Chapter 3).

[2] These include community gatherings in El Valle, also mentioned in Table 1.1.

1.5.4 Fieldwork overview

The main phase of fieldwork in Venezuela took place over the two-year period of March 2016 through February 2018, preceded by an initial month of exploratory fieldwork in July 2015 to inform the research design. A total of twenty months were spent in the field. While the fieldwork involved diverse components, three main anchors, or bases, can be identified: 1) my home base in the community of El Valle in Caracas; 2) my institutional base at Venezuela's top national research institute, el Instituto Venezolano de Investigaciones Científicas (the Venezuelan Institute of Scientific Investigation, el IVIC) and 3) my movement base with the Semillas de Pueblo, or Seeds of the People, movement.

El Valle is one of twenty-two *parroquias*, or parishes, in Caracas' capital district, el Distrito Capital. Comprised of a combination of high- and mid-rise apartment complexes and smaller buildings stacked upon a hillside, it is considered a *barrio* or *zona popular* (popular zone) for the demographics of its working-class urban poor residents. Such communities have long formed the base of the Bolivarian Revolution, and of the popular uprisings that came before it. El Valle is no exception, described as "one of the most fighting (*luchadora*) parishes of Caracas" (Cuárez 2017, translated) for its reputation as a hotbed of political activity. An apartment in a mid-rise complex near the main commercial center and metro stop of El Valle was my home base for the duration of the fieldwork. There I lived with a middle-aged couple and their young niece. The couple are well-respected community organizers and activists, and one works for the government of the capital district monitoring its school meals program. Thus, in addition to being my hosts, they also served as key informants and helped make a number of research connections for me, such as witnessing a food distribution for school feeding programs and attending a gathering of a local community feeding initiative, among others. I had first met these friends in 2006 and connected with them on each of my subsequent visits to Venezuela, including living with them during prior fieldwork in 2013. While I had chosen this location mainly for the familiarity I had with both the community and my hosts and for its proximity to public transportation, life in El Valle would come to form a critical component of my participant observation, as discussed further in Box 1.1.

529827-L-bw-Schiavoni
Processed on: 15-3-2019

Box 1.1

Everyday life in El Valle

In his overview of qualitative research methods, Patton (2002: 301-302) emphasizes the importance of "observing informal interactions and unplanned activities" as well as the need to employ both creativity and flexibility, including "using every part of oneself to experience and understand what is happening". These insights would prove particularly pertinent when I arrived to my homestay in El Valle in March 2016, encountering a situation of intensifying shortages of primary food goods; shortages of both water and electricity due to the worst drought the country had experienced in half a century, induced by El Niño; and rising rates of inflation and shortages of currency. I would quickly find that activities I had taken for granted during my last fieldwork stay in 2013, and even during my brief pre-fieldwork visit in 2015—e.g., accessing currency, going to the supermarket, assisting with meal preparation—took on new levels of complication and involvement. As the household I was part of was actively grappling with these issues as a matter of survival, as was everyone else around us, being part of the household and community meant my grappling with them as well. Appreciating the opportunity for a direct first-hand glimpse into how communities were responding to the shortages and other challenges of the moment, I embraced the experience. I went on scavenger hunts to the supermarket to see what could be found there, marveling at the abundance of soft drinks and cereals yet lack of milk powder, corn flour and cooking oil. I learned how to prepare fresh corn dough (*masa*) in the absence of Venezuela's top staple food, precooked corn flour, by cleaning, boiling and grinding whole corn kernels and came to appreciate what an effective form of stress relief using a hand grinder can be. I learned how to descale, gut and fillet sardines, which remained an affordable and abundant protein source through ubiquitous government-sponsored "sardine caravans". I waited (and waited) in lines at markets, banks, bakeries and pharmacies. I collected and traded seeds and plant clippings with the neighbors and tended to our windowsill garden. I spent an afternoon searching for birthday cake ingredients, ultimately resorting to the *bachaqueros* (vendors in the illicit "parallel market"), which I otherwise sought to avoid. I loaded up on fresh produce that remained abundant in open-air markets, and helped with the washing, seeding, peeling and chopping involved. Oftentimes as I engaged in these activities, one of my hosts, Johnny Moreno, would joke that it was "*para la tesis*", "for the thesis", which in fact could not have been more accurate.

El IVIC is outside of the official bounds of the capital district, but part of the greater Caracas metropolitan region in the state of Miranda. A friend and colleague in the Laboratory of Ecosystems and Global Change of el IVIC's Ecology Center arranged for me to be a guest researcher there for the duration of my fieldwork, providing me with an institutional base. As guest researcher, I had full autonomy over my work while benefiting from feedback and exchange with a bright team of researchers who were also involved in agrifood issues. Such exchange took place through both informal chats and more formal seminars. I formally presented my work on several occasions, including at the very start and very end of the fieldwork period. One researcher there, Ana Felicien, the friend who had originally arranged for my stay, would become a very close collaborator. I also collaborated with others in the Laboratory on a project on Indigenous farming systems together with students from Universidad Nacional Experimental Indígena del Tauca, the National Experimental Indigenous University of Tauca in the Amazon region, as well as serving on the thesis jury for one of the students.

Semillas del Pueblo, or Seeds of the People, is a grassroots movement that initially came together in 2012 under the banner of Venezuela Libre de Transgénicos, or GMO-Free Venezuela, around the creation of a new national Seed Law, as described in detail in Chapter 4. This movement had caught my attention for the diversity of groups involved, which spanned the urban-rural divide as well as spanning a variety of political tendencies; its nuanced positioning in relationship to the government; its deeply creative, participatory and militant forms of mobilization; and ultimately, for its major success in bringing about the passage of an internationally-recognized progressive new Seed Law through a bottom-up policy-making process. My fieldwork started several months after the Law's passage, at which time the focus had shifted to defending and implementing the Law. As I already had pre-established relationships with several of the individuals involved, I was able to embed myself in this movement for the duration of the fieldwork, including accompanying them for activities in the countryside in two different states (Anzoátegui and Mérida) as well as a wide variety of meetings and events, both public and internal, in and around Caracas. Further details on the partnership with Semillas del Pueblo are provided in Box 1.2.

529827-L-bw-Schiavoni
Processed on: 15-3-2019

Box 1.2

Engaged movement scholarship with Semillas del Pueblo

Spending the duration of my fieldwork experience embedded in the grassroots movement Semillas del Pueblo (Seeds of the People) arguably embodies what Brem-Wilson (2014: 112-113) describes as "engaged, participatory movement scholarship", reflecting "a steady increase, with periodic explosions, in the number of social movement scholars advocating the integration of social movements' interests and knowledge into academic processes of knowledge production". While this is still a relatively new and emergent area taking on a variety of different forms, Brem Wilson (2014) helpfully lays out four guiding principles based on his research experience with the peasant movement La Via Campesina that resonate with my experience with Semillas del Pueblo:

Active engagement and identification: Referring to self-identification of the researcher with the movement in a relationship of solidarity, this had already been established through my years as an ally to food sovereignty movements in Venezuela, and to the movement around the Seed Law in particular, including publicizing its efforts to an international audience (e.g., Camacaro, Mills and Schiavoni 2015a, 2015b).

Theoretical openness/suspension: While Brem-Wilson (2014: 120) describes this as "coming to the movement and its field without any prior theoretical framework and subsequently theorising from the movement's positionality", my process was rather more iterative, as I had developed a framework informed by past experience in the field in dialogue with movements (detailed in Chapter 2) during my dissertation design phase that I then shared with members of Semillas del Pueblo and sought their feedback on over the course of the fieldwork. This framework, which was positively received, served as a starting point in our collective analysis, while new elements were brought in to address gaps and weaknesses as identified (see Prologue to Chapter 4).

Dialogue and reciprocity: Dialogue and reciprocity were key to avoiding extractive forms of scholarship that tax social movements more than benefit them and to building a mutually beneficial partnership that was strengthened over time. Acts of reciprocity on my part included testifying in support of the Seed Law at a public hearing at the request of the movement; heading up an international sign-on letter in support of the Law; helping to build additional international linkages; and some material support such as facilitating the procurement of equipment.

Reflexivity: Reflexivity involved not only being mindful of my power and privilege and of my particular vantage point, but also taking seriously my role as ally and trying not to overstep the bounds associated with that role. For instance, any time I received an international query about the Seed Law or was invited to speak about it or write about it, I was upfront about my role as an ally and deferred to those directly involved in the movement, playing a facilitating role as requested.

The fieldwork took place at a particularly dynamic time, against a backdrop of rapidly changing events, many of which had direct bearing on the research, requiring a mix of flexibility, creativity and caution. In particular, in the face of rapidly deteriorating economic conditions, a series of violent anti-government protests known as *guarimbas* broke out in parts of Caracas and other areas of the country over much of 2017, as described in Chapter 3. Such conditions gave me a taste of "living through a period of political turmoil in the country where the [field]work is being done" (Howell 2007: 242). As described by Howell (2007: 242), this phenomenon, not uncommon in fieldwork, will "often involve several categories of problems at the same time". This was indeed the case, for although the protests were in isolated pockets of the city and thus mostly possible to avoid, events associated with them such as roadblocks had ripple effects including transportation shut-downs, closures of schools, workplaces and public establishments; cancellation of activities; and (further) disruptions in the flow of goods and delivery of services. During this period, basic activities, like traveling from one part of the city to another to attend an event or conduct an interview, became far more complicated. For those with whom I was living and working, such challenges were many times magnified as they attempted to go about daily life.

A first consideration under such circumstances was issues of safety. This was not necessarily a straightforward matter, however, for as Nordstrom (2007: 251) points out, "On entering the field, we enter the domain of lived experience. What is 'safe' is a study in smoke and mirrors". For instance, as the international mainstream media likened Caracas to a warzone and the U.S. State Department issued an alarming advisory against travel to Venezuela and authorized the voluntary departure of U.S. government employees from the U.S. Embassy in Caracas, I felt as if I were living in a parallel universe in El Valle, where children were out playing and the streets were bustling as usual. This is not to say, however, that the effects of the *guarimbas* were not felt in El Valle. Roadblocks in other parts of the city and associated transportation shut-downs kept many home from work and school (making me an impromptu caretaker for my friends' niece on more than one occasion) and made it harder for people to get around to access goods, further exacerbating the effects of already-ongoing shortages. Furthermore, a night of looting and violence in April 2017 shook the relative peace and calmness of El Valle. With the exception

529827-L-bw-Schiavoni
Processed on: 15-3-2019

of that night, however, I felt an average level of safety in my immediate surroundings. Nevertheless, I took a number of extra precautions, in line with Sluka's (2007: 268) reflection that that "One need not be paranoid about the dangers involved in doing research in violent social contexts, but a good dose of realistic appreciation goes a long way". Such precautions involved opting out of certain activities, such as a large public event that I otherwise would have attended (instead preparing dinner for my hosts to arrive home to afterwards, in a small act of solidarity); largely (although not entirely) avoiding parts of the city where *guarimbas* were known to be taking place; and avoiding being out late unaccompanied.

Sluka (2007: 269) adds, critically, that conflicts, hazards and dangers in fieldwork are to be approached as "methodological issues in their own right". This resonates very much with my own experience, in that the circumstances I encountered in 2017 led to at least three adjustments with methodological implications. First, while I had attempted to hit the ground running in 2016, covering as much territory as possible, including site visits in 11 states, a combination of safety considerations and logistical constraints led me to drop a number of pending visits outside of the city and stay in Caracas for the remainder of my fieldwork. Second, as basic daily survival activities such as food procurement and preparation took on new levels of complexity and involvement in the face of the given circumstances, participant observation of daily life in El Valle took on a new level of importance in my research (*see* Box 1.1). *Everyday life* would hence become an important theme in the analysis and writing, reflected in particular in Chapters 3 and 5.

Third, a combination of limitations and opportunities led me to re-envision the main research output as an article-based as opposed to monograph-style dissertation. This enabled me to move forward in a pragmatic manner in the face of constrained mobility and uncertainty in the fieldwork, while simultaneously allowing me to build upon emerging research collaborations that presented exciting new methodological opportunities. The latter had begun in the fall of 2016 with the collective drafting of an academic article on the new Seed Law of 2015 with a number of the activists involved in the process behind its passage. The writing process of that article continued into 2017, during which several additional collaborative research and writing projects organically arose. Shifting to an article-based dissertation allowed me to turn my time and attention to these projects for

529827-L-bw-Schiavoni
Processed on: 15-3-2019

much of the duration of my time in the field, not just approaching these as side projects, but making them a centerpiece of the research.

The projects resulting from the above-mentioned collaborations include two journal articles (with a third one planned), a book chapter, and two working papers. Each of these was co-authored by Ana Felicien of Semillas del Pueblo and additional co-authors include Eisamar Ochoa, Silvana Saturno, Esquisa Omaña and Adrianna Requena of Semillas del Pueblo, Liccia Romero of Mano a Mano Intercambio Agroecologico (Hand to Hand Agroecological Exchange) and U.S.-based Venezuelan activist William Camacaro. Beyond those who directly co-authored pieces, many others actively supported these collaborations, for instance through taking part in interactive workshops, serving as key informants, lending technical support, etc. Of particular note is the support and input of Alfredo Miranda, Gabriel Gil and Yoandy Medina of Semillas del Pueblo, three of our unofficial co-authors.

These collaborative projects brought tremendous added value into the research. First, they enabled me to benefit from both the lived experience and knowledge of those with whom I collaborated and to consider interpretations and conclusions other than my own. This appeared to be mutual, as my collaborators expressed it useful to have an outside perspective, particularly in terms of noting certain aspects that were unique to the Venezuelan experience and thus worth highlighting as well as noting points where contextualization was needed for readers from outside the country. This yielded work that was deeper and richer than that which any one of us would have been able to accomplish on our own. Such collaboration involving the melding of "insider" and "outsider" perspectives in many ways fits Long's (1992b: 269) description of "the dialogical interpenetration of different accounts of 'reality' – those offered by local actors and those emanating from outside", which, "in turn, questions the separation of so-called 'local' or 'indigenous' knowledge versus 'external' or 'scientific' knowledge". Such a blending of different forms of knowledge was all the more the case for us in that most of us were coming to the work as both activists and researchers.

Second, the writing process itself was a form of data collection, as it afforded me the opportunity to have extensive conversations with my collaborators, gleaning far more than I would have from one-off interviews. Conversations held during a particular project not only informed that immediate project, but informed my overall research and understanding,

529827-L-bw-Schiavoni
Processed on: 15-3-2019
PDF page: 49

feeding into other parts of this dissertation. And third, writing from within the field allowed me to approach the data collection, analysis and writing as iterative processes. Rather than waiting to make sense of the data collected after leaving the field, I was able to do so in real time, and in dialogue with others. And in attempting both to formulate our analysis and put it into writing, we were able to note gaps as they emerged and conduct further research as necessary. Van Manen (2014: 367) has similarly noted that "It is in the act of reading and writing that insights emerge". He adds that "It is precisely in the process of writing that the data of the research are gained as well as interpreted and that the fundamental nature of the research question is perceived". Two chapters of this dissertation, Chapters 3 and 4, are direct outcomes of these collaborations, while the whole of the dissertation has been influenced by them. Beyond this dissertation, these collaborations, several of which remain ongoing to date, have important methodological implications both for movement-building and for new forms of engaged research and knowledge co-generation. This is discussed in Chapter 4 and revisited in the conclusion.

1.6 Ethical considerations

As Stake (2003: 154) observes, "Qualitative researchers are guests in the private spaces of the world. Their manners should be good and the code of ethics strict". Ethical considerations have indeed been of utmost importance to this study, above all, with respect to my interactions with those who lent their time, energy, and insights to it. At the most basic level is the issue of informed consent, as emphasized by Mason (2002). This involved being clear, upfront and transparent with potential participants in this study regarding who I was and what my intentions were, in accessible language, in order for them to make an informed decision as to whether to participate (e.g., as interviewees or focus group discussion participants, sharing materials and/or allowing themselves/their group to be observed) and on what terms. Among the tools facilitating this initial interaction was a two-page Spanish language summary of the research, including goals, objectives and methodology. Consent, furthermore, remained an ongoing consideration throughout the duration of a given interaction as well as afterwards, including whether or not one was comfortable being recorded, directly quoted, having their name cited, etc.

529827-L-bw-Schiavoni
Processed on: 15-3-2019 PDF page: 50

While informed consent is at a basic level of ethical consideration, Sultana (2007) makes the point that more participatory or collaborative methodologies can make for more complex ethical considerations. She explains that in such cases, "Often ethics are then shifted away from the strict codes of institutional paperwork, towards moral and mutual relations with a commitment to conducting ethical and respectful research that minimizes harm" (Sultana 2007: 376-377). This speaks to two additional ethical considerations, already touched upon in Box 1.2, of reflexivity and reciprocity. Reflexivity involves reflection on "how one is inserted in grids of power relations and how that influences methods, interpretations, and knowledge production" (Sultana 2007: 276). In this study, reflexivity has involved being conscious of my power and privilege, which are significant as a white North American coming from a European research institute. It has also meant not shying away from but leaning into hard conversations around structural racism, colonization and imperialism – systems which I benefit from in various ways by virtue of my origin and background. This was particularly important surrounding the work on Chapter 3, where these issues were central themes. Occasionally, my privilege was able to be put to service, such as when I was asked by members of Semillas del Pueblo to testify in favor of the new Seed Law in my shaky Spanish shortly after my arrival because, I was told, my "*gringo* accent" would add authority to what I said in the eyes of those present.

Reflexivity, going back to Stake's (2003) point above, also involved my being conscious of the privilege and responsibility entailed in being a guest in each of the spaces into which I was invited, from homestays to social movement spaces, and doing my best to contribute in these spaces as helpful (e.g., helping with food shopping/preparation and babysitting in my main homestay and photo-documenting certain activities and events at the request of the movements hosting me) while trying to be as unobtrusive as possible. This brings us to reciprocity. While I sought to make various contributions while in the field, the true test of reciprocity, I believe, will be the work beyond this dissertation that continues to come out of the relationships built through this research. A priority will be to make the outputs of this research more widely accessible in both English and Spanish. Beyond that, I am committed to continue to work in partnership and solidarity with the grassroots movements who allowed me to accompany them in the field.

529827-L-bw-Schiavoni
Processed on: 15-3-2019 PDF page: 51

Finally, another crucial issue related to ethics is the credibility, trustworthiness, and integrity of what is conveyed through this study. Toward this end, I have made an effort to use multiple sources and to triangulate my data through the combination of methods employed in this study and to otherwise adhere to basic principles of academic integrity.

1.7 Limitations and disclaimers

This study has a number of limitations that bear noting. A first is that of scope. While an interest driving this study is to advance research that does greater justice to the breadth and complexity of food sovereignty construction, certain shortcuts and strategic decisions have had to be taken in terms of focus in the interest of time. This has involved, among other measures, prioritizing certain sectors and populations over others. For example, as important as fisheries issues are to food sovereignty struggles, and while Venezuela has much to offer in this area, given the historic decision in 2008 to ban trawling ships off the Venezuelan coast while supporting a resurgence of artisanal fishing (Sharma 2011), I was unable to include fisheries in the research due to limitations of time together with logistical constraints, although fisheries are referenced on a number of occasions herein. I sincerely hope that this issue is taken up in future studies (including possibly my own), as it very much merits investigation and analysis. The same is true of other populations and sectors of food providers referenced herein, including Indigenous and Afro-descendant communities, key actors in food sovereignty struggles meriting further attention and research collaboration (as mentioned earlier, I did take part in some research collaboration with students of the National Experimental Indigenous University of Tauca, but that research, led by others, is not included herein and is forthcoming at the time of writing).

A second limitation is that of language. Spanish is not my native language, and while I have a certain comfort level with it, particularly in communicating about food sovereignty-related issues, I by no means have the same level of fluency that a native speaker would, making this a limitation worth noting. Connected to the challenge of language is the issue of translation, which has presented both practical and ethical challenges. Much more than simply a technical issue, translation is very much a matter of interpretation, as pointed out by Marshall and Rossman (2006). All of the interviews, focus group discussions and participant observation for this

study have been conducted in Spanish, and where direct quotes have been used, these have been translated by myself into English. Some text has also been translated from Spanish into English, as noted at various points, where a citation is followed by "translated". The task of translation has required careful attention in order to convey what study participants have shared as accurately as possible, including capturing subtleties as best as possible. This has involved asking study participants to repeat themselves or clarify as necessary; double checking with participants afterwards when in doubt; and turning to friends and colleagues who are native Spanish speakers as needed.

Navigating between Spanish language empirical material and English language presentation has also involved a number of practical considerations, such as when to include original Spanish text along with the English translation and how to handle words and phrases that do not translate over well. Marshall and Rossman (2006) have argued that there are no simple strategies or blueprints on such matters, making it subject to the discretion of researchers. I have thus included original Spanish text in cases where it felt helpful (e.g., to identify an institution, organization or movement which readers may wish to look up[3]) and have retained some words in Spanish (italicized in the text) in cases where words do not translate over well or are simply most authentically conveyed in their Spanish form (e.g., *campesino*, *conuco*, *comuna*), including an explanation either in the body of the text or in a footnote.

A third issue has to do with my *gringa* status as a white North American. While this has been discussed above as an ethical consideration, it also bears mentioning as a limitation given the potential this had to serve as a barrier to connecting with others and gathering data. I found, however, that being conscious and open about my background and approaching matters with a dose of humor and humility went a long way toward fostering a sense of connection. I also found it helpful, in terms of chipping away at barriers, to be clear that I was there in solidarity, not uncritically, but in solidarity with popular movements and their ultimate visions of food sovereignty and broader social transformation that they are working toward. This helped to address an initial concern I had that some might be hesitant to share critiques of government policies and programs at a

---

[3] Thanks to Marc Edelman for this suggestion.

529827-L-bw-Schiavoni
Processed on: 15-3-2019

moment in which U.S. foreign policy was particularly hostile toward Venezuela. I found the majority of study participants I spoke with to be refreshingly upfront about this, however, once basic levels of trust and connection were established.

This brings me to the disclaimer, as mentioned earlier, that I did not embark upon this study as a neutral observer, but as someone who had been deeply involved in food movements in the U.S. for nearly twenty years and who had been working in collaboration with food sovereignty movements in Venezuela for ten. This made me deeply embedded in the politics of what I was been researching. As laid out by Edelman (2009), this position as an "engaged" scholar in relationship to the movements being studied, while presenting certain challenges, also allows for certain synergies that can increase the richness and relevance of the research. In Venezuela, this positioning afforded me access to people and sites to a degree that I would otherwise not have been able to achieve, facilitating the research considerably. But this also necessitated ongoing critical self-reflection in terms of my own positioning in what I was researching.

A final limitation worth noting is that of access to and reliability of certain types of secondary data, particularly recent statistics around agricultural production and food importation. The last national agricultural census was done in 2007, making that data more than a decade old. More recent data, where it is available, varies considerably according to sources (i.e., government institutions vs. private sector federations vs. multilateral institutions). Initially, I enlisted a student of economics of the Bolivarian University in Caracas to compare diverging data sets and try to help come up with some current estimates, but in the end, this did not prove very helpful to the research. I have therefore tried to use statistics that are consistent across multiple sources and have avoided statistics that were questionable or unavailable from trusted sources.

1.8 Chapter overview

As mentioned above, this is an article-based dissertation. What follow are four chapters, each based upon a journal article, followed by a conclusion to the overall dissertation. While some of the benefits of this being an article-based dissertation have already been mentioned above, it is also worth noting some of the down-sides, which are certain repetitions from one chapter to another and likely less flow among the chapters than there

529827-L-bw-Schiavoni
Processed on: 15-3-2019

would be in a monograph-style dissertation. While I ask readers to bear with the repetition (and perhaps also to take note of what is repeated, as central themes and historical events shaping food politics and food sovereignty struggles in Venezuela), I have attempted to address flow as best I could both through the ordering of the chapters as well as the addition of short prologues to each of the four main chapters. While the prologues were initially conceived of as serving as segues from one chapter to the next, they have also ended up serving as a place to share the "backstory" of each article, which I hope provides readers with an interesting glimpse into the research process. Finally, the prologues also contain some methodological notes to complement that which has already been presented in this chapter.

To provide a brief overview of the flow of the following chapters, Chapter 2 introduces the main analytical framework guiding this study, a *historical, relational and interactive approach* to food sovereignty construction (HRI), as well as introducing the case of Venezuela. Chapter 3 traces the food politics, from past to present, conditioning food sovereignty construction in Venezuela, with a focus on the events of the current conjuncture, including food shortages and responses to these. Chapter 4 provides an in-depth glimpse into the state-society interactions behind the passage of Venezuela's new Seed Law of 2015, spanning the period both before and during the current food shortages. Chapter 5 shares some take-away reflections from the fieldwork conducted for this study and introduces a new analytical framework, *the dialectics of building and dismantling* in food sovereignty construction, based upon these. Where applicable, details regarding the article(s) forming the basis of a given chapter, including citations of previously published works, are included in the chapter's prologue. Finally, the conclusion shares some overall reflections on the research process, the findings and future research directions.

529827-L-bw-Schiavoni
Processed on: 15-3-2019

Prologue to Chapter 2

The following chapter lays out the analytical framework guiding this study and provides a glimpse into my process of approaching food sovereignty from a scholarly perspective after having long approached it as an activist and practitioner. Dissatisfied with the abundance of works identifying the challenges, conundrums and limitations of food sovereignty but not, in my view, sufficiently exploring its possibilities, I was less interested in identifying what wasn't working as asking why it wasn't working and how might it work. And what intrigued me even more was what *was* working and why. In short, I was driven by the question of how can we be critical of food sovereignty in a way that ultimately helps to advance it. This chapter stems from my interest in transformational knowledge generation and the politics of possibility, and also draws inspiration from Fung and Wright's work on *real utopias*, which "embraces [the] tension between dreams and practice […]. The objective is to focus on specific proposals for the fundamental redesign of basic social institutions rather than on either vague, abstract formulations of grand designs, or on small reforms of existing practices" (Fung and Wright 2003: vii-viii).

The challenges and possibilities for food sovereignty in Venezuela, and the ample lessons it offered for broader food sovereignty thought and practice, drew me to this case specifically. The timing of the study, furthermore, could not have been better for exploring the dynamic tension between challenges and possibilities. In 2015 when I started this project, Venezuela had just been recognized for another consecutive year by the FAO for its advancements against hunger, as mentioned above, at the same time that global media outlets such as the *Wall Street Journal* were reporting 'Venezuela's Food Shortages Trigger Long Lines, Hunger and Looting' (Castro and Vyas 2015). Clearly there was much to unpack. While the unfolding crisis would indeed become an important focus of the study by virtue of its timing, this work is built upon a longer trajectory of having

529827-L-bw-Schiavoni
Processed on: 15-3-2019

followed food politics in Venezuela since 2006. This spanned a time during which the state and societal forces aligned with the Bolivarian Revolution were in a position to take a much more proactive approach to food sovereignty construction, making important headway in areas such as agrarian reform, agroecology and nutrition (Schiavoni and Camacaro 2009; Clark 2010; Crossfield 2011; McKay et al. 2014). The *competing sovereignties* that emerged during this time captured my interest, as diverse actors worked toward food sovereignty across a variety of scales, geographies and institutional settings – and across the often blurred and overlapping boundaries of state and society. In such scenarios, the multiple and contested meanings, practices and jurisdictions of food sovereignty were highly evident, expressing a real-life example of what Raj Patel (2009: 668) called "a concomitant call for spaces of sovereignty".

More than simply demonstrate a puzzle identified in the literature, however, Venezuela held important insights into how such challenges were actively being navigated and negotiated in the messy process of trying to put food sovereignty into practice. This was the impetus for my master's degree study of how competing sovereignties were playing out in food sovereignty construction in Venezuela (Schiavoni 2014, 2015). Among my conclusions from that research was that many of the commonly constructed binaries that abound in food sovereignty literature (e.g., food sovereignty/food security, urban/rural, state/society) did not encapsulate the most important issues I found "on the ground" in Venezuela. This was particularly the case with regard to food sovereignty and food security discourse and practice, which, rather than standing in stark contrast to each other as often presented in the literature (e.g., Schanbacher 2010), overlapped and intersected in fascinating ways. This left me interested in digging further into the tensions and synergies among various food security and food sovereignty approaches in Venezuela, my hunch being that where there was most synergy between the two, particularly at the state-society nexus, was where the greatest potential for broader transformation might lie.

With this goal in mind, I started my PhD project by reviewing the limited but by then growing body of work on food sovereignty in Venezuela. In doing so, however, it became evident that many of the same problematic binaries were being reinforced rather than deconstructed, among other tendencies that appeared to be limiting rather than expanding the depth of research into food sovereignty. Through literature review, I noted three

particularly common tendencies (i.e., neither sufficiently historicizing food sovereignty efforts nor approaching them as ongoing and process-oriented, as well as not sufficiently disaggregating the actors involved in food sovereignty construction) and set out to develop a framework to address them. Among the goals of the framework was to help us talk about the state in food sovereignty construction without centering the state in the analysis, as often tends to happen. Earlier on in the Bolivarian Revolution, it may have been tempting to conceive of a singular "Bolivarian project", steered by the government, with a singular food sovereignty agenda. While always debatable, by 2015 it was becoming more apparent than ever that there is no single Bolivarian project, nor any single food sovereignty agenda, but rather a highly heterogenous and contentious mix of individuals, groups, approaches and paradigms that coexisted with varying degrees of synergy and conflict. The Bolivarian Revolution is very much a contested terrain, as are efforts toward food sovereignty within it. I would broaden this argument outward and wager that "food sovereignty" within any given context will always be multiple and contested. How can we make sense of the dynamic interactions at play, across time, and effectively analyze food sovereignty as concepts, practices and movements in motion?[1] Such questions are at the heart of the *historical, relational and interactive* (HRI) framework that I developed for this study. The following chapter, which was published in the *Journal of Peasant Studies*,[2] outlines the framework.

The article forming the basis of the chapter is presented here in its originally published form, with the exception of five language modifications that bear mention. First, the term "black market" has been replaced with "parallel market" due to the racist undertones of the former, as pointed out by some of my Venezuelan friends, who therefore make a conscious effort to say "*mercado paralelo*" rather than "*mercado negro*". Second, the term "*caciquismo*", which appears in the journal version, has been removed. Caciquismo comes from the term *cacique*, which in Venezuela and in other

[1] In addition to the *competing sovereignties* study, I also want to recognize the collaborative project with Annie Shattuck and Zoe VanGelder that resulted in the book *The Politics of Food Sovereignty: Concept, Practice and Social Movements* (Shattuck et al. 2017) as having helped to inspire this study.

[2] Schiavoni, C. M. (2017) 'The Contested Terrain of Food Sovereignty Construction: Toward a Historical, Relational and Interactive Approach', *Journal of Peasant Studies* 44(1): 1–32.

529827-L-bw-Schiavoni
Processed on: 15-3-2019

parts of Latin America is a title associated with leaders of Indigenous communities. Over the course of colonization, the term came to take on negative connotations and has come to be generally understood as synonymous with "bossism", or the domination of a political system by a single powerful person through strong-armed rule and cronyism (Encylopaedia Britannica 2019). Through working with students at the Indigenous University of Tauca, however, I learned that *caciques* in Venezuela are generally highly respected community leaders, some of whom have even laid down their lives for their communities in struggles over resource rights, as was the case with the father of one of the students. I thus consider the equation of *caciquismo* with bossism, at least in a Latin American context, to be inaccurate, disrespectful and reinforcing of racist stereotypes.

Third, the reference in the published journal article to "popular consultation" with regards to a bottom-up process around the new Seed Law that took place from 2012-2015 has been changed to the more accurate term of "popular constituent debate". As will be explained in Chapter 4, this is an important distinction. Fourth, the term "neoextractivism" is now accompanied by quotes to convey that it is a contested term. To paraphrase what a social movement leader vented to me:

> Please tell me what's so new about "extractivism". Was slavery not "extractive"? Was the plantation economy under colonization not "extractive"? And name one country today that is not engaged in "extractive" activities in some manner or other. Why is it that these activities are not deemed particularly noteworthy by academia until the proceeds from them are channeled toward social needs by governments of the Left and this becomes "neoextractivism", subject to countless papers and debates?

And finally, references to "pink tide governments" have been removed and replaced with "left-turn governments". Like "neoextractivism", the term "pink tide", conveying a sort of watered-down version of the color red associated with communism, never struck me as being particularly helpful for scholarly analysis. This was reinforced by a number of people I spoke with in Venezuela, who see it as a term imposed from outside by those with limited understanding of the political processes underway in the region.

Each of these five changes to the text represents an important learning on my part gleaned while living in Venezuela for the better part of two years after writing this piece. Although relatively minor, I note these

changes in recognition of the power of language and the ways in which our word choices can feed into or challenge existing power asymmetries. While there are other parts of this text that have been tempting to rework (not so much to change substantively as to deepen/enhance), I have refrained from doing do in order to reflect the evolution of this study, especially as some of the shortcomings of this chapter are addressed further on.

529827-L-bw-Schiavoni
Processed on: 15-3-2019

2 The contested terrain of food sovereignty construction: toward a historical, relational and interactive approach

Abstract

This contribution puts forward a historical, relational and interactive (HRI) approach to food sovereignty research. A historical lens allows us to understand the social structures and institutions that condition the politics of food over time and the ways in which the agency of relevant state and societal actors has been, and continues to be, enhanced and exercised, or not, in the political contestation over the food system. A relational lens allows us to capture the process-oriented nature of food sovereignty – the ways in which the very meanings and attempted practices of food sovereignty are being dynamically and contentiously shaped and reshaped over time. An interactive lens allows us to analyze how actors within the state and in society are dialectically linked, molding the construction of food sovereignty through their interactions. Rather than an enquiry into food sovereignty per se, this piece is about efforts toward food sovereignty, partly to address a tendency in the literature and political debates to conflate the two. This is thus an investigation into food sovereignty construction, meaning how food sovereignty is being articulated and attempted, as well as contested – including resisted, refracted or reversed – in a given setting. The case of Venezuela is examined as one of a growing number of countries where food sovereignty has been adopted into state policy and among the longest-running experiments in its attempted construction. Concluding reflections are shared on the extent to which the HRI framework can help us understand the current conjunctural crisis facing Venezuela's food system, and implications for food sovereignty research and activism more broadly.[1]

[1] This is an Accepted Manuscript of an article published by Taylor & Francis in *Journal of Peasant Studies* on 27 October 2016, available online at: https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/03066150.2016.1234455

2.1 Introduction

Research into food sovereignty – broadly defined by transnational social movements as "the right of peoples to healthy and culturally appropriate food produced through ecologically sound and sustainable methods, and their right to define their own food and agriculture systems" (Nyéléni 2007a, no page) – is a dynamically evolving area of academic inquiry. Recent years have seen a bourgeoning of studies focused on theoretical explorations of the concept, on the dynamics within and among movements connected to it, and on real-life attempts to put it into practice. From within these studies is an emerging consensus that food sovereignty, in its multiple dimensions, is best understood and approached as a process (Edelman et al. 2014, Iles and Montenegro de Wit 2015, Shattuck et al. 2015). The concept itself is a moving target, a reflection, in part, of the shifting terrain of global agrifood politics (McMichael 2015) and of the new actors who have taken it up (Patel 2009). The peasant movements that originally thrust the concept into public light continue to form a key mobilizing base for food sovereignty, while they have been joined by an increasingly diverse set of actors in both the South and North. This is extending food sovereignty's reach into new geographical and political spaces, yielding fresh context-specific understandings of and efforts toward food sovereignty in the process (Brent et al. 2015, Desmarais and Wittman 2014, Figueroa 2015, Shattuck et al. 2015). This in turn is provoking new ways of asking questions about the ideas of and movements for food sovereignty (Alonso-Fradejas et al. 2015, Edelman et al. 2014, Shattuck et al. 2015, Wittman et al. 2010).

Further complicating the mix and opening up new possibilities, social movements are no longer alone in their efforts toward food sovereignty. It is now on the agenda and up for debate in diverse spaces ranging from local food policy councils and other municipal bodies to intergovernmental forums such as the United Nations (UN) Committee on World Food Security, while researchers have identified approximately 15 countries to date

where food sovereignty-inspired legislation has been adopted.[2] The formal entry of the state into food sovereignty politics, and the blurring of the lines between food sovereignty as a social movement aspiration and as a national policy objective, raises a number of challenging questions that have thus far been little explored. What happens to political projects and strategies when food sovereignty shifts, at least in part, from an oppositional demand by social movements into official policy in national laws/constitutions? How do state relations with various social groups, such as farmers and urban dwellers, change when a new political language becomes the norm? How do inherited ideas and practices around food production and provisioning change when inflected by the new shared objective of food sovereignty? How is the discourse of food sovereignty mobilized as part of competing political projects and strategies?[3]

Researchers of food sovereignty clearly have their work cut out for them in attempting to unravel these and other complex political dynamics, on top of unresolved debates around the concept itself. The aim of this piece is to point to possible directions forward for national-level food sovereignty studies, as part of a rapidly expanding and deepening agenda for food sovereignty research more broadly. In doing so, it builds upon important recent scholarly work in this area, identifying several common threads that are emerging, while also attempting to address a number of gaps in the recent literature. A key challenge is the role of the

---

[2] Among these, Venezuela, Mali, Senegal, Nepal, Ecuador, Bolivia and Nicaragua are recognized as being the first seven countries to adopt food sovereignty into the constitution and/or national law (Beauregard 2009). Menser (2014) describes Cuba as an example of "state-supported food sovereignty". Godek (2015) notes recent movement toward food sovereignty legislation in the Dominican Republic (*see also* FAO 2016). Wittman (2015) highlights Peru, Argentina, Guatemala, Brazil, El Salvador and Indonesia as having legislation supportive of food sovereignty efforts.

[3] Thanks to Harriet Friedmann for her assistance in articulating these questions.

state in food sovereignty politics. That is, national-level food sovereignty construction inherently implicates the state, with the specifics of why, how and to what extent increasingly debated (Bernstein 2014, Clark 2016, Edelman 2014, Patel 2009, McKay et al. 2014). Understanding such dynamics calls for new ways of theorizing, including a melding of the food sovereignty literature with the vast body of literature on the state. Indeed, some initial movement in this direction can be seen, two excellent examples being Clark (2016) and McKay et al. (2014), although much more remains to be done. Building upon the limited body of work on food sovereignty and the state while addressing some of its limitations, we can push the boundary of knowledge generation significantly farther. In each of the contexts where food sovereignty has been adopted into state policy, social actors played a critical role in the process. And, once the initial goal of policy adoption is achieved, their efforts do not end; they enter into a new arena of action. As Fox (2007) has noted, there is a long way to go between recognition of rights and actual implementation, and, ultimately, empowerment. The entry of the state into food sovereignty politics does not make it the protagonist of food sovereignty construction, but instead places it onto contested terrain with a host of other actors. To leave societal actors out of the analysis, or to include them only marginally, subsumed in a perspective that gives a commanding role to the state, is to construct, at best, an incomplete picture of food sovereignty vis-à-vis state policy in a given context, and runs the risk of flawed analysis.

This study aims to contribute to a still-emerging generation of literature which seeks to understand the actions of both state and societal actors involved in food sovereignty construction *in relation to each other over time*; an approach that takes the political *interaction* between the two broad sets of actors as a key reference point, a unit of analysis. This study argues that the actions of state actors with respect to food sovereignty can only be understood in dialectical relationship with the actions of societal actors (and vice versa). It situates these interactions as moving through time, both shaped by history and shaping history, thereby influencing what food sovereignty might actually look like and mean at a

given moment in a given context. In taking this point of departure, an aim here is to address several common trends within the current literature that may be serving as barriers to a more complete analysis.

A first trend is not – or not sufficiently – situating present food sovereignty efforts as part of longer historical processes. When the starting point of a given analysis is the adoption of food sovereignty into national policy, rather than the contested processes leading up to it, it is easy to attribute to the state more protagonism in the construction of food sovereignty than may actually be the case. Furthermore, important pieces of context conditioning the challenges and possibilities of the present go missing.

A second trend is not – or not sufficiently – approaching present food sovereignty efforts as dynamic, ongoing and open-ended. That is, there is a tendency to approach food sovereignty as an outcome as opposed to a process. Related is a tendency in both the literature and political debates to conflate food sovereignty with *efforts toward food sovereignty*. Yet if we follow the widely accepted distinction between democracy and democratization, the former being a vision and the latter being an attempt to realize it, something similar could be argued for food sovereignty versus food *sovereignization* – or, put more accessibly, food sovereignty *construction*. That is, what food sovereignty means and what it might look like, conceptually and in practice, are subject to ongoing processes of contestation and negotiation.

A related third trend is not – or not sufficiently – disaggregating the actors involved in food sovereignty construction and examining the interactions among them. This obscures the reality that food sovereignty construction is carried out by diverse sets of actors from within both state and society, and that it is the interactions among them that serve to drive forward – or block or constrain – food sovereignty.

Given the challenges presented above, frameworks are needed for approaching food sovereignty as a historically embedded, continually evolving set of processes that are interactively shaped by state and societal forces, reflecting competing paradigms and

529827-L-bw-Schiavoni
Processed on: 15-3-2019

approaches. This study critically combines three emerging directions in food sovereignty research, which, taken together, can be employed as a *historical-relational-interactive* (HRI) framework for study of national-level food sovereignty construction. First is a *historical* approach to food sovereignty research, which recognizes the construction of food sovereignty as continuous through time. Food sovereignty efforts are not seen as static, but as shaped by the history from which they arose and as continuing to "make history" as they unfold over time. Second is a *relational* approach that reflects the open-ended and iterative nature of food sovereignty efforts; that is, that the very meanings of food sovereignty and pursuits toward it are dynamically shaped by competing paradigms and approaches. Third is an *interactive* approach, which situates food sovereignty construction as neither state-driven nor society-driven alone, but rather as a product of the interaction between and among diverse state and societal actors. The HRI framework will be further elaborated upon in the sections to follow. The case of Venezuela, one of a growing number of countries where food sovereignty has been adopted into state policy and among the longest-running experiments in its attempted construction, is used as an illustrative example. The proposed analytical framework, however, may have resonance beyond Venezuela, and, for that matter, even beyond Latin America, and may also be relevant to studies pitched at difference scales, whether international or subnational.

2.2 Food sovereignty construction in Venezuela

The case of Venezuela, which the author has been researching over the past decade, is employed in this piece to inform both how food sovereignty is understood conceptually and how it is investigated by drawing insights from on-the-ground efforts to transform it from vision into reality. Rather than an enquiry into food sovereignty per se, this study is about efforts toward food sovereignty, partly to address the above-mentioned tendency to conflate the two. This is thus an investigation into food sovereignty construction, meaning how food sovereignty is being articulated and attempted, as well as contested – including resisted, refracted or reversed – in a given setting. The interest in the case

of Venezuela is to address the gaps not only between theory and practice, but also between practice and theory. It is one thing to analyze a real-life scenario against existing definitions and conceptions of food sovereignty and point to divergences between visions and realities. But how can we understand and learn from convergences between visions and realities, with all the contradictions and messiness they entail? Put another way, that food sovereignty is difficult if not impossible to realize in most societies today is widely acknowledged and presents no puzzle. Existing structures and institutions constrain or obstruct efforts at constructing a radical alternative food system, while the political agency of social groups and state actors who seek to transform the food system may not be sufficiently strong or effective at a given time. Yet there are instances when efforts towards food sovereignty, against difficult odds, achieve significant gains, however partial and fragile. When and where this happens, how and why so? This is the puzzle that requires careful investigation.

In the case of Venezuela, a national food sovereignty effort, enshrined in state policy, was launched in 1999 through the process of social transformation known as the Bolivarian Revolution. Since then, the country has seen substantial public reinvestment in food and agriculture, along with new forms of citizen mobilization and participation in food politics. This includes the reduction of hunger by more than half through a series of state-supported feeding and food distribution programs (FAO 2015); the redistribution of arable land to over 1 million people through a state-led agrarian reform program (Enríquez and Newman 2016, McKay et al. 2014); and the blossoming of citizen-run social institutions that are increasingly taking up matters of food sovereignty (McKay et al. 2014, Schiavoni 2015). How did these openings come to be, how are they being navigated, and what broader lessons do they hold for other contexts?

On the flip side, understanding food sovereignty construction requires understanding the forces that are pulling away from it together with those that are pushing toward it. What are the specific ways in which food sovereignty is being constrained or blocked? Part of what makes the Venezuelan case fascinating and

529827-L-bw-Schiavoni
Processed on: 15-3-2019

relevant is that it is home to some of the most inhospitable conditions for food sovereignty – conditions directly inherited from the pre-revolutionary past – with nearly 90 percent of its population living in urban areas (World Bank n.d.); over 95 percent of its export revenue derived from petroleum (Lander 2014); food import rates as high as 80 percent in recent decades (FAO 2002); and mounting public health concerns linked to diet (Briceño-Iragorry et al. 2012). The situation with respect to food sovereignty construction in Venezuela is thus highly complex, particularly at this given moment. On the one hand, in 2013 hunger levels were recognized by the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) as being at historic lows, an achievement that has been an explicit aim of the Bolivarian government, as mandated by the national constitution (Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations 2013). On the other hand, building up a secure and sustainable domestic food supply from which to feed the population, also mandated by the constitution, has proven much more challenging to achieve. As put by a Venezuelan peasant leader, "We know that food security is achieved through resources. But food sovereignty has to be a process coming from the bottom up – from the peasant, from the communities" (Schiavoni 2015: 474).

This comment underscores the fact that Venezuela's advances in food security in recent years rest on a highly precarious food system that continues to rely heavily on imports of industrially produced food, facilitated by petrodollars. This makes the transformational efforts associated with food sovereignty both particularly challenging and urgent. The cracks in the current system became especially apparent recently, in the form of shortages of basic food items throughout the country, resulting in daily lines outside most major grocery outlets, as people queued up to access basic items such as precooked corn flour, sugar and cooking oil. While periodic food shortages are nothing new in Venezuela, the most recent wave of shortages intensified into a mounting national crisis immediately prior to the parliamentary elections of December 2015, and are widely perceived as being a factor in the outcome of these elections, in which the majority of seats shifted

from the Bolivarian (*chavista*) government to the political opposition. The shortages are intensifying at the time of this writing. Pro-government forces point to manufactured scarcity in the form of intentional withholding of food by private chains aligned with the political opposition, which control much of the supply chain, along with diversion of goods to a parallel illicit market which speculates on the price of commodities. Opposition forces point to a dwindling supply of dollars through economic mismanagement by the government. A key issue acknowledged across the board is the dramatic drop in petroleum prices in recent years, upon which Venezuela depends for its foreign exchange, with the prices plummeting from around USD 100 per barrel in 2013 down to USD 30 per barrel in January 2016 (U.S. Energy Information Administration (EIA) 2016).

In such a moment of crisis, it is not an understatement to say that food politics are among the most decisive issues influencing broader politics in Venezuela – and the very future of the Bolivarian Revolution. How is food sovereignty being debated and framed in such a context? How are historically contingent challenges impacting the contemporary construction of food sovereignty, and to what extent are they being addressed? What are the proposals being put forward, and what character and extent of structural and institutional transformation do these entail? Who are the actors involved in food sovereignty construction, and where do their interests, visions and efforts converge and diverge, and why? These are interrelated broad questions for those seeking to theoretically understand, and/or politically contribute to, efforts toward food sovereignty.

To tackle the above-described puzzle of food sovereignty construction in Venezuela will require the interlinked analytical lenses of HRI. First, a historical lens allows us to understand the social structures and institutions that condition the politics of food over time and the ways in which the agency of relevant state and societal actors has been, and continues to be, enhanced and exercised, or not, in the political contestation over the transformation of the food system. In the case of Venezuela, for instance, the question of how food sovereignty came to be put on the national agenda

in 1999 tends to be assumed as a political given in a socialist revolutionary project – rather than empirically investigated and demonstrated – and is thus little documented and examined. It has similarly gone largely unexplored how the conjunctural situation at present and its political and electoral implications have emerged directly from past conditions and what are the threads connecting the past, present and future of food politics in Venezuela. Second, a relational lens allows us to capture the process-oriented nature of food sovereignty – that is, the ways in which the very meanings and attempted practices of food sovereignty are being dynamically and contentiously shaped and reshaped over time. In Venezuela, as with elsewhere, there is no one singular conception of food sovereignty. This lens also reflects the multidimensionality and fluidity of food sovereignty as a concept and the ways in which it interacts with other concepts and ideas. Third, an interactive lens allows us to more fully analyze how actors within the state and in society are dialectically linked, shaping the construction of food sovereignty through their interactions – and in turn influencing the degrees to which food sovereignty is advanced, constrained and/or blocked. To understand food sovereignty construction in Venezuela or elsewhere, it is not sufficient to focus on either the state or society, one to the exclusion of the other, but instead on how they are interacting and mutually influencing each other. The pages to follow will further elaborate upon each of these lenses and how they can be employed toward a fuller understanding of the dynamics at play in the attempted construction of food sovereignty in Venezuela.

2.3 Food sovereignty construction through time: a historical approach

The starting point of many narratives on food sovereignty in Venezuela is the adoption of food sovereignty into state policy in 1999 at the start of its political process known as the Bolivarian Revolution. The Bolivarian Revolution set into motion a variety of reforms by state actors, while also presenting some significant openings for previously marginalized sectors and classes (namely,

the urban and rural working class) of society. While 1999 was indeed a defining moment for efforts toward food sovereignty in Venezuela, the adoption of food sovereignty into state policy did not happen in a vacuum, nor does the story begin in 1999. Instead, it is rooted in decades-long and even centuries-long struggles over land, food and other basic rights by societal actors vis-à-vis processes of state-building through the periods of colonization, struggles for independence and, most recently, democratization.

A pivotal moment in these struggles in recent history was the popular uprising of 1989 known as the Caracazo, when, on the 27th of February, hundreds of thousands of people poured down into the capital from the impoverished hillside communities on the periphery of Caracas, protesting in the streets as they looted shops first for food, then for other basic goods, then for basically anything in sight (Hardy 2007, Nuñez Nuñez 1990). The protest was precipitated by President Carlos Andrés Pérez signing a deal with the International Monetary Fund (IMF) to enter Venezuela into a structural adjustment program, against a backdrop of prior neoliberal reforms, causing an abrupt surge in food and fuel prices in which the cost of bread rose by over 600 percent (Hardy 2007).[4] Maya (2003) emphasizes, however, that while the Cara-

---

[4] The signing of a deal with the IMF was just a part of an unfolding situation, though a critical part. On the eve of the Caracazo, the overall socio-economic situation was bad. "The rate of inflation, historically in single-digit, reached 8.0 percent in 1987 and 29.48 percent in 1988… By 1988, the public external debt had reached US$26.6 billion" (Lander and Fierro 1996: 51). This forced the government to sign a deal with the IMF in exchange for debt restructuring, and the Structural Adjustment Program had the following requirements:

> (1) restriction in public expenditure; (2) restriction of wage levels; (3) unification of the exchange-rate regime, with a single floating exchange rate; (4) flexible interest rates, an immediate increase in the level of regulated interest rates, elimination of preferential-interest-rate loans for the agricultural sector, and market determination of interest rates as soon as possible; (5) reduction of price control; (6) postponement of low-priority public investment program; (7)

cazo is often treated as a spontaneous mass riot, in fact, anti-neoliberal student protests had been steadily intensifying in the days prior, and on this particular day, these were first joined by certain groups of workers before later being joined by the masses at large. The President's response to the massive mobilization of this day was to authorize the security forces to use lethal force. The official death toll was 276 civilians, with actual deaths estimated to be much higher. Similar events transpired in cities across Venezuela on the same day. The Caracazo is credited with being not only one of the earliest public manifestations against neoliberalism, but also a defining moment of popular power that ushered in a politically heated decade and paved the way for the rise of the Bolivarian Revolution, with the election of Hugo Chávez Frías at the end of 1998 (Ciccariello-Maher 2013, Hardy 2007, Maya 2003).

The experience of the Caracazo indicates the political nature of food in Venezuela much prior to the Bolivarian Revolution. Tellingly, among the slogans heard or scrawled on walls that day were "The people are hungry", "The people are angry" and "No more deception" (Maya 2003: 126). Furthermore, the conditions that had given rise to the Caracazo were connected to food and agrarian politics of the past. The shantytowns covering the hills of Caracas can be seen as a visual representation of Venezuela's withdrawal from agriculture as the country's petroleum industry was developed from the early 1900s onward. As attention turned to oil, both the land-owning upper classes and the government lost interest in agriculture and largely withdrew from investing in

---

> reduction of subsidies; (8) introduction of a sales tax; (9) adjustment of the prices of the goods and services provided by state enterprises, including oil products in the domestic market; and (10) reform of trade policy, including the elimination of most of the exceptions in the tariff system, and liberalization of imports. (Lander and Fierro 1996: 52)

This deserves an extended footnoting because it is important to refresh our memory of the circumstances in the build-up toward the Caracazo in 1989, and the Caracazo itself, because these would largely influence state policy towards some of these key issues from 1999 onward.

it. The flight of capital from the countryside was accompanied by a mass exodus of *campesinos* (peasants and rural workers), who poured into the Caracas and other urban hubs (Gilbert 2004, Wilpert 2006). With little work to be found, many ended up on the edge of existence, living in extreme poverty and arguably fitting the characteristics of "surplus populations", as described by Li (2010). Furthermore, the abandonment of agriculture together with an inflow of dollars from petroleum revenue led to a cycle of dependency upon imported foods, leading Venezuela to become the first country in the region to be a net food importer (Wilpert 2006), procuring from abroad as much as 80 percent of its food in recent decades (FAO 2002). These conditions put Venezuela's food supply in the hands of a number of companies that controlled its lucrative food importation and distribution apparatus – a powerful apparatus which remains largely intact to this day (Schiavoni and Camacaro 2016). This also fostered a highly precarious situation with respect to food access for those living in poverty, who by 1998 made up 55 percent of the population (Weisbrot 2008).

If the urban struggles connected to the Caracazo can help to explain the strong prioritization given to food access and other immediate material needs at the start of the Bolivarian Revolution in the form of feeding programs and subsidized food outlets, it is also important to look to the peasant struggles in the countryside as important factors contributing to the current process for agrarian reform. The latter forms another important component of Venezuela's food sovereignty process, with an estimated 5.5 million hectares of arable land redistributed to over a million people thus far, along with accompanying support in the form of training and technical assistance, credit, inputs and marketing support (Enríquez 2013, Enríquez and Newman 2016, McKay et al. 2014). Mobilizations of peasant movements, including two member groups of La Vía Campesina, have been key to these gains. These movements date back to nineteenth-century peasant struggles over inequitable land distribution patterns established during the period of Spanish colonization, perpetuated and reinforced by landed classes and other elites following independence (Ciccariello-Maher 2013, Wilpert 2006).

529827-L-bw-Schiavoni
Processed on: 15-3-2019

To fail to take into account the rich history of resistance around food, land and agriculture in Venezuela is to miss the ways in which persisting structures and institutions built in the past – and resistance to them – are shaping what is transpiring at present. It also risks perceiving current efforts toward food sovereignty as originating solely from, and orchestrated mainly by, the state as opposed to emerging from an interactive relationship between the state and society, grounded in decades of resistance and social movement-building alongside and in response to state-building processes. The point is that while it is the interaction between state and societal actors that determines the character, pace and trajectory of food sovereignty construction, it is usually the persistent and pervasive social mobilizations and demands from below by a variety of social groups that get food sovereignty onto the official agenda, and keep it there. While definitely not a sufficient condition for food sovereignty construction, this is a fundamentally necessary one for the incorporation of food sovereignty into the official state agenda.

An illustration of the above point is when, in 2010, a farmer leader of a cooperative in the agricultural state of Yaracuy was asked by a researcher whether he agreed with the wording pertaining to food sovereignty in the national constitution. "Do we agree with it?!", he replied. "We're the ones who fought to get it in there in the first place!", "we" being the peasant movement of which he was part.[5] This serves as a vivid reminder that food sovereignty is only enshrined in national policy as a result of decades of struggle on the part of social movements, which continue to be key protagonists of food sovereignty construction under the Bolivarian Revolution. A similar scenario exists in other countries where food sovereignty has been adopted into state policy (e.g., *see* Giunta 2014 and Godek 2015 on the role of social movements in pushing for the adoption and subsequent implementation of food sovereignty policies in Ecuador and Nicaragua, respectively). This connects to a point made by Gaventa and McGee – partly in dialogue with the idea of "political opportunity structure" in explaining state and societal actors' role in contentious

[5] Personal communication, July 2010, Urachiche, Yaracuy.

politics (Tarrow 2011) – that "This historical view challenges the idea of political opportunities as openings created from above to which activists merely respond. Rather … the process is more cyclical in nature" (Gaventa and McGee 2010: 14). They add that "What appears a new political opportunity may in fact have been shaped by previous collective mobilization and action" – or, as Gamson and Meyer put it, "opportunities open the way for political action, but movements make opportunities" (Gaventa and McGee 2010: 14). Indeed, a historical lens can help us understand and appreciate the much longer trajectory of which current food sovereignty efforts are a part, and the critical role of social movements in having shaped, and in continuing to shape, this trajectory in an interactive relationship with the state.

From what has been elaborated thus far, one can begin to see how Venezuela's food politics have been shaped by patterns extending from the past, such as oil exploitation, urban poverty and waves of social unrest. Furthermore, there are a number of questions that begin to emerge that require systematic historical analysis. Why did the Venezuelan government adopt food sovereignty as a national policy in 1999? This implies not taking as unproblematic the general assumption that it was the logical manifestation in food policy of the Bolivarian Revolution that got started that year. What kinds of food policy and politics (including cheap food, and food provisioning in times of crisis) emerged historically, why, and with what implications for contemporary food politics? How and why have relevant social structures and institutions partly shaped the degree of autonomy and capacity – or political agency – of traditionally marginalized social classes, and how have the latter in turn reshaped social structures and institutions? These questions and related ones point to the importance of applying a historical lens to food sovereignty construction in Venezuela. Tilly (2006: 417) cautions that "explanatory political science can hardly get anywhere without relying on careful historical analysis". The remainder of this section will explore what this practically means for food sovereignty research.

To begin, what is meant by a historical lens? Is it simply a matter of looking back into the past? Collier and Mazzuca emphasize that, "The distinctive feature of history is *time* – a focus on the

temporal dimensions of political occurrences and processes" (2006: 473, emphasis in original). They thus put forward four key ideas with respect to time in politics. First is *history as period*, which refers to understanding political phenomena in socially defined intervals of time. Second is *history as conjuncture*, which refers to "a temporal coincidence of a potentially limitless number of forces, actors, structures, and events" (Collier and Mazzuca 2006: 473). Third is the importance of the *timing* with which political phenomena occur, and fourth is the idea of *change over time*. Abrams (1982: xvi) similarly underscores the centrality of time to historical analysis: "It was not so much the relevance of history that sociologists failed to see as the relevance of time … the fact that history happens in time". He further elaborates that fundamental to historical analysis is a "problematic of structuring" – that is, attempts to understand the multifaceted relationship between structure and agency, which is "something that is continuously constructed in time. It makes the continuous process of construction the focal concern of social analysis" (Abrams 1982: 16).

From these perspectives, one can begin to appreciate history as having just as much to do with the present and future as it does with the past. Or, as Hobsbawm (1972: 16) put it, history can be understood as "the unity of past, present and future". This implies moving beyond the stale treatment of history as background or as context, to a much more dynamic perspective on the ways in which history is shaping the present and future. Abrams thus cautions against approaches in which history is relegated to a chapter on historical background, which can often leave the rest of the analysis quite ahistorical, instead calling for a more integrated approach:

> Doing justice to the reality of history is not a matter of noting the way in which the past provides a background to the present; it is a matter of treating what people do in the present as a struggle to create a future out of the past, of seeing that the past is not just the womb of the present but the only raw material *out of* which the present can be constructed. (1982: 8, emphasis in original)

There are several more general points worth underscoring with regards to constructing a historical lens, before getting back to

529827-L-bw-Schiavoni
Processed on: 15-3-2019

the specifics of Venezuela. One has to do with how we understand and analyze events. Just as our understanding of history should not be relegated to the past, neither should the events comprising history. Jackson (2006) makes two important points regarding this. First is that events can – and should – be considered part of history from the moment they happen. This is a point which will be returned to below. Second, even when an event has occurred in the past, how it is understood, recalled, and analyzed is a continual process extending into the present. Thus, according to Jackson, there is often "a methodological disposition to focus on events as discrete happenings taking place outside of the process of conceptualizing them…" whereas

> the irreducible historicity of events suggests an alternative way to proceed: instead of working with events as presumptively stable entities, we should focus on the ongoing dynamic process of *eventing* whereby the contours of an event are produced and reproduced… (2006: 498, emphasis in original)

Jackson describes "eventing" as a form of social negotiation, which can also be likened to Tilly's (2002: 116) notion of "contentious conversation", which "proceeds through incessant improvisation within limits set by the previous histories and relations of particular interlocutors". This brings us to the last general point here, which has to do with the highly imperfect and contested nature of historical knowledge itself. Hobsbawm (1972: 3) reminds us that "what is officially defined as 'the past' clearly is and must be a particular selection from the infinity of what is remembered or capable of being remembered".

Following the last point above, a study of national-level food sovereignty construction cannot tackle the complete history of a given country relevant to the study of contemporary food sovereignty initiatives there. Rather, a historical lens will by necessity need to be selective, focusing in on certain key questions, such as those posed earlier in this section. Here the work of Edelman and Leon (2013) may be instructive. In their case for greater historical analysis of contemporary global land grabbing, they argue for the importance of: (1) an understanding of interconnected historical cycles, shaped by both regional and global dynamics of capital

accumulation; (2) a "baseline" understanding of how pre-existing conditions (prior to the current land rush) may be shaping current patterns; and (3) an understanding of the present as being part of history. While specifically responding to the body of literature on land grabbing, these points readily translate over to the need for deeper historical analysis of food sovereignty construction. The first point is that:

> land grabbing tends to occur in cycles, or waves, depending on historically specific regional and global dynamics of capital accumulation. Each new cycle has had to take into account and is profoundly shaped by pre-existing social formations and local and regional particularities. (Edelman and Leon 2013: 1697)

This is relevant to food politics in Venezuela in that recent challenges – shortages, food price spikes, inflation – are nothing new and have been seen cyclically, through an interplay between global and national economic processes, since the country's shift to a petroleum economy from the 1930s onward (Gouveia 1997, Lander and Fierro 1996, Maya 2003). Along with the emergence of the oil economy came a relationship between the steady decline of the autonomy and capacity for domestic food production on the one hand, and the increasing reliance on cheap imported food items on the other hand, in order to feed an increasingly urbanized, non-farming population. This was facilitated by a steady flow of revenue from oil exports and the availability of cheap food made possible through subsidized overproduction in the U.S. beginning in the 1950s (Carbonell and Rothman 1977). Thus, the double attraction of a high global demand for oil and the availability of cheap industrially produced food on the global market contributed to Venezuela's national food system being inserted firmly into the global political economy. Such terms of insertion render countries like Venezuela vulnerable to oil and food price fluctuations, partly caused by available surplus food supply, stronger control by private corporations on global-national food supply/pricing and/or domestic inflation (Lander 2014).

The second point relates to a tendency in the land grab literature to attribute to land grabs effects which "might plausibly have predated today's land deals, might have other causes or might

have happened anyway" (Edelman and Leon 2013: 1698). Therefore, "[i]nformation on land uses and livelihoods that existed before the implementation of a land deal is essential for assessing any transaction's short or medium-term impact" (Edelman and Leon 2013: 1698). As related to food sovereignty construction in Venezuela, this point is connected to the prior one in terms of recognizing the ways in which patterns persisting from the past are continuing to shape food politics, and to condition the construction of food sovereignty. Thus, as argued above, to take 1999 as the starting point for analysis of food sovereignty efforts under the Bolivarian Revolution is to miss the ways in which longer-term historical patterns are supporting and/or hindering the advancement of food sovereignty. As already emphasized, a key factor here is the orientation of the Venezuelan economy around petroleum and the ensuing implications for labor, demographics, food provisioning and general patterns of accumulation. To understand how these patterns have persisted over time, it is helpful to examine the role of institutions, as "both formal organizations and informal rules and procedures that structure conduct" (Thelen and Steinmo 1992: 1). Roseberry (1983: 123) explains that during the first phase of Venezuela's petroleum industry development, from 1920 to 1936, "the development of economically important state institutions was an aspect of the growth of the state". While these institutions evolved and morphed over the years, they continued to reinforce a system that, on the one hand, prioritized petroleum production at the expense of other industries, including agriculture, while, on the other hand, supporting capital-intensive modes of production for what remained of the country's agriculture sector (Roseberry 1983). Enríquez (2013) explains that within the Bolivarian Revolution, the clash of old power represented by the country's elites and new power represented by popular movements can be seen both within and across institutions of the state, and that deeply entrenched power relations that continue to be institutionalized to varying degrees remain among the greatest barriers to the advancement of food sovereignty.

The third point has to do with “viewing contemporary processes as the history – conceptually and methodologically speaking – of the present” (Edelman and Leon 2013: 1698). This point is fundamental to food sovereignty construction in that it is precisely about trying to change the course of history – that is, the cycles that have up to the present driven hunger and poverty – and to build something new. Or, to borrow from Marx (2008: 15), people are indeed “making history” (in attempting to put food sovereignty into practice), while at the same time “they do not make it just as they please; they do not make it under circumstances chosen by themselves, but under circumstances directly encountered, given and transmitted from the past”. Key to this process is the above-mentioned interplay between structure and agency. In the case of Venezuela, there are certainly some major structural barriers, both national and globally, standing in the way of food sovereignty. This is part of what makes Venezuela such an important case to examine. These structures, however, do not predetermine the outcomes of food sovereignty efforts, even if they shape them in important ways.

Relevant here is the work of Figueroa (2015: 505), who sees the seeds for food sovereignty being sown in the spaces where capitalism has not fully penetrated, in the acts of subsistence and survival of “everyday life”, which she describes as “an ongoing, living process [that] is continually ‘leaking out the sides’, so to speak, of capitalist structures; its ‘residue’ confounding the attempts of abstraction and alienation to contain it”. She argues that people’s “everyday life” practices around food, often born out of techniques for survival under capitalism, contain the seeds for transcending capitalism’s grip on the food system and other realms of life, and the seeds for building contextually meaningful forms of food sovereignty. While Figueroa draws her research from Chicago’s South Side neighborhood, her insights bear resonance for Venezuela, where nearly 90 percent of the population are urban dwellers, the majority descended from those displaced from the countryside in past decades. It is thus particularly relevant to Venezuela when she asks:

> what does it mean to preserve ‘traditional’ ways of life, or ‘peasant spaces’, in a situation where people are far removed from any

> kind of referents for what these mean in practice, and where they may not have any immediate knowledge, experience, or even desire to engage with them? In a global metropolis, the diversity of experiences that exist within even a limited local context can imply very different meanings of food sovereignty for various communities. (Figueroa 2015: 499)

These insights can help us to appreciate that there are in fact diverse histories within the historical narrative of food sovereignty in Venezuela, and that out of these diverse histories emerge equally diverse contextually specific articulations of food sovereignty. This can also help us to appreciate, and to empirically investigate, how some of the solutions coming from the grassroots level, which are often left out of the analysis, may in fact be providing important building blocks for food sovereignty that are not inconsequential. An example from Venezuela is a return to local culinary traditions in the face of recent shortages of various industrially processed food staples such as precooked corn flour. These practices are in turn being taken up and promoted by social movements, for instance through a popular monthly fair in Caracas featuring alternative homemade products. The movements involved see this as a means of confronting the "economic war" (*guerra económica*) they feel is being waged by elements of the political opposition, while also carving out greater independence from the industrial food system, supporting better nutrition, and further deepening and radicalizing national food sovereignty efforts. In this example, we can see how current structures are conditioning the responses emerging with respect to food sovereignty construction, while these responses also hold possibility for transforming current structures.

In summary, the structures both hindering and supporting food sovereignty construction in Venezuela are to be taken seriously, and key among these are the structures, both global and domestic, upholding Venezuela's petroleum-based economy and associated food importation complex. And yet, through both record high and record low oil prices since 1999, the government has steadily invested in food and agriculture programs, in a radical break from pre-1999, and both social movements and citizen groups have continued their efforts toward food sovereignty. An

529827-L-bw-Schiavoni
Processed on: 15-3-2019

understanding of agency, and the interplay between structure and agency as mediated by institutions (Thelen and Steinmo 1992), thus becomes critically important to the analysis. What are the ways in which agency is being exerted by various actors of both society and state, within, through, against and/or outside of existing structures? This gets into the question of strategies for effecting change, which brings us into the next prong of the HRI framework, *relational*.

2.4 Food sovereignty construction as process: a relational approach

A second common trend in the literature is related to the first in not situating present food sovereignty efforts as being in motion through time, but here the issue has more to do with not looking forward than not looking back. That is, it has to do with a tendency to view present food sovereignty efforts as more of a final outcome than as a particular snapshot in time that could go in any number of directions. The second prong of the HRI framework, *relational*, thus builds upon the first, *historical*, in that it also starts from an understanding of food sovereignty construction as unfolding in time. This particular lens looks at the ways in which the very meanings of food sovereignty and approaches toward it are dynamically being shaped – and mutually shaping each other – in the process of its construction. Since there is no predetermined path for food sovereignty, it must be defined and articulated as it is being constructed, through processes that are open-ended, iterative, creative and contentious. What would food sovereignty actually look like for Venezuela? What is the vision? What are the respective roles of state and societal forces in this vision? Of urban and rural populations? What model(s) of agriculture form the basis of food sovereignty? What are the roles and meanings attached to food in this process? Is food sovereignty considered a means of "feeding the revolution" or a revolution within the revolution – or both? How transformative in nature is the vision of food sovereignty for Venezuela? How much of a break from the current system does it imply? And how to get there?

There is of course no single answer to these questions, and responses will vary greatly depending upon who is asked. Even among those who support food sovereignty in principle, it takes on a variety of meanings, with different perspectives on how to build it, and these perspectives are in ongoing dialogue and tension with one another. Thus, in Venezuela, and elsewhere, there is no singular, unified vision or project for food sovereignty, but rather multiple, overlapping, and often competing efforts. Perhaps this explains, at least partly, Bernstein's (2014) observation that studies of food sovereignty in Venezuela have varied significantly to date. Much depends on how food sovereignty is being defined, what is being observed and through which analytical lenses. For instance, in his study of Venezuela's state-run agricultural enterprises, Kappeler (2013) finds that they are based on large-scale, industrial production and organized hierarchically, with producers viewed more as factory workers than as *campesinos* (peasants). He thus argues that "Although official rhetoric rarely if ever acknowledges the divergence of reality on the ground from the peasant line of La Vía Campesina, in practical terms, the model of agriculture created by the government represents a distinct form of food sovereignty" (Kappeler 2013: 16), characterizing the latter as a form of "Fordist Neopopulism" (Kappeler 2013: 17).

Kappeler generates some critically important insights into the challenging dynamics of state involvement in food sovereignty construction in his analysis of an under-examined approach to food sovereignty construction in Venezuela. However, his characterization of the state-run enterprises as *the* approach to food sovereignty reflective of *the* food sovereignty pursued by the Venezuelan state under the Bolivarian Revolutionary government implies, perhaps unintentionally, that there is a singular stand-alone approach by the Venezuelan state towards radical food system transformation. Yet the state-run enterprise initiative is one of many competing approaches being adopted by the government, approaches which differ quite fundamentally, and which tend to be dynamically altered over time. An illustration of this can be found in Kappeler's explanation that the promotion of state-run

agricultural enterprises was partly sparked in response to the limitations faced by a prior push by the government for farmer-run cooperatives earlier on in the agrarian reform process. This initiative, he explains, largely failed to reach its desired aims due to challenges including barriers in knowledge and technology transfer, economic unviability, and an inability of the government to attract and retain sufficient participants, together with a lack of alignment between the interests of the government and those of participants. This combination of factors, according to Kappeler, is among the reasons behind the shift toward agricultural enterprises entailing more direct oversight of state actors (*see also* Page 2010, Clark 2010). And yet it bears emphasis that these enterprises exist alongside the persisting state-supported cooperatives, and together with a host of urban and peri-urban farming initiatives, as well as other forms of food production taking place via citizen-run social institutions, each of which is supported through multiple, and in some cases clashing, government initiatives. Thus, Venezuela's state-run enterprises may be better seen as an expression, at a given moment in time, of competing approaches and paradigms that are a logical manifestation of a contested state. The point raised above builds on the fundamental assumption of this study about the need to differentiate, empirically and analytically, between food sovereignty and efforts towards it.

The dynamics at play behind clashing government-supported initiatives around food and agriculture in Venezuela are captured well in another recent food sovereignty-related study of Venezuela, by Enríquez and Newman (2016). Interestingly, they assert that the government's food sovereignty agenda has in fact given way to a new agenda of "nationalist food security" from 2010 onward. They argue that this is evidenced in part by continued reliance upon food imports, along with a preference toward sourcing from large-scale operations for food that is purchased domestically, for the government-run food programs. They summarize the main reasons they see behind "the national state's inability to attain food sovereignty" as "a lack of agency-level capacity, inter-agency conflict, and the persistence of the old property structure" (Enríquez and Newman 2016: 621). While

these structures and institutions are indeed fundamentally important constraining and hindering factors in efforts toward food sovereignty, the conclusion around a "nationalist food security" agenda can be misplaced. Several questions are raised by this argument. First are fundamental questions about the concept of food sovereignty itself. Is food sovereignty best understood as a state of being that can be attained, or does such a conceptualization reduce it from the complex and dynamic process, or set of processes, that others have argued it to be (Edelman et al. 2014, Iles and Montenegro de Wit 2015, McKay et al. 2014, Shattuck et al. 2015), and hence serve to reduce its transformative potential? McKay at al. (2014: 1177) have argued, for instance, that "Food sovereignty cannot be conceived of as a finite outcome; it is a political space and terrain of struggle around control over food systems". Furthermore, does the implication that food sovereignty is a condition to be attained by the national state risk invisibilizing the inherently key role of non-state actors in food sovereignty construction? We will come back to this shortly.

Regarding the point on the perceived agenda shift by the Venezuelan government from food sovereignty to food security, Enríquez and Newman (2016) raise important issues that get to the heart of debates around food sovereignty. For instance, what place, if any, do food imports and long-distance trade have in food sovereignty construction? This is a matter indeed worth critical interrogation, as some have already begun to do (e.g., Burnett and Murphy 2014, Edelman et al. 2014). However, similar to the points raised above with regard to Kappeler's study, it bears asking whether strategies such as food importation indeed represent a unidirectional shift on the part of the government (i.e., away from food sovereignty and toward food security) or if this might be perceived as one of several competing strategies, including what Marcano Marin and Ellner (2015, no page) describe as "pragmatic" approaches, on the part of the government given in the face of current circumstances such as intensifying food shortages at the particular moment in time. That there is an ongoing policy for food importation, continued from the past, by the government is one thing. Which policy direction it is dynamically

moving towards or away from is another. I argue that it is problematic to conclude that government policies are moving away from food sovereignty towards more conventional nationalist food security when a mix of approaches can be observed – some of which reflect an effort to break away from the pre-1999 past towards food sovereignty, however uneven, slow, partial and non-unilinear the direction of the process has been. In this sense, Venezuela precisely fits the category of traditionally food-deficit countries that are pressured to embark on importation of cheap food to partially meet their food needs – that in turn face difficult dilemmas in food system transformations, and pose complicated challenges for food sovereignty advocates, as explained by Edelman et al. (2014). I also argue that it is problematic to conclude that there is any unified policy of the government when it comes to food and agriculture, as opposed to multiple and competing policies, as Enríquez and Newman's findings would appear to support.

Another important question raised by the study of Enríquez and Newman (2016) is the extent to which food security and food sovereignty are mutually exclusive, in theory and/or in practice, if indeed they are. In the Venezuelan context, for instance, the two are often seen going hand-in-hand in public policies, discourse and practice – as seen, for example, with the national Organic Law of Food Security and Sovereignty of 2008, in which both concepts are embedded. This interplay between food security and food sovereignty seen in Venezuela and elsewhere (*see*, for instance, Godek 2015 on the case of Nicaragua) connects to broader theoretical debates around the relationships between the two concepts. While there has been a tendency in these debates to paint the two as oppositional to each other (e.g., Schanbacher 2010), some scholars are beginning to make a case for moving away from a dichotomous take (e.g., Clapp 2014, Edelman 2014, Jarosz 2014, Murphy 2014). Clapp (2014), for instance, argues that the two concepts serve distinct functions and that food security is a more open-ended concept than the characterizations often attributed to it in the food sovereignty literature, making a plea to move beyond binaries. In a similar vein, Edelman (2014: 967) adds that, "in its origins and its contemporary expressions,

'food sovereignty' intersects considerably and sometimes even converges with 'food security'. Both have been protean concepts, frequently imprecise, always contested and in ongoing processes of semantic and political evolution". Given these more expansive ways of thinking on food security and food sovereignty, perhaps rather than analyzing whether one approach has displaced another in a given context, it might be more useful to examine the extent to which these two approaches are clashing, converging and mutually shaping each other. This is where a relational lens can be helpful for moving beyond binaries and appreciating food sovereignty construction as consisting of competing elements that coproduce and co-shape each other in dynamic ways.

A relational lens can also help us to appreciate the unfolding nature of food sovereignty construction and not to miss or discount efforts toward it that do not fit a certain mold. As Shattuck et al. explain, building upon calls for relational approaches to food sovereignty by Iles and Montenegro de Wit (2015) and Figueroa (2015):[6]

> A more relational approach to sovereignty moves away from an ideal, typified notion of what food sovereignty is or is not, focusing instead on how efforts to build food sovereignty change the

---

[6] This study builds upon several important prior studies that have called for a relational approach to understanding food sovereignty construction. Iles and Montenegro (2013: 2) describe the concept of sovereignty embedded in food sovereignty as "an intrinsically relational concept, only taking on meaning in relation to other processes, functions, and forms – not least, other sovereign units". This is particularly relevant, they argue, for understanding and analyzing food sovereignty construction across multiple scales, which they further explore in an equally insightful subsequent piece (Iles and Montenegro de Wit 2015). Figueroa calls for "a relational conception of food as a nexus of multiple, intersecting social-historical processes" (Figueroa 2015: 498). She adds:

> Thinking about food relationally is useful not only for an analysis of what went into its physical production, but also for the production of meaning through food practices, and their capacity to produce and reproduce social relations in general through the lived experience of obtaining, preparing, and consuming food. (502)

> ways in which power is structured and experienced in people's everyday lives. This allows us to see that food sovereignty does not have to – and will not – look the same everywhere … these differences are the product of local history, identity, cultural memory, and political moments. (Shattuck et al. 2015: 427)

Key here is approaching food sovereignty as process as opposed to outcome. It is too soon to draw any conclusions on what food sovereignty does or does not look like for Venezuela, as this is being actively debated and shaped, without any pre-determined pathway, by the many actors involved. Indeed, the jury is very much out on the future trajectories of the food sovereignty efforts currently underway in Venezuela, and here is it argued that it is the processes shaping these trajectories as we speak that are in fact most interesting and instructive to learn from.

So, what does it mean to apply a relational lens to food sovereignty construction? According to Emirbayer (1997: 281) in 'Manifesto for a relational sociology', a relational lens depicts social reality "in dynamic, continuous, and processual terms" and "sees relations between terms or units as pre-eminently dynamic in nature, as unfolding, ongoing processes rather than as static ties among inert substances" (Emirbayer 1997: 289). Furthermore, he adds that from a relational perspective, "the very terms or units involved in a transaction derive their meaning, significance, and identity from the (changing) functional roles they play within that transaction. The latter, seen as a dynamic, unfolding process, becomes the primary unit of analysis…" (Emirbayer 1997: 287).

It is important to underscore that relational here refers not only to relationships among the actors engaged in food sovereignty (which will be further addressed in the next section, on an interactive lens), but also to relationships among the very concepts, paradigms and approaches comprising food sovereignty construction. With a dynamically evolving concept such as food sovereignty, the ideas and meanings attached to it are co-evolving and co-constituting each other. This notion is captured by Somers (1995: 136), who argues that "the most important definitional shift in an historical sociology of concept formation is away from thinking about a concept as a singular categorical expression to

regarding concepts as embedded in complex relational networks that are both intersubjective and public…". She adds that "What appear to be autonomous categories defined by their attributes are reconceived more accurately as historically shifting sets of relationships that are contingently stabilized" (Somers 1995: 136).

This perspective is relevant to food sovereignty on a number of levels. First, food sovereignty as a concept and an idea has been and continues to be shaped through its interactions with other concepts and ideas. Going back to food security and food sovereignty, the two concepts derive much of their meaning from their relationship to each other. Food sovereignty as it is known today arose in large part in response to the perceived failures of food security approaches (Patel 2009) and thus has been deeply shaped by perceptions of what food security is and is not. The relationship between the two is more complex than one simply being a critique of the other, however, in that elements of food security have been reflected in the various definitions of food sovereignty from early on (Edelman 2014), particularly in the most widely recognized definition from 2007.[7] And, on the flip

---

[7] According to Clapp (2014: 207),

> The 1996 World Food Summit expanded the definition of food security, and with the addition of the word "social" in 2001, remains the most widely used and authoritative definition of the concept today: "Food security exists when all people, at all times, have physical, social and economic access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food that meets their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life" (FAO 2001). The Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) now also frequently refers to four pillars of food security: availability, access, utilization, and stability, when explaining the concept (FAO 2008).

The most widely recognized definition of food sovereignty, coming out of the Nyéléni Food Sovereignty Forum of 2007, is: "the right of peoples to healthy and culturally appropriate food produced through ecologically sound and sustainable methods, and their right to define their own food and agriculture systems" (Nyéléni 2007a, no page). This basic definition is excerpted from a longer, more detailed definition of food sovereignty contained in the 'Declaration of Nyéléni' (Nyéléni 2007a).

side, with the emergence of food sovereignty, discourse around food security would never be quite the same. Patel (2009) points out that the broadened definition of food security (to include issues of nutrition, social control and public health) adopted at the 1996 World Food Summit was in fact influenced by the simultaneous launching of food sovereignty there by La Via Campesina. The influence of food sovereignty has similarly permeated food security dialogues from the UN Committee on Word Food Security to national anti-hunger initiatives. Thus, as others have pointed out (Clapp 2014, Edelman 2014) and as mentioned above, there is considerable give-and-take and mutual influence between food security and food sovereignty as concepts. Both concepts are in motion, as Edelman (2014) reminds us, and their respective trajectories are largely influenced by the dynamic tension that exists between them. A binary approach to food security and food sovereignty, then, does not do justice to either concept or to the multifaceted relationship between them. A relational approach, on the other hand, helps us to appreciate the ways in which the two concepts are historically linked and not only coexist but coproduce each other.

Just as a relational lens is helpful for examining the ways in which food sovereignty is simultaneously shaping and being shaped by other related concepts, it can also be helpful for examining how food sovereignty itself is a composite of different concepts, paradigms and approaches, which interact dynamically, pushing its ongoing evolution. The various elements embedded within and comprising food sovereignty are perhaps best captured in the *6 pillars of food sovereignty* developed at the Nyéléni 2007 Forum for Food Sovereignty, in Sélingué, Mali. Nyéléni was a defining moment in the evolution and articulation of the concept by transnational social movements and their allies, and it was there that the most widely referenced definition of food sovereignty (see note 6) was developed, along with a broader framework that includes the following six main pillars (Nyéléni 2007b):

Food sovereignty …

i. focuses on food for people

529827-L-bw-Schiavoni
Processed on: 15-3-2019

ii. values food providers
iii. localizes food systems
iv. puts control locally
v. builds knowledge and skills
vi. works with nature

While these pillars are not to be taken rigidly and certainly should not be mistaken for a checklist, they serve as helpful guideposts for analysis into the multiple dimensions of food sovereignty, as conceived of by transnational social movements. For the purposes of research into food sovereignty construction, they might be thought of as "arenas of interaction", defined by Alimi et al. (2015: 56) as "sites and frameworks of interchanges, communication, bargaining, and negotiation". Take, for example, the first pillar of food sovereignty, *focuses on food for people*, which affirms the right of all people to healthy, culturally appropriate food and that food be treated first and foremost as a life-sustaining resource and not simply as a commodity for profit (Nyéléni 2007b). This is an arena in which Venezuela has seen some notable advances, but also one riddled with tensions and contradictions. Through substantial government investment in food access and feeding programs, a national survey in 2013 found that over 96 percent of the population was regularly eating 3–4 meals a day, an extraordinary accomplishment, as recognized by the FAO (Agencia Venezolana de Noticias 2013).[8] However, as a member of the GMO-Free Venezuela campaign put it, "This same food system that's been applauded by the FAO has a horrific ecological footprint … and health consequences too".[9] This comment touches upon a number of issues, including the type and quality of food and the processes involved from farm to plate. This, then, raises fundamental questions with regard to *food for people* – what food and from where? And does it matter? On one end of the spectrum are those who might argue that what matters most

[8] This percentage has likely gone down in the face of recent food shortages, although conclusive data is not yet available at the time of writing (*see* Schiavoni and Camacaro 2016).

[9] Interview, Caracas, 21 July 2015.

is a readily available supply of cheap food that is universally accessible to the whole of the population. In this paradigm, the right to food might be equated with "the right to calories" (Valente 2014: 156). On the other end of the spectrum is a more multidimensional paradigm of food as a nexus of nutrition, culture and ecology, and as a vehicle for broader transformation.

In Venezuela, both of these paradigms – characterized by McMichael (2009: 147) as "food from nowhere" versus "food from somewhere" – are at play. The former appears to be the paradigm underlying many of Venezuela's government food programs, which continue to rely in large part upon food produced through the industrial food system, both imported and domestically sourced, in order to make affordable food available to Venezuela's largely urban population. The latter is what is being advocated among many of Venezuela's social movements, together with some from within the government, who are working toward a more transformative approach to food, as a means of reclaiming Venezuela's agricultural and culinary traditions, enhancing public health, building bridges across the urban-rural divide, and challenging corporate control of the food supply. This second approach involves a critique of the former. For instance, some point out that the industrially processed foods pervasive in the Venezuelan diet have been implicated in fueling Venezuela's mounting public health concerns, with a third of the population overweight or obese (Briceño-Iragorry et al. 2012). As one government representative involved in food sovereignty efforts reflected, "The food we're importing is not healthy, unfortunately".[10]

The institutional design of Venezuela's food programs around cheap, industrially processed foods has also come under fire by food sovereignty activists for perpetuating the commodification of food. They point to the growing business of buying subsidized food and reselling it on the domestic parallel market and/or smuggling subsidized food across the Colombian border, where it can be resold at much higher prices. Such practices, which the government has been struggling to curb, are implicated in contributing to the shortages, while also further fueled by them (Mills

[10] Interview, Caracas, 22 July 2015.

and Camacaro 2015). The GMO-Free Venezuela representative adds that a distinction must be made that Venezuela is far from experiencing an overall food shortage, but is in fact experiencing shortages of particular processed food items: "One thing I'll tell you is that people aren't lining up for cassava". The same foods that people are lining up for, she explains – for example, pre-cooked corn flour, margarine, mayonnaise and refined sugar – are foods produced through the industrial food system that are in fact bad for the environment, bad for human health and against the interests of food sovereignty. Some activists are therefore calling for a wholesale shift away from industrial foods as they promote alternatives. And yet the same actors who are calling for a paradigm shift around food and food provisioning also support, in principle, the government's efforts to make food universally accessible as a basic human right through a host of feeding and food access programs. The demand is not to do away with these programs, but to move away from the dependency on industrially processed "food from nowhere" (McMichael 2009: 147) upon which they are currently based. In a scenario that largely mirrors the above-mentioned interplay between food security and food sovereignty, there is the question of how to ensure that people eat sufficiently and to do so in a way that addresses issues such as public health, sustainability and autonomy. This would likely involve not displacing one paradigm with another, but identifying the points of synergy between the two.

Through this brief discussion of the first pillar of food sovereignty as an "arena of interaction", we can see the ways in which a wide range of competing paradigms and approaches are interacting dynamically to shape food sovereignty construction. We can also appreciate the ways in which food sovereignty construction is a composite of many different processes. Understanding such processes, and the elements constituting them, is key to moving "from static to dynamic analysis" (McAdam et al. 2001: 12), as part of a relational lens to food sovereignty construction. This will also be picked up in the next section on an interactive lens. A key point here is that a relational lens helps us to be critical about the categories of analysis used in food sovereignty studies

(and beyond), reflecting on how the meanings of certain analytical categories change as history marches forward. Finally, a relational lens, as Hart (2006: 21–22) acknowledges:

> differs fundamentally from one that deploys ideal types, or that posits different 'cases' as local variants of a more general phenomenon. Instead of comparing pre-existing objects, events, places, or identities, the focus is on how they are constituted in relation to one another through power-laden practices in the multiple, interconnected arenas of everyday life. Clarifying these connections and mutual processes of constitution – as well as slippages, openings, and contradictions – helps to generate new understandings of the possibilities for social change.

2.5 State-society relations in food sovereignty construction: an interactive approach

The third and final tendency in the recent food sovereignty literature addressed here is not – or not sufficiently – disaggregating the actors involved in food sovereignty construction and examining the interactions among them. This has to do with the positioning of the state vis-à-vis society in food sovereignty studies. Until recently, the more dominant view in the literature had been a society-centric view that emphasized the role of non-state actors in pushing for food sovereignty, without addressing the strategic role of the state in facilitating efforts toward food sovereignty beyond localized, scattered initiatives, however concrete, inspiring and fascinating these are. If food sovereignty is to mean a wholesale transformation of the food system, benefitting social classes and groups beyond the organized ranks of social movements, then the role of the state becomes key. As scholars have increasingly begun to pursue the involvement of the state in food sovereignty construction, however, much of this emerging literature has tended toward being state-centric. There is a tendency of assigning too great a role to the state in determining whether food sovereignty construction will push forward or not, and if so, to what extent, and with what character and trajectory. This tendency has at least two problematic implications. First is that the role of non-state actors is not significant enough to bring more

prominently into the analysis. Second is that non-state actors can be lumped together with the state as a single actor just because they fall under the same broad political project – e.g., lumping the social movements who identify with the Bolivarian Revolution together with the Venezuelan state. The latter is to conflate *state-society interaction* with *state action*.

The limitations of a state-centered approach can be seen in the analysis of sustainable agriculture in Venezuela. This is a particularly paradoxical area within Venezuelan food sovereignty efforts, as sustainable agriculture is explicitly promoted by law, whereas its actual promotion and implementation by state agencies is much more uneven. As documented by Enríquez (2013) and Enríquez and Newman (2016), while the state has invested heavily in agriculture in recent years, the credit, technical support and inputs provided to producers are simultaneously supporting both industrial agriculture and agroecological practices, partly depending upon the agencies involved, which are sometimes in direct conflict on the matter. One example is the simultaneous promotion and distribution of synthetic and biological fertilizers and pesticides, which are associated with significantly divergent models of production. Furthermore, Enríquez (2013) and Enríquez and Newman (2016) have found that these conflicting forms of support remain skewed more toward industrial agriculture than agroecology. From such accounts alone, one could conclude that the state commands the course of food sovereignty initiatives, privileging industrial agriculture over agroecology. However, what these and other accounts do not include are the significant openings created through the Bolivarian Revolution for movements for sustainable agriculture and agroecology coming from below. That is, there are movements that had been working on these issues long before 1999, that, though they might have a critical stance on certain state policies, feel that their work has been able to advance in significant ways with greater institutional support/collaboration from the state through the Bolivarian Revolution (Nuñez 2007, Paget-Clarke 2008). These movements, in turn, are influencing state policies and actions, in dialectical relationship with state actors.

Venezuela's broad movement for sustainable agriculture and agroecology – comprised of a range of both formal and informal local and national organizations and institutions – is relatively autonomous from the state Bolivarian government, even when individually and collectively those within this movement consider themselves part of the Bolivarian Revolution. These are among the most vocal critics of state support for industrial agriculture, which they see as being contrary to the interests of food sovereignty. One point of critique, for example, is the nationalization of the country's largest agricultural input chain, AgroIsleña in 2010, which the state continues to run under the name AgroPatria, but, which according to an agroecology activist, "is no more than a *chavista* AgroIslena" (Schiavoni 2014: 21). The same activist added that such practices undermine the more innovative efforts supported by the state, such as financing for farmer-led research projects that build upon locally held knowledge (Schiavoni 2014: 21). The state-centric emphasis in the scholarly literature has resulted in scant studies that have examined the ways in which such movements have grown in number and in political power, serving as an important counterforce to the entrenched power structures upholding industrial agriculture.

In situations where there are competing currents within the state, either between or within ideological camps, resulting partly in policy initiatives that run counter to food sovereignty principles, relatively autonomous social movements can be a radicalizing force from below that can directly frustrate conservative political swings. This could be seen in a recent three-year struggle over the country's national seed law. In 2013, as the Venezuelan National Assembly was about to pass a new seed law that would have paved the way for the legalization of genetically modified organisms (GMOs) in the country, social movements came together from across the urban-rural divide under the banner of Venezuela Libre De Transgénicos (GMO-Free Venezuela) and succeeded in grinding the process to a halt. They then launched a participatory, bottom-up national process of popular constituent debate to develop an alternative seed law (*see* Mills and Camacaro 2013 and Camacaro et al. 2016a for detailed accounts). The result two years into the process was a proposed seed law

529827-L-bw-Schiavoni
Processed on: 15-3-2019

that was radically different from that which had been nearly passed two years prior. The new proposed law garnered major support among civil society, and among a growing number of state actors as well, ultimately resulting in its passage in December 2015 by the outgoing *chavista*-majority National Assembly, after intense deliberation and debate (Camacaro et al. 2016a). Components of the law include a ban on both domestic production and importation of transgenic seeds; restrictions against patenting of plant genetic material; and special protections for locally produced seeds of Venezuela's Indigenous, Afro-descendant and peasant farming communities.

The struggle over the seed law demonstrates that the efforts of GMO-Free Venezuela are no less influential in shaping state policies than any number of state institutions involved in food sovereignty matters. Furthermore, this society-driven campaign at once worked both through and outside of the mechanisms of the state, and in collaboration with certain state actors and in antagonism with others. Such important dynamics are all but invisibilized with a state-centered lens. Similarly, were they to be analyzed through a society-centered lens, the important openings from within the state for the advancement of this radical grassroots policy agenda could just as easily be overlooked.

That social movements for agroecology, against GMOs and for a progressive seed law have significantly influenced state action and state-society interaction – and thus, national policy dynamics – pinpoints the importance of not missing the role of social forces from below in one's analysis, as well as of not lumping social movement actors with the state even when they are in the same political project. It also encourages us not to conflate state action with state-society interaction. To limit one's lens to the role of the state, then, is to miss important pieces of the picture. As emphasized by Migdal (1994: 2), "there is no getting around the mutuality of state-society interactions: Societies affect states as much as, or possibly more than, states affect societies".

This is where an interactive lens becomes an important framework of analysis for gaining an understanding of how state and societal forces are mutually shaping each other (Fox 1993, Gaventa and McGee 2010). Indeed, analyzing food sovereignty

construction through such a lens is important for understanding how political power is distributed, contested and transformed in and in relation to the food system, and how the food system in turn shapes broader societal processes, such as capital accumulation, as well as state formation, and vice versa. Given the discussion above, and following Kohli and Vivienne (1994: 294) in dialogue with Migdal, there are three related fundamental assumptions that are important here – namely, that it is critical to disaggregate the state; that the boundaries between the state and society are generally blurred; and that it is more useful to think of a recursive interaction between state and society that is the mutually transforming nature of state-society relations. Relevant here is Fox's "interactive approach" to state-society relations which he developed to study Mexico's public food distribution system in the 1980s. The approach "builds on the strength of both society- and state-centered approaches, while attempting to compensate for their limitations" (Fox 1993: 21–22). Fox argues that "state action is the result of a reciprocal cause and effect relationship between changes in the balance of power within the state and the shifts in the balance of power within society. Through conflict, each is transformed" (Fox 1993: 22). In attempting to assess the factors contributing to the unexpected relatively successful outcomes of a state-supported food program, Fox found that neither state-centered nor society-centered approaches could adequately explain the dynamics at play. Instead, the outcomes could best be explained through focusing on the "interaction between state and society, the institutions that mediate such interaction, and the factors that account for how those institutions are in turn transformed" (Fox 1993: 39). Employing such an approach, Fox argued that certain openings from above facilitated by reformist actors within the state were met with mobilization by societal actors from below that "shifted the boundaries of what was politically possible" (Fox 1993: 39), yielding unexpected outcomes that empowered rural communities.

This study adopts Fox's (1993: 11–12) definition of the state, namely, "compris(ing) the ensemble of political, social, economic, and coercive institutions that exercise 'public' authority in

529827-L-bw-Schiavoni
Processed on: 15-3-2019

a given territory". Such a take ascribes neither to a purely Weberian view of the state as autonomous from societal forces nor to a purely Marxist view of the state an instrument of class power, instead seeing state and social forces as mutually shaping one another. Furthermore, the state is seen not as a monolithic entity that acts in a unified way all the time, but as a heterogeneous and contested space. Two key categories of actors here are "social actors" or "societal actors", defined as "groups of people who identify common interests and share ideas about how to pursue them" (Fox 1993: 23), and "state actors", defined as "groups of officials whose actions push or pull in the same political direction" (Fox 1993: 29).

The challenges and opportunities perceived by different state and societal actors put them together, tactically or strategically, in relation to a particular reform or political project for system-wide change. While unified state actors' ranks can lead to state action toward desirable reforms, splits among the various factions of state actors can also facilitate the emergence of favorable changes in the "political opportunity structure" that can then enhance the autonomy and capacity of claim-makers from below to demand claims and rights, and/or forge and expand alliances with some groups within the state (Tarrow 2011). Bridging objectively or subjectively allied state and societal actors are what Fox calls "institutional access routes" (Fox 1993: 31). In the case of Venezuela these include formal and informal institutional channels through which similarly oriented state and societal actors get in touch with, negotiate with, support or pressure each other, and/or plan together on how to bring them closer to their common goals. Sharing the same vision of the Bolivarian Revolution, or a shared disdain for traditional bourgeois classes, or being jointly located in a particular food policy or agroecology initiative are examples of such access routes. In Fox's analysis, institutions are seen as playing a key role in mediating the relations between state and societal actors, and thus serve as focal sites of his analysis, very much in consonance with the historical institutionalism take of Thelen and Steinmo (1992) described above. In particular, Fox (1993: 217) emphasizes the creation of community food councils in rural Mexico in providing

> a new, two-way institutional access route that connected state and societal actors. From above, state reformists structured new patterns of representation within rural society. From below, these new opportunities for participation became autonomous channels for interest articulation that in turn left their imprint on the state.

As I have elaborated elsewhere (Schiavoni 2015), the community food councils described by Fox share certain parallels with citizen-led bodies in Venezuela that are increasingly taking up matters of food and agriculture. The building blocks of such efforts are communal councils, local citizen-run bodies that set their own priorities and budgets, interface with the government and channel state resources into community development projects. Supported by the Communal Council Law of 2006, there are upwards of 44,900 communal councils throughout the country as of the time of writing.[11] A major thrust of the Bolivarian Revolution in recent years, coming both from above and below, is a push for the formation of *comunas* by the linking together of communal councils across a shared territory.[12] The stated goal behind the construction of *comunas* is to facilitate a greater transfer of power from the state to citizens, toward the furthering of "participatory democracy", in which citizens play a more direct role in governance. As of May 2016, there were over 1500 *comunas* officially registered with the government, with additional ones under construction (Ministerio del Poder Popular para las Comunas y los Movimientos Sociales 2016). Occupying a key space at the intersection of state and society, the organized citizens who comprise the *comunas* have emerged as important new actors in food sovereignty efforts. Many of them are taking food sovereignty matters into their own hands in a distinct departure from the approaches of various state agencies, while continuing to interact with these

[11] Representative of Fundacomunal, Caracas, personal communication, 23 July 2015.

[12] For a background on the construction of *comunas* in Venezuela, some of the top-level internal discussions about this and an effort to locate it more broadly in the literature, see Foster (2015).

agencies, mutually influencing each other in the process (Schiavoni 2015).

Leach and Scoones (2007: 7) remind us, however, that "it is evident that many instances of citizen engagement take place outside these institutionally-orchestrated spaces through more spontaneous forms of mobilization". This resonates with the Venezuelan context, in which community councils and *comunas* serve as only part, albeit an important part, of a much broader patchwork of citizen-led efforts in Venezuela that is shaping the construction of food sovereignty in dynamic and contentious ways. Other critical pieces of this patchwork are the many social movements involved in food sovereignty activism in Venezuela, which, as mentioned above, played a decisive role in getting food sovereignty onto the state's agenda in the first place, through years of prior mobilization. These movements are themselves quite heterogeneous and operate with varying degrees of closeness to, or distance from, the state, while still influencing the state's engagement in food sovereignty construction in important ways. Some of these movements intersect significantly with the *comunas*, while others do not. Some of them are largely aligned with state policies, while others are largely critical of them, even if they continue to identify with the broader vision of the Bolivarian Revolution.

Given the nuanced and diverse positioning of societal actors, including social movements, vis-à-vis the state, and their mix of *inside* and *outside* strategies, it is suggested here that some additional analytical tools are needed to complement those presented thus far, for a deeper understanding of how these movements function and what their roles are in food sovereignty construction, particularly in relation to the state. A number of scholars have already made some helpful analytical bridges between the sort of state-society frameworks presented thus far and the frameworks coming out of social movement theory. Leach and Scoones (2007: 15), for instance, suggest an "integrated perspective on mobilization" that

> in turn suggests a more integrated perspective on citizenship: one that understands socially and spatially located nature of the 'mo-

> bilising citizen', engaged in a dynamic, networked political interactions, drawing on a variety of resources, becoming part of shifting forms of social solidarity and identification.

Gaventa and McGee (2010: 11) argue, with respect to state-society relations and social movement theory, that

> there is a need to bring these two approaches together: it is precisely by looking at how and under what conditions policy-focused collective action and social movements emerge that we can also gain insights into when and how organized citizen action can bring about national policy change as well.

Gaventa and McGee (2010: 26) provide a helpful framework for such an integrated analysis, drawing from classic social movement theorists such as Tarrow, Tilly and McAdam, looking, for example, at the ways in which political openings are both created and seized by social movements; at mobilizing structures; and at the framing of claims as "an intrinsically contentious and dynamic process". Such analytical tools are helpful for further interrogating the role of social movements vis-à-vis state-society relations in the construction of food sovereignty.

Going back to the state, state actors then become the other critical set of players in an interactive perspective to state-society relations. The emergence of a *state-society synergy* or *mutually reinforcing interaction* (Evans 1997, Fox 1993, Migdal et al. 1994), however, does not guarantee that the desired system change or reforms, such as food sovereignty, can be pushed or constructed to a great extent or intended character, pace and direction. This is because such political interaction occurs in the context of the limits imposed, or possibilities allowed, by pre-existing social structures and relevant institutions. This is even more so and even more complicated in settings where remnants of an old regime continue to be entrenched in the midst of emerging enclaves of a new regime, as with the Bolivarian Revolution (e.g., *see* Enríquez 2013).

Furthermore, state actors, and by implication, the societal actors they are allied to, face the difficult challenge of the double imperative of facilitating capital accumulation on the one hand

and maintaining a historically determined minimum level of political legitimacy on the other hand (O'Connor 1973). In largely capitalist-oriented societies, the state will always be dependent on how and how well capital accumulation proceeds because it is partly or largely dependent on the revenues generated by such processes. This is even more so in settings where the state has nationalized key industries, and in the context of the left-turn national governments, the strategy around "neoextractivism" (Arsel et al. 2014, Petras and Veltmeyer 2014). Capital accumulation is, and must, always be paired with legitimation – which Fox (1993: 30–31) defines as "the creation and renewal of the conditions for social peace – that is, the containment of most conflict within 'proper channels'". He further explains that legitimacy "refers to a political system's renewable lease on power, which depends on its appearing to function better than plausible alternatives…" (Fox 1993: 31).

State actors' location at the various levels of the state may also contribute to their accessibility (or vulnerability) vis-à-vis claim-makers from below. Migdal's categories are useful in this sense where he explains that four levels are important to note: the trenches, the dispersed field offices, the agency's central office, and the commanding heights (executive leadership) (Migdal 1994: 16). In the context of political transformation within which social movements in Latin America operate, specifically from struggles against clientelism and bossism to struggles for rights, Harvey (1998: 8–9) explains that, "When movements no longer petition the government for favors but demand respect for rights, the practices inevitably change, even if the authorities attempt to re-assert vertical lines of clientelistic control". Following Foweraker's work on Mexico, Harvey (1998: 23) also notes that:

> The hallmark of Mexican popular movements is not their radical autonomy from the political system, but their institutionalism… This trend does not mean that movements only seek incorporation into the existing rules. Foweraker saw them, instead, as institutionalist and non-conformist. They negotiate in order to get demands met, but they also mobilize and challenge the way they are treated by state authorities.

This is an important conceptual angle for food sovereignty research, particularly in Venezuela and other Latin American countries that have similar political histories.

2.6 Toward a historical, relational and interactive approach to food sovereignty research

This contribution has pointed to several proposed directions forward for the rapidly growing field of food sovereignty research, brought together under the *historical-relational-interactive*, or HRI, framework. As the concept of food sovereignty and the movements connected to it are in a dynamic state of evolution, so too is our understanding of them. A key question becomes how to study such a moving target. Perhaps most fundamentally, it is important to have clarity as to what we are studying. If we set out in search of food sovereignty in a given context, we are bound not to find it. Furthermore, we risk overlooking the struggles and initiatives underway that are providing the very fabric out of which food sovereignty is being, or might be, constructed.

This could not be better exemplified than in the case of Venezuela. What can be seen in the country at the time of this writing – shortages of basic items, high inflation and an especially tense political climate – might look as far away from food sovereignty as imaginable. And yet, this moment of crisis is providing fertile ground for seeds of deeper transformation toward food sovereignty, as unprecedented numbers of Venezuelans are growing their own food, saving and exchanging seeds, bartering with their neighbors, and seeking out alternatives in order to feed themselves and their families (Schiavoni and Camacaro 2016). Social movements are seizing the moment to push for a radicalization of national food sovereignty efforts, including advancing proposals that had been long in the making before the current crisis. One such proposal is the above-mentioned new seed law, which is now undergoing a process of *comunalización*, or grassroots diffusion, as movements seek to push forward its implementation as rapidly as possible in the face of industry-backed opposition. Simultaneously, movements are working to forge concrete solutions to confront the current bottleneck in food distribution. An

example is the Feria Conuquera, a highly popular monthly market in Caracas featuring homemade and artisanal alternatives to the items missing from supermarket shelves. Another example born out of the crisis is Plan Pueblo a Pueblo, a people-to-people effort to forge direct links between rural and urban communities, through the vehicle of the comunas. In little over a year since its inception, Plan Pueblo a Pueblo is now reaching upwards of 40,000 urban inhabitants with affordable fresh food, with other communities looking to get involved. The government has also launched a series of new initiatives, from a new Ministry of Urban Agriculture to promote and consolidate urban food production to an emergency door-to-door grocery delivery effort in partnership with community organizations. Some of the government responses are being embraced by food sovereignty activists (albeit to differing degrees), while others have come under criticism as perpetuating a broken system, generating much debate and discussion over what food sovereignty means and looks like and how to get there.

How can academics, as well as activists and policymakers, make sense of these recent developments? Here HRI can help bring us to a deeper understanding of the current conjuncture and future possibilities. A historical lens sheds light into how Venezuela's food system got into the precarious place that it is and how food politics connect to the broader politics of the country. A relational lens can help us to tease out and analyze the many responses to the present crisis, from those serving to reinforce the current system to those representing a radical break from it, and to identify where the greatest points of synergy and tension – and possibilities for convergence – may lie. An interactive lens can help us to appreciate the interdependency between state and societal actors required for any meaningful shift out of the current system. As one grassroots food sovereignty activist wrote reflecting upon the present challenges, "This has shown us the urgent task of deepening and radicalizing this process in our own hands and not leaving the fate of this country in the hands of bureaucrats".[13] At the same time, she and others are calling

[13] Personal communication via email, 7 December 2015.

529827-L-bw-Schiavoni
Processed on: 15-3-2019

upon the state to fulfill its obligations in the implementation of the new seed law, as an urgent step forward toward food sovereignty, among other demands upon the state. They are under no illusion that they can go it alone. Furthermore, an HRI perspective can help us to see the current conjuncture facing Venezuela for what it is – the current conjuncture. How Venezuela's food politics will further unfold is anyone's guess. But here too an HRI approach can be helpful for analysis of the possibilities and limits of food sovereignty construction in Venezuela and for considering under what conditions the current crisis could serve as a catalyst for a deepening of food sovereignty efforts. Might there be a radicalization of the interaction between pro-reform state actors and social mobilizations from below in such a way as to impact the overall balance of forces within the state and in society in favor of a deepened food sovereignty agenda representing a significant break from the current system?

The current crisis facing Venezuela's food politics brings us to an immediate sub-context, which is a tumultuous moment facing Latin America's left- turn countries, of which Venezuela has been an important reference point. As many of the left-turn governments are also among the first to have adopted national food sovereignty policies, the implications for food sovereignty construction in this moment of shifting political dynamics are significant. Here an HRI perspective may be helpful for looking at some of these other national contexts (both in other countries where food sovereignty is officially on the agenda and in those where it is not) as well as regional food sovereignty construction efforts such as those of the 11-member ALBA (Bolivarian Alliance for the Peoples of Our America) founded by Venezuela and Cuba. On the flip side, while Venezuela has served as an apt and timely example to illustrate an HRI approach to food sovereignty research, the relevance of HRI spans well beyond this particular national case and beyond Latin America to other contexts. In many ways, the current situation seen in Venezuela, particularly the apparent failures of its deeply entrenched food import and distribution complex to meet the needs of the population, serves as a microcosm of the broader global food system, as exemplified in the food price crisis of 2007–2008 and onward. Since then, there has been

a flurry of new proposals on the global front, from those serving to uphold and strengthen current global food and agriculture architecture, to those pushing for radically different approaches, including a centering of human rights. What are the competing paradigms and approaches underlying these proposals, where did they come from, and how are different actors positioned in relation to them, and in relation to each other? Similar questions might be asked in any national, or even subnational, context in the wake of the food price crisis, and the ongoing structural failures of the dominant global food system.

It is hoped that scholars elsewhere will take up an HRI approach and apply it to their respective contexts, in the process further refining it and developing other complementary tools and frameworks. Especially as food sovereignty movements continue to expand into new contexts, there is infinite room for further research. For example, how can a historical approach be employed to challenge dominant origin stories of food sovereignty efforts in a given context that may omit important pieces of history and key elements and actors? While Edelman (2014) has done important work on this from a global perspective, relatively little has been done in national and subnational contexts (with important exceptions, such as Godek 2015). Furthermore, how can comparative historical methods most effectively be brought to bear in attempts to historicize food sovereignty? The work of Philip McMichael, particularly his incorporated comparison approach (McMichael 1990) may be instructive here.[14] With regards to a relational approach, once we have a deeper understanding of the competing paradigms and approaches shaping food sovereignty construction in a given context, what tools can help us identify points of synergy and tension, and thus potential for convergence? Here the work of Holt-Giménez and Shattuck (2011), in their assessment of the political tendencies of food movements, provides a helpful entry point. So too do recent studies of convergence among movements, including those by Brent et al.

---

[14] *See also* McMichael's (2014) 'Historicizing food sovereignty' for additional helpful insights into historicization.

529827-L-bw-Schiavoni
Processed on: 15-3-2019

(2015) and Tramel (2016) in the U.S. and global contexts, respectively. For an interactive approach, further tools are needed for more intricately situating the role of capital in state-society relations, and here McKay (2018) offers a helpful framework in his "state-society-capital nexus". Connected to this is the need for deeper analyses of class as related to the diverse actors involved in food sovereignty efforts. Important recent work in this area has been done by Henderson (2016), in his class analysis of food sovereignty movements in Ecuador and Mexico, along with earlier work such as that of Borras et al. (2008) on the class dynamics of transnational agrarian movements.

These are some suggested starting points for future research, but the list is endless. If this piece were to be boiled down into a single message it would be that the dynamism of our research must strive to match pace with the dynamism of food sovereignty efforts themselves. In Venezuela as with elsewhere, nothing is predetermined in the attempted construction of food sovereignty. Unexpected outcomes are par for the course. For researchers of food sovereignty, this is perhaps the greatest challenge – and the greatest thrill – of the work at hand.

Prologue to Chapter 3

Chapter 3 applies the HRI framework to food politics in Venezuela. Empirically, the chapter is based on fieldwork from 2015 to 2018, connecting the present conjuncture to little-examined events during the periods of colonization and modernization. The analysis further examines dynamic interactions of state and society over time, placing greater emphasis on the role of private capital. And the chapter examines various social responses to present challenges, both in relation to one another and in relation to similar efforts at other moments in history.

A call for papers from the newly forming Emancipatory Rural Politics Initiative (ERPI) in 2017 was the impetus for an earlier version of this chapter. ERPI is "focused on the social and political processes in rural spaces that are generating alternatives to regressive, authoritarian politics".[1] While the framing of "authoritarian populism" that is a main thrust of ERPI has frequently been applied to Venezuela and the Bolivarian Revolution, many such characterizations have been based on a mix of faulty assumptions and narrow understandings of democracy that have obscured rather than elucidated Venezuela's highly nuanced state-society dynamics (see Koerner (2017a) for an excellent

[1] See https://www.iss.nl/en/research/networks/emancipatory-rural-politics-initiative-erpi. We are very grateful to the team of ERPI for supporting this work.

529827-L-bw-Schiavoni
Processed on: 15-3-2019
PDF page: 111

overview of such). My Venezuelan collaborator, Ana Felicien, astutely noted, however, that many of the aspects of authoritarian populism laid out in the ERPI framing paper (Scoones et al. 2017) applied to recent resurgences of rightwing elements in Venezuela and the tactics they were employing in a moment of mounting crisis. Furthermore, many of the responses coming from the grassroots were powerful examples of emancipatory rural (and rural-urban) politics that merited greater exposure and analysis. Approached in this light, engagement in ERPI would be an opportunity to confront some of the many misperceptions around Venezuela while bringing in new perspectives that were being little heard. Sufficiently convinced, I embarked on this project with Ana and a third collaborator, Liccia Romero.

A first step in the research process was to inventory the dominant narratives surrounding Venezuela at the current conjuncture – on overall politics and on food politics in particular – noting common threads. A dominant metanarrative clearly emerged, which we analyzed, elucidating both the assumptions upon which the metanarrative was based, as well as the holes it contained and the social realities it concealed. From there, we dove into historical documentation, teasing out little-known parts of Venezuela's history that contained important insights into the present. For example, examination of the 1936 Law of Immigration and Colonization, among other key elements of Venezuela's agricultural modernization period, highlighted dynamics of race and racism deeply embedded in Venezuela's food politics that continue to play out into the present. A closer examination of the modernization process also shed important light into the industrial bias that continues to be pervasive in the Venezuelan agrifood system, including under the Bolivarian Revolution, a phenomenon frequently noted but little contextualized in much of the literature on Venezuela. We also examined other cases from other moments in history, from the economic blockade facing Chile under Allende to the survival programs of the Black Panther Party in the U.S., that share some striking parallels with the challenges facing present-day Venezuela and similarly hold some key lessons. For the sections on the current conjuncture, we drew from each of our respective investigations in the field, complemented

529827-L-bw-Schiavoni
Processed on: 15-3-2019

by lived experiences.[2] We also drew from secondary data and conducted several additional interviews with both government officials and social movement actors to gather specific pieces of information necessary for the project. Given the amount of material we attempted to condense into a single paper, a good deal of thought and discussion went into matters of organization and content flow, facilitated by the use of a white board, butcher paper, elaborate assemblages of adhesive notes and google documents.

The collaboration with Ana and Liccia would turn out to be a major highlight of my research experience. Both researchers straddle the worlds of activism and scholarship, and work very much at the intersection of the two, engaged in research that is praxis-based and action-oriented. Ana is a researcher at el IVIC (the national research institute that hosted me), is a national leader in the movement around the Seed Law, and works with urban and rural farmers and Indigenous communities on seed saving and exchange, agroecology, climate change adaptation and mitigation, and other food sovereignty-related efforts. Liccia is a professor at Universidad de los Andes (University of the Andes) who works with farmer-to-farmer networks on conservation and propagation of traditional crop varieties as well as efforts directly linking producers and consumers on the rescue of traditional crops, efforts which have been recognized by Slow Food International. As activists, women and Afro-Venezuelans, theirs does not fit the typical profile of Venezuelan intellectuals whose voices tend to make it to the exterior, even as they have critically important perspectives to offer. Camped out in Ana's family's apartment as we worked around the clock together, the experience of doing this project with her and Liccia not only exponentially deepened my understanding of Venezuelan history and politics, but also exposed me to a new approach to scholarship – one that

[2] Over the course of this project alone, matters of everyday survival such as transportation and food procurement and preparation grew increasingly difficult and complicated, impacting our daily schedules as we vividly lived through what we were writing about.

529827-L-bw-Schiavoni
Processed on: 15-3-2019

is unapologetically anti-patriarchal, anti-racist, decolonizing, horizontal, reflexive and bottom-up. I appreciated the refreshingly supportive atmosphere that was fostered together through recognizing, valuing and making room for the many hats we wear and roles we play, including often-invisibilized care work and emotional labor. Through this experience, I came to realize and appreciate that another form of scholarship, and another academia, is possible.

The piece that Ana, Liccia and I produced together was posted as an ERPI working paper in early 2018 in its raw and unedited form.[3] The original piece was largely targeted to the group of self-identified scholar activists present at the ERPI conference on "authoritarian populism and the rural world" held in The Hague in March of 2018. That paper was then picked up by *Monthly Review*, which featured a shortened, lightly revised version of it as the "Review of the Month" in its June 2018 issue.[4] The following chapter is a further reworking of the original paper that has benefited from additional review and revision. A difference from the original paper is that the framing of authoritarian populism has been removed, as it is a theme not central to the overall study, while the lens of food used in the original paper has been further developed. The ordering of the piece has also been reworked somewhat, in line with the revised analytical framework. Use of the first-person plural reflects that this is a co-authored work.

---

[3] Felicien, A., Schiavoni, C.M. and L. Romero (2018) 'Food Politics in a Time of Crisis: Corporate Power vs. Popular Power in the Shifting Relations of State, Society and Capital in Venezuela's Food System' Emancipatory Rural Politics Initiative Conference Paper No. 9. The Hague: ISS.

[4] Felicien, A., Schiavoni, C. M. and L. Romero (2018) 'The Politics of Food in Venezuela', *Monthly Review* 70(2): 1-19.

529827-L-bw-Schiavoni
Processed on: 15-3-2019

3 Food politics in Venezuela

Abstract

This chapter applies a historical, relational and interactive framework to the agrifood politics of the current conjuncture in Venezuela, together with a focus on questions of power understood through an analytical lens of food. We begin by digging into the past in order to shed light into the challenges and opportunities at present, examining a) the ways in which food, through its material and symbolic power, has served as a vehicle for processes of social differentiation along lines of race, class and gender – processes which continue to evolve into the present; b) the interplay of global-level and national-level food politics and the ways in which these connect to and play out at the level of everyday life; and c) how the contours of the Venezuelan food system have been shaped by the pushes and pulls of state, society and capital over time, in a delicate balance of forces characterized by both deep tensions and deep ties. The fragility of this balance came to the fore in recent years, particularly from 2013 onward, in the form of food shortages, food lines and purported food riots. This chapter aims to shed light into such developments with a particular interest in implications for food sovereignty construction. Starting from the premise that food sovereignty construction cannot be separated from the broader food politics of which it is part, this piece examines food politics over time in Venezuela – the role of food in politics and the politics of food – addressing the questions: *What do food politics tell us about broader forms, organizations and relations of power in Venezuela today? And with what implications for food sovereignty construction?* By focusing on food politics as a key area in which the country's broader politics are playing out, a multitude of issues can be better understood.

529827-L-bw-Schiavoni
Processed on: 15-3-2019
PDF page: 115

3.1 Introduction

Over the period of 2013-2014, what appeared to be temporary shortages of key staple food items in Venezuela, endured periodically over past decades, took a different turn. Rather than dissipating over time, the shortages intensified and became increasingly sustained, manifested in the form of long lines outside of supermarkets that captured headlines across the globe. As the shortages persisted into 2017, a particular mainstream narrative surrounding them crystalized. The lines, according to the narrative, were the result of overall scarcity facing the nation due to misguided socialist-oriented policies over the course of the Bolivarian Revolution, which had been propped up by high oil prices and the charismatic appeal of former president Hugo Chávez Frías. Amid the perfect storm of the death of Chávez in 2013, the collapse in global oil prices in 2014, and the government's misguided policies, Venezuela had steadily slid into a state of economic and political disintegration, with food and other necessities growing scarce, sparking social unrest as people took to the streets.

However, this dominant narrative does not capture the complexities of what is happening in Venezuela today. There are significant holes in the account, which raise important questions: who are "the people" at the center of such analysis? What, if any, are the different impacts of present challenges on various sectors of society? Where and how does the role of capital figure into the state-society dynamics surrounding the shortages? This chapter aims to shed light into these and other questions regarding the events of the current conjuncture in Venezuela, with a particular interest in implications for food sovereignty construction. Starting from the premise that food sovereignty construction cannot be separated from the broader food politics of which it is part, this piece examines food politics over time in Venezuela – the role of food in politics and the politics of food – addressing the questions: *What do food politics tell us about broader forms, organizations and relations of power in Venezuela today? And with what implications for food sovereignty construction?* By focusing on food politics as a key area in which the country's broader politics are playing out—particularly by looking at recent shortages and food lines, as well as what have been presented as "food riots"—a multitude of issues can be better understood.

This chapter picks up where the last one left off by applying the HRI framework to the agrifood politics of the current conjuncture in Venezuela, complemented by an analytical lens of food, as will be described

529827-L-bw-Schiavoni
Processed on: 15-3-2019

next. Through analysis of historical documentation, we begin by digging into the past in order to shed light into the challenges and opportunities at present. We then critically examine the events of the current conjuncture, both challenging and complicating the dominant narratives surrounding it, drawing from empirical evidence gathered over fieldwork from 2015 through 2018. In taking such an approach, our objectives are multifold. First, a historical lens helps us to understand how the events of today came to be, tracing historical continuities from past to present. We do this in order to address the above-mentioned tendency in the literature of ahistorical or insufficiently historical narratives, as described in Chapter 2, in which both the present-day problems of the agrifood system and efforts toward food systems transformation are traced no further back than the start of the Bolivarian Revolution in 1999. Instead, we argue that to understand what is currently transpiring, it is necessary to look much farther back, from the period of colonization onward, to identify historical patterns conditioning the present. In this sense, our perspective on the current crisis facing Venezuela's agrifood system is similar to McMichael and Schneider's (2011: 120) take on the global food price crisis of 2007-2008: "While official approaches are concerned with proximate sources of the crisis, food sovereignty understands the crisis as historical and systemic". Relatedly, we argue that many of the responses seen today, particularly those coming from the grassroots, can be understood as present manifestations of historical legacies of resistance.

If a historical lens helps us to trace historical continuities playing out in current Venezuelan agrifood politics, an interactive lens helps us to understand them in relation to the pushes and pulls of diverse state and societal forces over time. Recalling the previous chapter, among the functions of an interactive lens is the disaggregation of the broad categories of *state* and *society*. Here we take a deeper look into *society* while disaggregating the state is a focus of the next chapter), including a focus on class differentiation and on what Cannon (2008: 731-732) has described as a "class/race fusion" with "deep roots in the country's history". This brings us to a second objective of this chapter, which is to address what we argue to be an erasure of key actors and identities in narratives of the current conjuncture by explicitly looking at how questions of race, class and gender converge around food. In examining the intimate connections between food and processes of social differentiation and identity formation forged over time, we demonstrate the ways in which differences and disparities seen in the

agrifood system are both reflective and co-constitutive of broader societal fissures that are playing out at present. And third, while many analyses on the current conjuncture in Venezuela tend to be centered on the government and state, we highlight the central role of capital and its relations with the state in conditioning the present circumstances, and therefore as key to understanding state-society relations.

Finally, a relational lens is applied to the current conjuncture in order to analyze the multiple responses rapidly unfolding at present in relation to the challenges out of which they have arisen, in relation to each other, and in relation to broader visions of/efforts toward food sovereignty in Venezuela under the Bolivarian Revolution. A particularly helpful tool to facilitate such analysis is provided by Fraser (2017: 38), who, building upon Polanyi's "double movement", describes a "triple movement" among political forces of social protection, marketization, and emancipation (i.e., the overcoming of domination), in which "each can ally, in principle, with either of the other two poles against the third". The implication is that a key determinant for the advancement of food sovereignty as an emancipatory pursuit is how efforts toward food sovereignty align with, incorporate, counteract or otherwise interact with a variety of other efforts. In a moment of flux and uncertainty facing Venezuela's agrifood system and the politics surrounding it, there is also possibility for new alignments, as will be further explored below. Such an interest of this piece situates it within a growing body of work on *emancipatory rural politics* (Scoones et al. 2017) – or *emancipatory rural-urban politics* in the case of Venezuela – to which this piece aims to contribute.

3.1.1 Food as an analytical lens

Uniting the various strands of this analysis is our use of food as an analytical lens. Following Figueroa's conception of food as "an *ensemble of relations*, a kind of nexus in and through which social processes at varied spatial and temporal scales converge and interact" (Figueroa 2015: 502, emphasis in original), we identify three areas of focus: 1) *the multiple dimensions and functions of food;* 2) *the use of food as a tool of subjugation and control and, conversely, as a tool of resistance;* and 3) *food as a nexus of both micro-level and macro-level processes.* First is an eye to the multiple dimensions and functions of food, particularly what McMichael (2000: 21) describes as food's "material and symbolic functions" or what Slocum (2013: 28) describes as food's "material-semiotic" nature. These two main facets of food interact to shape

social identities and divisions in a variety of ways. As Mintz and Du Bois (2002: 109) have noted, "Like all culturally defined material substances used in the creation and maintenance of social relationships, food serves both to solidify group membership and to set groups apart". This brings us to our second focus area, the use of food as a tool of subjugation and control and, conversely, as a tool of resistance. Both the material and symbolic functions of food may be drawn upon for the exertion of control over a given population, in forms both overt and subtle, including through what Friedmann (1995: 26) has described as "a shifting balance between coercion and consent, both in the constitution and reconstitution of desire for specific foods, and in the availability of those foods". At the same time, and in a relational manner, food may be "at the center of a liberatory agenda" (White 2017: 33), as exemplified in the concept of food sovereignty and in the movements advancing it. Food has thus been used over time as a tool of both subjugation and resistance, the pushes and pulls of which help to shape the broad contours of agrifood politics over time in a given context.

The third and final focus area is food as a nexus of both micro-level and macro-level processes. A realm in which these processes converge is that of everyday life, manifested through what Figueroa (2015: 498) describes as "everyday food practices" or what Friedmann (1995: 26) describes as "social relations of consumption", a parallel concept to social relations of production, "based in the daily life experiences of preparing, sharing, and taking meals". The realm of everyday life is often subject to control and coercion, for instance, "when people's lives are disrupted so they cannot continue to use land, to work, and in other ways to live as they did before" (Friedmann 1995: 27) at the same time that it is a particularly fertile ground for alternative-building. Such dynamics are captured well by Figueroa (2015: 502), who describes how "banal acts of daily subsistence" at once "reflect and reproduce capitalist social relations, express their contradictions, and contain the seeds of their overcoming". A similar view is shared by White (2018), whose "collective agency and community resilience" framework builds upon the work on "everyday strategies of resistance" (e.g., Scott 2008, Kerkvliet 2005) to identify not only disruptive but also *constructive* forms of resistance coming out of the realm of the everyday. This includes ways in which communities "adjust, withstand, and absorb disturbance [and] reorganize while undergoing change" (White 2018: 8). Figueroa's (2015) and White's (2018) complementary works are

529827-L-bw-Schiavoni
Processed on: 15-3-2019

returned to below to help us unpack community responses to the challenges at present.

A helpful tool for situating the food practices of everyday life within broader global processes and relations (namely, the flow of commodities, associated processes of capital accumulation and counter-movements to these), is "food regime analysis" developed by Harriet Friedmann and Philip McMichael (*see*, e.g., Friedmann and McMichael 1989; Friedmann 2005; McMichael 2009; Friedmann 2016; McMichael 2016). Food regime analysis periodizes the history of the past century and a half, examining food politics within relatively stable periods of capital accumulation governed by particular (implicit) sets of rules and relations, as well as looking at periods of transition and instability. In doing so, it offers insights into current processes of political, social and ecological transformation as well. McMichael (2016: 650) explains that "'food regime' is not a theoretical construct" but "a world-historical method. It is a way of organizing our understanding of significant shifts in global power relations through the agri-food lens". We draw from food regime analysis to situate developments in Venezuela within a broader world-historical context, analyzing how patterns established over time – from Spanish colonization, when Venezuela was a source of raw goods for luxury items such as coffee and chocolate for Europe, through the early decades of democratization and nation-building, when demand for imported foods by an increasingly urban population was met with an abundance of cheap wheat and durable goods from the U.S., through mass privatization of food provisioning infrastructure at the start of the neoliberal era – continue to play a role in shaping food politics to this day.[1]

Drawing inspiration from Friedmann and McMichael, we examine agrifood politics across periods, looking at four main periods that culminate in the present conjuncture. The first, and longest, period extends from the

---

[1] For an insightful glimpse into some of the lively debates surrounding food regime analysis, including the role of social movements in agrifood politics across and between each of the regimes, and particularly at present; the extent to which agriculture has already been absorbed into global circuits of capital and the degree to which such processes are or are not reversable; and whether or not a third food regime is emerging/has already emerged, and if so what its defining characteristics are, see the 'Bernstein-McMichael-Friedmann Dialogue on Food Regimes' in *Journal of Peasant Studies* (volume 43, issue 3).

529827-L-bw-Schiavoni
Processed on: 15-3-2019

early sixteenth through early twentieth centuries, covering colonization through early independence, which saw a continuation of many of the patterns of production and consumption established under colonization. The latter part of this period overlaps with the *first food regime* which "combined colonial tropical imports to Europe with basic grains and livestock imports from settler colonies, provisioning emerging European industrial classes, and underwriting the British 'workshop of the world'" (McMichael 2009: 141). The patterns of this period would be shaken up with the rise of Venezuela's oil industry in the 1920s, giving way to a period of modernization from the 1930s-1970s. The latter half of this period overlaps with the *second food regime*, which "re-routed flows of (surplus) food from the United States to its informal empire of postcolonial states on strategic perimeters of the Cold War" while "[f]ood aid subsidised wages, encouraging selective Third World industrialization" (McMichael 2009: 141). The 1980s ushered in a period of neoliberal reform, together with mounting social unrest, leading to the rise of the Bolivarian Revolution in 1998 and the presidency of Hugo Chávez Frías from 1999 through 2012. While Friedmann and McMichael have diverging perspectives on whether a third food regime has emerged/is emerging, and if so, what its defining features are (Friedmann 2016), this period overlaps with McMichael's characterization of a current *corporate food regime* as "a private regime of global trade managed by transnational corporations" to which food sovereignty movements have arisen in opposition (McMichael 2016: 664). We find the *corporate food regime* helpful for understanding the conditions leading up to and persisting into the Bolivarian Revolution, as will be described further on. Finally, 2013 onward into the present (2019 at the time of writing) is considered the current conjuncture, characterized by shortages, economic crisis and conditions ripe for both rupture and transformation of Venezuela's agrifood system.

The sections to follow are organized chronologically by period, with an eye to the interaction of material and symbolic functions of food vis-à-vis social relations of production and consumption, particularly along lines of race, class and gender; the interplay of macro- and micro-level processes; and the shifting relations of state, society and capital over time. Across each period, special attention is given to corn, Venezuela's top-consumed staple food, given its particular material and symbolic importance across Venezuelan diet, culture, economics and politics. In identifying corn as emblematic of social and political life, we are far from the first to do so.

Warman (2003) has written what is perhaps the most comprehensive work of this genre from a world-historical perspective, while numerous accounts have used corn as a lens through which to trace the past and present politics of Mexico, as the crop's center of origin (e.g., Lind and Barham 2004; Fitting 2006; Baker 2012). Here, however, corn does not form the centerpiece of our analysis but is part of a broader focus on food and the power relations surrounding it. On one level, the politics of food in Venezuela serve as a fascinating microcosm through which to understand the broader politics of the country. But more than being demonstrative of broader politics, they are in fact a key element in them.

3.2 Colonial period and continuation of colonial patterns of production and consumption

Venezuela's main link to the *first food regime* was in the export of raw tropical goods to Europe, contributing to what would become longstanding commodity circuits and divisions of labor established through colonization. Although Venezuela did not have a particularly prominent role at the onset of colonization – according to Wilpert (2005, no page) "it was generally considered a backwater because the Spaniards did not believe Venezuela had much mineral wealth" – it would later play a key role in struggles for independence throughout the region. Even into independence, however, the patterns established under colonization would leave an indelible mark upon Venezuela's food system and beyond. This section introduces these patterns, including the establishment of an extractive agroexportation complex; mutually reinforcing processes of dietary differentiation and social differentiation; and the use of food as a means of both subjugation and resistance.

Venezuela's "extractive engine", as characterized by Lombardi (2003), dates back to Spanish colonization from the 16th into the 19th centuries. During this period, a "tropical plantation economy based on slave labor" gave rise to a powerful agroexportation complex through which primarily cacao and later coffee were supplied to Europe and Mexico (Andrews 1985: 12).[2] A main feature of this system was what Ríos de Hernández and

---

[2] The phenomenon of "monoexportation" in Venezuela did not begin with petroleum, but with the colonial agroexport complex. In 1775, 75 percent of the

Prato (1990) describe as the "plantation-*conuco* binomial", in which familial and communal plots called *conucos* served as a source of subsistence for the enslaved and later low-wage labor forces of the *haciendas* of the colonial elite (*see also* Carvallo and Rios 1984, Hernández 2008, Rojas-López 2012, Ramos Guédez 2005). The *conucos* of the *haciendas* represented a melding of Indigenous and African crops and growing practices, in a common though underrecognized trend throughout the Americas (Carney 2013). While composition varied by location, *conucos* generally consisted of a diverse polyculture including tubers, legumes, fruits and vegetables (Lovera 1988). Out of these, the two most important staple crops were corn and cassava. While both crops were prepared in diverse manners, a popular form of corn preparation was the *arepa*, a patty prepared from a dough made of finely ground corn, while cassava was often consumed in the form of a type of dry flatbread known as *casabe* (Amodio 2017). Preparation of each was largely managed by women.

In 1830, Venezuela was among the first countries in the region to achieve independence, followed by the abolishment of slavery by 1854, both developments a product of popular rebellion. As noted by Andrews (1985), however, most social and economic patterns established under colonization were little altered. The plantation economy lasted for another century following independence, while commerce with the exterior switched hands from the Spanish crown to a commercial bourgeoisie descended from English, Germans, Dutch, French, and Italians, among others.[3] This group ran trading companies known as *casas comerciales*, which mediated relations between the *haciendas* and international agricultural commodity circuits (Banko 2010).

Across this period, the plantation-*conuco* binomial underpinning the plantation economy gave rise to patterns of dietary differentiation, with those who labored on the plantations feeding themselves through their own production, while the colonial elite (and later, the European-descended bourgeoisie) continued with culinary patterns brought over from

total value of exports was from cacao (Vitale 2002) and in 1897-1898, coffee represented 83 percent of exports (Lezama and Hernandez 2006).

[3] I.e., those originating from countries who had been allies against the colonial rule of the Spanish. The Dutch, for instance, had been the main suppliers of arms to the independence movement.

Europe, relying in part on imported goods. This dietary differentiation was intricately linked with questions of identity and domination, serving to maintain European descendants as distinct from and superior to the rest of the Indigenous, Afro-descendant and *mestizo* majority. One means through which this was done was the "monstrification" of Indigenous foods, in the words of Amodio (2017: 27, translated). Such sentiments are reflected, for instance, in the remark attributed to Spanish general Pablo Morillo that he could "handle anything on this earth except for those wretched corn cakes they call *arepas*, that have only been made for stomachs of blacks and ostriches" (Quintero Saravia 2017, translated). The colonizers' disdain for Indigenous food and food practices, however, was paradoxically coupled with a dependency on them. Indigenous knowledge proved essential for the adaptation of European crops to tropical agroecosystems, and food from *conucos* served as a vital source of sustenance, particularly during times of war. Indigenous foods also facilitated transatlantic trade, with accounts of Indigenous women being brought onboard trade ships to make *arepas*, while *casabe* was prized for its durability over long periods at sea (Amodio 2017). Over time, Indigenous foods increasingly made their way into the everyday diets of the European descendants living in Venezuela, albeit selectively and conditionally. Cassava was largely rejected for its negative connotations as a root crop, while corn was adopted, but on the understanding that it was inferior to wheat, which was upheld as being associated with civilization and progress (Amodio 2017).

Dietary differentiation was not altogether imposed from above, however. Amodio (2017) stresses that there was also resistance to European foods and food practices from below, for example, the leader of an Indigenous uprising of 1871, Túpac Katari, calling on his people to reject Spanish foods and culture, particularly white bread. This brings us to another important historical angle. As recognized by numerous accounts (e.g., Rodriguez 2001, Rojas 2009, Tiapa 2014), the Indigenous peoples, African descendants, and *mestizos* comprising the majority of Venezuelans over time have a rich history of rebellion, from Afro-descendant and Indigenous uprisings (including when a group of enslaved, formerly enslaved and Indigenous peoples stood up to the most powerful trading body of the agroexport complex in the 1730s), to more covert forms of resistance. Such resistance from below was pivotal to the fall of colonization, as formerly enslaved, Indigenous and *mestizo* peoples played a key role in the struggles led by independence leader Simon Bolivar, once he caught on to

their importance (Vargas Arenas and Sanoja 2017), continuing into peasant struggles over land post-Independence, and later flowing into struggles of *guerillas*, students, workers and women, among other "others", during the period of modernization (Ciccariello-Maher 2013), which we come to next.

3.3 Modernization period

Following the longstanding patterns initiated under colonization centered around the plantation economy and the plantation-*conuco* binomial, Venezuela's food system would undergo a major reordering with the rise of its petroleum industry in the 1920s, as an exodus from the countryside and influx into cities spurred a turn to imports just as the U.S. was seeking new markets for its agricultural surpluses. At the same time, what remained of Venezuela's agricultural sector underwent a rapid process of modernization spurred by a confluence of national policy measures and broader geopolitical developments that will be described in this section. Such events arguably placed Venezuela thick in the midst of the *second food regime* (1950s-1970s), as Venezuela's growing dependency on cheap surplus wheat and durable goods imported from the U.S. served to prop up U.S. hegemony at the same time that Venezuela came to embody the model of agro-industrialization characteristic of so-called "development states" at this time by "adopting Green Revolution technologies, and instituting land reform to dampen peasant unrest and extend market relations into the countryside" (McMichael 2009: 141). Through the course of these changes, the dietary differentiation established under colonization would at once be reinforced and reshaped, including through the emergence of a middle class, drawn largely along lines of race, as part of the modernization process.

In 1929, the U.S. stock market crash and associated crash in agricultural commodity prices together with the rise of petroleum in Venezuela as an export commodity spelled the end of the agroexportation period, as several new patterns rapidly emerged (Banko 2010, Ríos de Hernández and Prato 1990). One was a flight of capital out of agriculture and into the emerging petroleum industry, with petroleum concessions going mostly to the same wealthy families of the agroexportation complex (McBeth 1983). Along with the flight of capital out of rural areas was a flight of people,

through mutually reinforcing processes of proletarianization and urbanization, as rural inhabitants sought waged labor in growing commercial and services industries in urban hubs (Suárez and Torrealba 1980, Papail and Picquet 1989). These new urban workers, however, were met with insufficient sources of employment and infrastructure, leading to a subsequent surge in urban poverty (Araujo 2013, Wilpert 2006, Osorio 1985). While the development of the petroleum sector further concentrated wealth and fostered a "surplus population" of urban poor, it also gave rise to a middle class of professional workers who populated the sector. In response to these changes, the families behind the former agroexport complex were able to take advantage of its existing infrastructure, an inflow of oil dollars, and the newly acquired purchasing power of Venezuela's emerging middle class to shift from exportation to importation, giving rise over time into a powerful agrifood importation and distribution complex inextricably linked with petroleum extraction (Ríos de Hernández and Prato 1990).

Petroleum thus served as an energetic surplus to break the plantation-*conuco* binomial, rupturing existing patterns of production and consumption. A key development filling this void came in the late 1930s, with the introduction of Venezuela's agricultural modernization program, supported through petroleum dollars and based on the premise of import substitution of highly consumed foods in growing urban centers. Such a program grew out of a convergence of internal and external needs and interests. The country was just coming out of nearly three decades of dictatorship by military general Juan Vicente Gómez, from 1908-1935 (followed by a period of transition under the rule of Gómez's minister of defense López Contreras from 1935-1941). It was under the rule of Gómez that Venezuela had risen to be the world's largest exporter of petroleum and abandoned its agriculture sector, and by 1935, the country was a net food importer (Salas 2015a). Securing an adequate food supply for the population was a pressing need by this point, as it would be for successive political regimes that vied for power over this politically turbulent century. There was thus an interest in revamping the agricultural sector in such a way that a lack of manpower in the countryside could be compensated by modern technology along with the infusion of a new and "improved" rural workforce. This period was also in the run-up to the Green Revolution that would soon be sweeping Latin America and much of the Global South, as part of an anti-communist Cold War strategy among the U.S. and allies (Cleaver 1972, Perkins 1997, Patel 2013). Relations between the

U.S. and Venezuela had tightened over the course of the Gómez dictatorship, making Venezuela fertile ground for the arrival of the Green Revolution. Salas (2015a: 67) explains that, "Gómez became the first Venezuelan ruler not wholly dependent on internal forces to retain power. Under his rule, Washington absorbed Venezuela into its sphere of influence".

The Green Revolution was personally ushered into Venezuela by U.S. "missionary capitalist" to Latin America, Nelson Rockefeller (Rivas 2002). As the site of Standard Oil's most profitable regional affiliate, Venezuela held a special place in the interests of Rockefeller, who made it his home away from home, establishing his own personal *hacienda* there (Rivas 2002, Hamilton 2011). Rockefeller's vision was to bring U.S.-style industrial farming and food distribution systems to Venezuela, in order to address a growing food deficit while quelling social unrest and fostering stability through capitalist expansion with a social mission. He set about doing so through a variety of means from 1939 onward. One was through the creation of the Venezuelan Basic Economy Corporation (VBEC), a subsidiary of Rockefeller's International Basic Economy Corporation (IBEC) with capitalization from Venezuela-based oil companies and the Venezuelan state via the Corporación Venezolana de Fomento (Venezuelan Development Corporation). A main thrust of VBEC was the introduction of U.S.-style supermarkets into Venezuela, via the supermarket chain CADA (short for Compañía Anónima Distribuidora de Alimentos, or Wholesale Food Company), supplying the capital area and the commissaries of petroleum extraction zones. CADA was rolled out in the hope, according to Hamilton (2011: 1), that supermarkets "would transform Venezuela from a petroleum-dependent autarky with a restive peasantry into a reliable U.S. ally with a diversified economy and a solidly middle-class electorate".

While CADA supermarkets were heavily reliant upon goods imported from the U.S. (comprising upwards of 80 percent of CADA's stock in 1949 (Hamilton 2011)), Rockefeller's vision was to develop a modernized domestic supply chain. VBEC thus established Productora Agropecuaria Compañía Anónima (Agricultural Products Company, PACA), which set up a number of large-scale industrial farms throughout the country showcasing hybrid seeds, agrochemicals and agricultural machinery (Rivas 2002). Advised by technicians from the Rockefeller Foundation, U.S. extension agencies and the United Fruit Company, these were intended to serve as replicable models but encountered many problems, both in the attempt to apply a one-size-fits-all model to Venezuela's diverse tropical

529827-L-bw-Schiavoni
Processed on: 15-3-2019 PDF page: 127

agroecosystems and in the failure to recognize the key role of large government subsidies in the apparent success of industrial agriculture in the U.S. (Rivas 2002). Rockefeller also launched the similarly ill-fated Pesquerías Caribe Compañía Anónima (Caribbean Fisheries Company), PESCA, as well as a number of reconstituted milk production plants that were more successful in transforming Venezuela's milk sector (Rivas 2002).

In addition to the for-profit VBEC, Rockefeller also ran the non-profit American International Association, or AIA. AIA worked hand-in-hand with the Venezuelan government, via the Instituto Agraria Nacional (National Agrarian Institute) to implement market-based agrarian reform, through which rural inhabitants received parcels of land from the government and credit and technical support for farm modernization through AIA (Rivas 2002). This included support for the "agricultural colonies" of the modernization period, described next. Oriented around a technological package of specialized machinery, "improved" seeds, and agrichemical inputs, Venezuela's agricultural sector came to be the most highly mechanized of all of Latin America by 1950 (Rodríguez Rojas 2009). Such efforts, however, yielded mixed results at best in bolstering the domestic food supply, and Venezuela remained a net food importer. Furthermore, the modernization process served to increase dependency upon the U.S. as the main supplier, not only of food, but also of agricultural supplies to Venezuela. Such technological dependency, which continues into the present, helps to explain why there was an increase in importation during the modernization period, despite its import substitution premise (Ríos de Hernández and Prato 1990).

While Rockefeller played a pivotal role in Venezuela's agricultural modernization process, Rivas (2002: 137) stresses that it is "unclear how much credit Rockefeller can be given for a modernization process that was already under way and greatly encouraged by public policy". One such policy was the Law of Immigration and Colonization of 1936. Characterized by a melding of 'high modernism' represented by industrial production and white supremacy, manifested in *blanqueamiento* or 'whitening' efforts, this law facilitated the entrance of white Europeans into Venezuela, specifically, in the words of then-Agricultural Minister (and coffee plantation owner) Alberto Adriani, for Venezuela to "...diversify its agriculture; develop new industries and perfect existing ones; and contribute to the improvement of its race and the elevation of its culture…" (Ramos

Rodríguez 2010: 94). Towards these ends, the Law supported the formation of aptly named "agricultural colonies" (*colonias agrícolas*) of European immigrants on some of the country's most productive agricultural land, several of which, including the well-known Colonia Turén, exist into the present (Kritz 1975, Ramos Rodríguez 2010).

The agricultural colonization policies, and the broader push for both agricultural modernization and whitening of which they were part, were picked up by Pérez Jiménez, who ruled by dictatorship from 1952-1958.[4] Inspired by Adriani's writings on racial superiority and economic development, Pérez Jiménez spoke of the necessity of 'mixing our race' with that of the Europeans in order to instill in Venezuelans a 'spirit of work,' lest they remain a 'backwards people' (Blanco Muñoz, 1983: 67-69). Approximately one million immigrants, the majority of them Europeans, entered Venezuela under Pérez Jiménez's reign (Kritz 1975). While such policies ended with the fall of the dictatorship in 1958, their influence would endure. Significantly, they contributed to the growth of an overwhelmingly white Venezuelan middle class, including a rural white middle class of producers engaged in capital-intensive practices. The latter is represented by the influential confederation of mid- and large-scale producers, Confederación de Asociaciones de Productores Agropecuarios (Conferderation of Associations of Agricultural Producers, FEDEAGRO), to which we will return.

If the agricultural colonies harkened back to Venezuela's colonial past, so too did the establishment of supermarkets, in the form of the abovementioned CADA supermarket chain, which contributed to the processes of dietary differentiation extending from colonization. Established in

[4] As mentioned above, this was a tumultuous period in Venezuelan politics, with coups and coup attempts commonplace. In 1948, a coup was carried out against president Rómulo Gallegos of the Acción Democrática (AD) party by a group of military officers. Among these was Marcos Pérez Jiménez, who ruled by dictatorship from 1952-1958. While there is no single explanation attributed to the coup that gave rise to the dictatorship, it is believed that the moderately progressive leanings of the AD and concerns over greater state involvement in the oil industry, sparked in part by Mexico's nationalization of its oil industry over this period, riled some business interests both inside and outside of the country. While the role of the U.S. government in the coup remains debated, Salas (2015a: 86) explains that "Pérez Jiménez and the United States quickly found common ground on the matter of oil policy and anticommunism".

529827-L-bw-Schiavoni
Processed on: 15-3-2019

1948, CADA grew to be the largest private commercial retailer in Venezuela by the 1970s (Rivas 2002), over time joined by a number of other chains. The absolutely pivotal impact of the arrival of the supermarket to Venezuela, particularly in the realm of everyday life, cannot be overstated. Further solidifying the connections between food consumption, identity, and social status, supermarkets served as a vehicle for the newly emerging middle class to have a taste of food elitism, literally and figuratively. The expansion of supermarkets facilitated the expansion of U.S.-based food multinationals such as Quaker and General Foods in Venezuela as well (Rivas 2002). By now, the middle and upper classes were eating diets quite similar to those of their northern neighbors, from Pepsi Cola to Kellogg's Corn Flakes, which remained largely out of reach of the poor. The reinforcement of social divisions and inequalities represented by supermarkets was not lost on the broader population. By the 1960s, CADA supermarkets were among the targets of Venezuela's growing *guerilla* movements, with a spate of reported attacks, including bombings, carried out between 1962 and 1965 (Rivas 2002, Hamilton 2011). Hamilton (2011: 31) describes one particular incident in which "guerilla fighters hijacked one of the firm's trucks, took the truck up to a hillside hideout, and distributed the food Robin Hood-style". A CADA representative remarked at the time that, "'there must have been one helluva banquet in the barrio that evening,' as the truck was filled with a 'sufficient supply of wines' and imported foods" (Hamilton 2011: 31). Rivas (2002) adds that there was an effort over time for CADA to extend into poorer areas. Other supermarket chains would follow suit, although they continued to be concentrated in wealthier areas, and access to the imported goods they contained would remain heavily skewed towards to the middle and upper classes.

Another development that occurred over this period was the integration of wheat into the Venezuelan diet across socioeconomic strata in urban areas. Since colonial times, wheat had been reserved for consumption by the European and European-descended elite. This pattern was initially maintained through the process of agricultural colonization, as the influx of European immigrants was accompanied by an influx of wheat from the U.S., giving rise to a baking industry supplying French- and Italian-style white bread, largely reserved for the middle and upper classes (Carbonell and Rothman 1977). From 1958 onward, however, a steady supply of cheap wheat from the U.S. facilitated the purchase and consumption of wheat-based products by the majority of society for the first time. Wheat

soon became commonplace in the diet of urban Venezuelans of all incomes, eventually overtaking the place of corn as the top-consumed staple grain by the early 1960s (Carbonell and Rothman 1977).

The phenomenon of imported U.S. wheat outcompeting traditionally consumed staples was not unique to Venezuela at this time, but rather was part of a broader trend throughout much of the Global South, identified by Friedmann and McMichael (1989) as a defining feature of the *second food regime*. One condition distinguishing Venezuela, however, was that while the U.S. food aid program, via Public Law 480 (PL 480), was the main mechanism through which the U.S. reached new markets for its wheat and other agricultural surpluses, Venezuela received only negligible amounts of wheat through PL 480, as it already had strong trade ties with the U.S. by this point (Carbonell and Rothman 1977). Import of U.S. wheat into Venezuela was instead facilitated by the Venezuelan state through trade mechanisms such as "import duty exemptions, preferential exchange rates, preferential credit facilities for the wheat industry, and lastly the direct subsidy" (Carbonell and Rothman 1977: 313). In addition to preferential trade arrangements, Carbonell and Rothman (1977: 311) attribute the rapid adoption of wheat into the diet of urban Venezuelans to both the "convenience factor" compared to corn-based dishes which took longer to prepare, making wheat conducive to busy urban lifestyles, as well as "the prestige elements associated with wheat in Venezuela" as "the conquerer's food and later the food of the dominant urban classes of landowners, administrators and merchants".[5]

While wheat would remain a fixture in the Venezuelan diet to this day, its reign over corn as the top-consumed carbohydrate of Venezuelans was short-lived, lasting only until 1966, when corn overtook wheat in the form of *harina precocida de maiz*, or 'precooked corn flour', introduced just several years earlier (Carbonell and Rothman 1977). Precooked corn flour represented a striking melding of food patterns in that, as a white and ultra-refined version of corn, precooked corn flour was essentially as close to the wheat flour that Venezuelans had grown accustomed to as corn could

[5] Carbonell and Rothman (1977) add, however, that the spread of wheat in Venezuela was not even. The high levels of wheat consumption recorded in this period were largely limited to urban areas – home to nearly 80 percent of the population by this time – while rural populations continued to rely on corn, cassava and other roots crops as their main carbohydrates.

529827-L-bw-Schiavoni
Processed on: 15-3-2019

get. It also represented a melding of notions of modernity and tradition, as it was for the most part destined for the *arepa*, the above-mentioned corn patty dating back to pre-colonial times, while revolutionizing its preparation. The introduction of precooked corn flour as a product of the modernization process had reverberations across the agrifood system, changing patterns of production, processing, and consumption of corn that had gone largely unaltered for generations.

On the production end, corn was extracted from the *conuco* and inserted into industrial monoculture production, dependent on certified commercial seed varieties of multinationals such as Pioneer and Cargill (Vielma et al. 2005) and increasingly homogenized, to the extent that commercial hybrid white corn comprised an estimated 95 percent of the corn grown in Venezuela by 1992 (FAO 1994). No less dramatic were the changes to the processing of corn for precooked corn flour, in which the kernel is "dehulled, degermed, precooked, dried, flaked, and milled" (Peña-Rosas et al. 2014: 2). In the process, its more nutritional outer layers are removed and used separately for industrial animal feed (Peña-Rosas et al. 2014, Gwirtz and Garcia-Casal 2014, Ranum et al. 2014), yielding a nutritionally poor substance lacking in vitamins and minerals that then requires fortification to meet basic nutrition standards (Ablan and Abreu 1999, Garcia-Casal and Layrisse 2002). This phenomenon, in which original nutrients are removed while others are artificially added, can be understood as a form of "nutritionism" or "nutritional reductionism", as described by Scrinis (2012), a practice under fire by health advocates today (Patel et al. 2015). Until this time the *arepa* had been prepared in essentially the same way since pre-colonial times (with the exception of the introduction of the *pilón*, a type of wooden mortar, by enslaved Africans during colonization). Preparation mainly took place at home, largely managed by women, while pre-prepared homemade dough was also vended on the streets by women known as *areperas*. The introduction of precooked corn flour dramatically reduced its preparation time, making it integral to processes of proletarianization and urbanization, and in little time, this became the principal staple of Venezuela's poor working class (Garcia-Casal and Layrisse 2002).

The homogenizing effects of the rise of precooked corn flour in Venezuela cannot be overstated. Within four decades, it would come to represent 88 percent of all corn consumed in the country (Abreu and Ablan 2004). Through the modernization process, the basis of the Venezuelan diet shifted from a wide variety dishes produced through the diversity of

the *conuco* to *arepas* of homogenous taste, texture and appearance, made from industrially grown and processed white corn. Such phenomena share some striking parallels with the rise of industrially processed white bread in the U.S. from 1890-1930, through which bread was transformed from "brownish, heterogenous and unruly" to "white, sliced and modern" as a materialization of concerns over purity, hygiene, and sanitation that "were irrevocably entangled with larger anxieties about racial purity" (Bobrow-Strain 2013: 266-267). Similar trends can be seen in the transition from *arepas* made from whole dried corn kernels prepared in the home to those made from industrially produced precooked corn flour. Through this transition, processes ranging from seed management to food handling were stripped from the Afro-Indigenous majority who had been feeding itself, justified by racially laden discourses around "hygiene" and "quality control" in which whiteness was equated with purity. Particularly strong was the gender dimension, as the site of the processing of corn for *arepas* shifted from the home, controlled mainly by women, into commercial enterprises controlled mainly by men.

From the first commercialization of precooked corn flour into the present, there is one brand, Harina P.A.N., that has become synonymous with it, to the point that it is used interchangeably with the generic term "*harina precocida*", in a phenomenon known as trademark vulgarization (Vallenilla 2009). Harina P.A.N. is such a household term that little consideration is given to the power of the dual acronym and homonym contained in its name. As an acronym, P.A.N. stands for Productos Alimenticios Nacionales, National Food Products, while P.A.N. is a homonym of *pan*, meaning bread. Despite the humble origins portrayed in Harina P.A.N.'s marketing campaigns, the family behind this brand, the Mendoza Fleury, comes from a long lineage tracing back to the colonial elite, appearing among the families associated with the *casas comerciales*, and later the petroleum concessions, and related to the first president of the First Republic of Venezuela, Cristóbal Mendoza (McBeth 1983, Araujo 1968). Today they are among the most powerful families in the country and are best known as the owners of Empresas Polar, the consortium responsible for supplying the most widely consumed foods and beverages in Venezuela, particularly *arepas* and beer. These two are directly linked, in fact, as precooked corn flour emerged as a byproduct of the corn that was being used as an ingredient

in Polar's beer (Vielma 1998). Polar is the largest private company in Venezuela, with transnational linkages including serving as Venezuelan subsidiary of PepsiCo, and with its products reaching global markets.

With the release of Harina P.A.N. into the Venezuelan market in the early 1960s, Polar employed a well-crafted marketing strategy penetrating both public and private spaces, including the most intimate spaces of everyday life. A key initial target was Venezuelan women, again paralleling the spread of industrial white bread in the U.S., in which women's "lives, habits, and desires represented the most important battlefield" and in which the housewife was seen as "either a competitor or a customer" (Bobrow-Strain 2013: 272-274). Among Polar's strategies was employing the slogan "*Se acabó la piladera*", loosely, "The days of the *pilón* are over," referring back to technology used over generations by Afro-Indigenous women, and portraying the *pilón* as drudgerous and backwards in its ads. This was complemented by a more "grassroots" strategy of training thousands of women to go into neighborhoods to teach other women how to make *arepas* from Harina P.A.N. (Caldeira and Tovar 2013). Polar's strategies targeting women varied by class, including specific "bottom of the pyramid" (BOP) marketing strategies targeting poor women (Ozegovic 2011, Ireland 2008). Polar's targeting of women is also reflected in the iconic image of a woman's face on the packaging of Harina P.A.N., a sort of Venezuelan version of Aunt Jemima, in a trend not uncommon to food marketing (Roberts 1994). With Afro-Indigenous features and her hair wrapped in a kerchief, she appears the idealized embodiment of an *arepera*, a user of the *pilón* that Polar had deemed an antique of the past, her features standing in stark contrast to the whiteness of the flour contained within the package.

Another strategy facilitating the penetration of Harina P.A.N. into the everyday lives of Venezuelans across class was the evoking of nationalism, in which Harina P.A.N was equated with the *arepa*, which was equated with Venezuela and *venezolanidad*. Such a strategy, for instance, has long been employed in Polar's sponsorship of key cultural events, especially baseball games, where its beer and *arepas* go hand-in-hand. This connects to a number of observations made by Ichijo and Ranta (2016: 61) on food and nationalism, including how perceptions of food impact how we view ourselves and our national identities; how food can serve as an important means of "concretizing" national identities; and how "[t]his has in turn

helped to construct and reproduce food images, tastes and qualities as belonging to or originating from a particular national setting". With its combination of use of popular imagery reflecting the majority of the population and evoking of national identity, Harina P.A.N. might be thought of as a *charismatic food*, to borrow from Kimura's (2013: 19) conception of "charismatic nutrients" whose cachet "depends on sociopolitical networks built around them". Through such means, Polar has over time positioned its Harina P.A.N. as the "brand of birth of all Venezuelans" (Torelli 2013). Given the ubiquity it would come to have in Venezuelan households, this might not be a far-off claim.

3.4 Neoliberal reform and the rise of the Bolivarian Revolution

If a goal the domestic and foreign powers that promoted the modernization process was the conversion of Venezuela into a "reliable U.S. ally with...a solid middle-class electorate" (Hamilton 2011:1), by many accounts, these efforts were successful, with Venezuela in the late twentieth century commonly regarded as "one of the developing world's success stories, an oil-rich democracy that was seen as a model for economic growth and political stability in the region" (Anderson 2017, no page). Salas (2015b: 46) has reflected, however, that "Oil never fully transformed Venezuela, but rather it created the illusion of modernity in a country where high levels of inequality persisted". The inequalities and associated societal tensions fostered through the colonization and modernization periods would intensify into the start of the neoliberal era. A particularly telling moment was when structural adjustment policies served as the final straw for an increasingly fed up population, leading to the Caracazo, when, as described in Chapter 2, hundreds of thousands of people descended from Caracas's hillside *barrios* into the center of the capital in a massive popular uprising that rapidly spread across the country (e.g., *see* Nuñez Nuñez 1990; Maya 2003; Hardy 2007; Ciccariello-Maher 2013a).

Inequities around food were among the immediate causes of the Caracazo, as the poor endured long lines to access basic goods, while middle-class retailers hoarded these goods to speculate on rising prices in the face of inflation, and the elite carried on with their day-to-day food habits through largely uninterrupted access to luxury import items (Battaglini 2011), with striking parallels to the present. Directly prior to and following

529827-L-bw-Schiavoni
Processed on: 15-3-2019 PDF page: 135

the Caracazo, headlines such as 'Prices of Sugar, Cereals, and Oils Go Up' and 'Distressed Multitudes in Search of Food' abounded in the national press (Battaglini 2011, translated), while the *New York Times* (1989a) reported "shortages of items like coffee, salt, flour, cooking oil and other basic products". This reflected growing tensions around food access, disproportionately impacting the poor, signaling that Venezuela's high modernist food system based on importation, industrial agriculture, and supermarkets, as championed by Rockefeller, was not in fact serving the interests of the majority (Nuñez Nuñez 1990). Taking stock of the food system at this time, Llambí and Gouveia (1994: 72) identify as key structural problems:

> oil rent-induced non-competitiveness in domestic production; the prominence of oligopolistic markets—particularly in the agro-food sector—and inherited from the import-substitution; and a highly skewed income distribution also inherited from the ISI era.

If the modernization era had failed to deliver on promises of addressing key societal problems, the following period of neoliberal reform would only exacerbate them. The immediate sub-context of the Caracazo was a wave of neoliberal reforms in the wake of the Latin American debt crisis, as Venezuela and many of its neighbors followed the path of a Washington Consensus-based model of development, involving cuts in public expenditure and increased privatization (Gouveia 1997; Lander and Fierro1996; Llambí and Gouveia 1994). Such measures continued into the 1990s, with World Bank-prescribed reforms in agricultural trade, financing and domestic pricing, including the removal of import restrictions; the transfer of public agricultural funds from public institutions into private banks; and the deregulation of food, farm and input prices, with limited exceptions (Llambí and Gouveia 1994). Additional reforms took place in the form of privatization throughout the food system, including in the areas of storage and commercialization, technology and plant health and sanitation (Llambí and Gouveia 1994). As the public sector retreated, multinational food corporations that already had a presence in the country such as Nestle came to play a more dominant role in Venezuela's food system (Gouveia 1997).

Such developments are precisely those which McMichael (2009, 2016) describes as having paved the way for a current *corporate food regime* that privileges corporate interests in agrifood ordering. In contrast to previous

food regimes constructed around hegemony of states, argues McMichael (2009: 649), "the food regime under neoliberalism institutionalizes a hegemonic relation whereby states serve capital" and "corporate rights have been elevated over the sovereign rights of states and their citizens". Within these dynamics, he describes a tension between "food from nowhere" delivered through the regime versus "food from somewhere" (i.e., grounded in place, culture and ecology) promoted by counter-movements. McMichael's *corporate food regime* is helpful for understanding the state of Venezuela's food system leading into the Bolivarian Revolution in the 1990s, by which time the country was importing upwards of 80 percent of its food (FAO 2002) through a powerful private food importation and distribution complex controlled in an oligopolistic fashion (Ríos de Hernández and Prato 1990; Curcio Curcio 2017). Having developed an early dependency on "food from nowhere" as a byproduct of oil exploitation, Venezuela of the 1990s could be considered a posterchild of the *corporate food regime*. On a similar vein, the tension between "food from nowhere" and "food from somewhere" has been a central tension in food sovereignty efforts over the course of the Bolivarian Revolution, as we will come to next.

In 1997, Gouveia wrote that the neoliberal reforms:

> [have] led to a rapid deterioration of the social sector and of non-financial sectors such as agriculture. Poverty estimates range from 50 per cent to 80 per cent; the basic food basket costs about 75 per cent of average incomes, and agriculture's rate of growth continues to decline with few exceptions. (Gouveia 1997: 233)

Not only was more than half of the population living in poverty in at this time, but approximately a quarter were living in extreme poverty (Weisbrot 2008). The Caracazo and ongoing social unrest that continued into the 1990s in many ways signaled the visibility of the long-invisibilized excluded majority, giving light to an ongoing tension between the furthering of patterns of accumulation among a small elite, on the one hand, and the coalescing of popular unrest among the vast majority of the population, on the other. Vargas Arenas and Sanoja (2017: 113, translated) situate the Caracazo as part of a trajectory directly connecting rebellions of the past to those of the present, emphasizing that these developments "did not arise in a capricious manner". On the contrary, they:

> resulted from class struggle, from the resistance and multiple social rebellions that began to be forged in the sixteenth century against the colonial government of the Spanish, expressed today as a necessary process to settle the historical debt that the national State has with the socially, culturally and economically excluded majority of the population.

The rise of Chávez and the Bolivarian Revolution can be understood as a direct continuation of the Caracazo, through which "the popular sectors … came to assume their own political representation" (Sanoja and Vargas Arenas 2004: 32, translated). It was an attempt by the descendants of those who had been "othered" over the course of colonization and subsequent periods to break from historical patterns of inequality by challenging the power structures that had been upholding them.

If a goal of the Bolivarian Revolution was to restore legitimacy by settling historical debt, a first line of order was to confront the inequalities around food facing the population. This implied the dual, if at times divergent, tasks of addressing the immediate material needs of the more than half of the population living in hunger and poverty, largely urban, while working to shift the historical patterns that had forged deep divides in Venezuela's agrifood system. The importance of food and agriculture was reflected in Venezuela's new national constitution, drafted through a participatory constituent assembly process and passed by popular referendum in 1999, which guarantees the food security of the population, "through the promotion of sustainable agriculture as a strategic basis for integrated rural development" (Ministerio de Comunicación e Información 1999). This provision of the constitution is significant in that it recognizes a revaluing of agriculture and a revaluing of long-neglected rural communities as going hand-in-hand, and, in specifying promotion of sustainable agriculture, it clears some room for movements away from the Green Revolution paradigm that long dominated national agricultural policy.

In response to this popular mandate, since 1999 a variety of state-sponsored initiatives have been carried out, in tandem with citizen efforts, under the banner of *food sovereignty* (*soberanía alimentaria* or *soberanía agroalimentaria*). Fundamental to these have been processes of agrarian reform, particularly those carried out in the decade of 2003-2012. In contrast to the agrarian reform under the modernization period, which exacerbated differentiation in the countryside, giving rise to various forms of "petty-capitalist farming" (Llambí 1988), the most recent reform process was explicitly aimed at valuing and recognizing the peasants and landless rural

workers of Afro-Indigenous origins marginalized under past state policies. This involved a holistic approach in which redistribution of land was complemented by a wide variety of supportive programs including in education, housing, healthcare, and media/communications (Wilpert 2006, Lavelle 2013, Enríquez 2013, Dávila 2014). Fishing communities benefited from similar programs, along with the banning of industrial trawling off the Venezuelan coast (Sharma 2011; Schiavoni and Camacaro 2009).

Complementing rural initiatives have been a range of largely urban-based food access programs, reaching schools, workplaces, and households (Alayón López 2016). Equally important to food sovereignty efforts have been diverse forms of popular organization, from territorially-based communal councils and *comunas* to sectorally-based farmers and fishers councils, among others. Supported through a series of *popular power* (*poder popular*) laws, such forms of organization, considered cornerstones of the Bolivarian Revolution, have contributed to broadening direct popular participation in the food system (McKay et al. 2014). Together, these state-led and citizen-led efforts have formed an intricate web of agrifood system initiatives that has been woven and re-woven over the course of the Bolivarian Revolution, reflecting shifting political conditions.

Such initiatives have seen important gains and limitations. Among the most notable outcomes to date was the surpassing of the first Millennium Development Goal of cutting hunger in half in advance of 2015, as recognized on a number of occasions by the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO 2013, 2015). Over 2008-2011, hunger was reduced to an average of 3.1 percent of the population, while Venezuelans on average were consuming 121 percent of the baseline daily calories recommended by the FAO for an adequate diet (FAO 2017) – gains largely attributed to the above-mentioned food distribution programs, as well as an increase in purchasing power among the poor that broadened access to supermarkets and other food outlets.

There are significant limitations, however, in the degree of *systemic transformation* achieved through such efforts, limitations which have become increasingly apparent at present, as will be elaborated upon below. The crux of the issue is that many of the advances in fighting hunger came from a *reinforcement* of the agro-import complex, not from alternatives to it. The efforts toward agrarian reform in the countryside, while also receiving significant investment (Dávila 2014), were happening on largely parallel tracks. While some important inroads were made in connecting the two,

529827-L-bw-Schiavoni
Processed on: 15-3-2019

there was far from a rupture of the powers long controlling the agrifood system. Thus, more feeding programs meant more food importation, which meant increased consolidation of the agrifood import complex and its "food from nowhere", reinforced through multiple mechanisms of the state. Among these mechanisms is the granting of dollars to private (and, to a lesser degree, public) enterprises, at highly subsidized rates, for the import of food and other goods deemed essential. These dollars are from petroleum revenues, from which Venezuela derives 95 percent of its foreign exchange—the same revenues that are funding social programs. This means that dollars from the state, while going into many social programs, have also been flowing into the private agrifood import complex over the course of the Bolivarian Revolution, amounting to major subsidies for the most powerful companies (Gavazut 2014). For those benefiting from these arrangements, both directly and indirectly, there is little incentive to alter this system.

The agrarian policies and programs under the Bolivarian Revolution thus represent a mixture of tendencies running the gambit from those more transformative to those reinforcing the industrial food system. This is reflected in the government's mix of approaches regarding corn production and processing, as well as in its often tenuous though not entirely antagonistic relationship to Polar. Among the strategies of the agrarian reform process has been the forging of partnerships between state institutions and farming communities focused on corn production. These partnerships are mainly around national-level planning and coordination of corn production coupled with public financing, with a portion directed toward agroecological production, primarily by cooperatives on former *latifundio* lands recovered through agrarian reform. There have also been some efforts in processing, including the establishment of twelve state-run corn flour plants and the nationalization of several private plants that had been engaged in illegal practices. Such efforts in processing, however, have yet to reach a significant scale of production. In fact, a combination of insufficient capacity on the part of the state to absorb production along with national preference for Harina P.A.N has resulted in some government-supported cooperatives directly supplying white corn to Polar. Another form of support from the Bolivarian government to Polar is in the above-mentioned provision of dollars for importation at highly subsidized rates, of which Polar is among the top recipients (Gavazut 2014). Such

linkages are being further solidified in the present conjuncture, as discussed next.

Thus, while the Bolivarian Revolution has made some incremental inroads into corn flour production, Polar continues to maintain relative hegemony, both materially and symbolically. At present, Polar controls an estimated 50-60 percent of Venezuela's supply of precooked corn flour, the most-consumed staple food of Venezuelans, and particularly of the poor (Schipani 2017, Curcio 2016). Such a degree of control has been facilitated through a combination of vertical concentration, strategic linkages with the state and a multi-pronged marketing approach. On the production end, Polar's Fundación Danac, with a germplasm collection of more than 600 corn varieties, has come to control much of the genetic base of Venezuela's certified corn seeds, with much influence over research and seed certification (Chassaigne-Ricciulli et al. 2012, Chassaigne 2010, Bastidas et al. 2015, Fundación Danac 2017, Diario Qué Pasa 2014). Polar (via its subsidiary REMAVENCA) also has direct links with corn producers via contract farming arrangements, as well as links with large-scale producer groups that form part of FEDEAGRO (Vielma et al. 2005).

On the distribution end, Polar's connections in the retail sector run deep. In addition to having been a main shareholder of the CADA supermarket chain, Polar played a leading role in the spread of hypermarkets in Venezuela when it partnered with Dutch firm SHV to launch Venezuela's largest hypermarket chain, Makro, in 1992. And finally, a key component in maintaining its dominance over the market is a broad-based marketing campaign reaching multiple segments of society, from traditional approaches like billboards, tv and print media, to the sponsorship of cultural events, to playing a leading role in research and publishing through the its Fundación Polar, to a prestigious award for scientists (el Premio Polar), to forms of "corporate social responsibility" that have garnered it international attention (Schipani 2017). Perhaps most telling of the sheer extent of the penetration of Polar into the everyday of Venezuelans is the common equation of its products, most of all of its Harina P.A.N., with food itself. That is, the idea that without Polar's products, there is no food. This phenomenon has not been lost on Polar, which maintains the ability to keep its products off of the shelves just as readily as its ability to keep them on—a point to which we will return.

3.5 Contemporary period: food as control

Over the course of the history presented thus far, several interrelated sets of cross-cutting processes bear highlighting. First, we have examined the ways in which food, through its material and symbolic power, has served as a vehicle for processes of social differentiation along lines of race, class and gender – processes which continue to evolve into the present. Second, we have examined the interplay of global-level and national-level food politics and the ways in which these connect to and play out at the level of everyday life. And finally, we have seen how the contours of the Venezuelan food system have been shaped by the pushes and pulls of state, society and capital over time, in a delicate balance of forces characterized by both deep tensions and deep ties. The fragility of this balance came to the fore in recent years, particularly from 2013 onward, in the form of the above-mentioned food lines that became emblematic of present-day Venezuela, followed by purported "food riots" that were over time combining with more organized "pro-democracy" protests, as part of a global surge of popular uprisings against authoritarian regimes. This combination of factors has come to mark what is widely regarded as the current conjunctural crisis of Venezuela's food system, as part of a broader political and economic crisis facing the nation.

In this section, we move into the contemporary period, taking a deeper look at its dynamics, particularly the dynamics of the shortages and street protests characterized as food riots, challenging the dominant narratives surrounding them. That the Venezuelan food system is in crisis today is hardly debatable. The question is how did it get there. McMichael (2009: 139) has argued that, "Contradictory relations within food regimes produce crisis, transformation, and transition to successor regimes". Looking back over the decade leading into 2013, in terms of contradictory relations we see what might be characterized as "the *corporate food regime* meets Bolivarian-style food sovereignty construction". That is, we have seen a food system deeply entrenched in the *corporate food regime* and efforts to change this through returning the means of production to the broader populace. The latter, however, have had significant limitations, and, as argued in the Chapter 5, many of these efforts have been more focused on building alternatives than on dismantling pre-existing power structures. This has left the dominant agro-import complex largely intact and in the hands of the elite who oppose the government and the Bolivarian Revolution, fostering

a scenario wherein food can be weaponized toward political ends—the very antithesis of food sovereignty.

This section explores such dynamics, focusing on the theme of *food as control*. In doing so, we will dig into the narratives on scarcity, arguing that, far from a situation of overall food scarcity in Venezuela, what exists is a "selective scarcity" in the form of an absence of key staple food items upon which Venezuela's poor working class had come to depend. We also look at the dynamics of the purported food riots, arguing that while the street protests have been presented in mainstream narratives as a direct outcome and extension of the food lines, those in the lines and those on the streets are for the most part distinct groups, representing different sectors of society with different political interests. Furthermore, the nature of the protests departs significantly from typical features of food riots past and present (e.g., *see* Patel and McMichael 2009, Holt-Giménez et al. 2009, Thompson 1971), as we will explore below.

We start with the food lines, looking at their composition, their location, and what products are being sought. In terms of composition, those in the lines have been overwhelmingly poor working-class women. This has taken a toll on everyday life at the household level (Davies 2017; Alzuru 2015), as well on everyday life of the popular organization of the Bolivarian Revolution, in which women have played a key role (Guédez 2015). The lines have been largely outside supermarkets, and are to access certain specific items that have gone largely missing from supermarket shelves. These consist of the most consumed industrially processed foods of the Venezuelan food basket, particularly precooked corn flour (Curcio Curcio 2017). The selectivity of the missing items – that is, that the items missing are those deemed most essential to the population – point to holes in narratives on scarcity. For instance, while precooked corn flour has gone missing, corn-based porridge has remained available; while milk powder has gone missing, fresh dairy products like cheeses have remained available, etc.[6]

There are a number of additional elements pointing to holes in the scarcity narrative, three of which we will highlight here. First is that the same items missing from shelves have continued to be found in restaurants. Second is that, by their own accounting, private food companies including

---

[6] For further first-hand accounts on the shortages, see Pearson 2013, Media Roots 2017, and Schiavoni and Camacaro 2016.

529827-L-bw-Schiavoni
Processed on: 15-3-2019

Polar continued to maintain steady production levels at least through 2015 (Curcio Curcio 2017). A representative of Polar, in fact, spoke of the recent addition of new products including teas and gelatins to their Venezuelan lines in a 2016 interview.[7] Third is that even before widespread government responses to the shortages kicked in (as described below), corn flour consumption levels among both higher- and lower-income sectors of the population remained steady from 2012-2015 (Curcio Curcio 2017). Thus, while the shortages have generated tremendous anxiety and insecurity, and while accessing certain goods has become more time-consuming and complicated, Venezuelans have found ways to access them (Curcio Curcio 2017). In addition to enduring the lines, another access channel has been through an illicit parallel economy, through which goods such as corn flour are sold at prices many times the original cost. While individuals have turned such practices into business opportunities, private enterprises have done so as well, in the form of both hoarding of goods for speculative purposes as well as smuggling them across the Colombian border, with regular discoveries of stockpiles serving as further indication of goods being intentionally diverted from supermarket shelves (Mills and Camacaro 2015).

Political economist Francisco Dominguez (2016), who lived through Chile of the 1970s and whose research includes Venezuela, notes striking parallels between present-day Venezuela and Chile under Allende in the period prior to the U.S.-backed coup of 1973, as have others (e.g., Curcio Curcio 2017, Camacaro and Mills 2015, Harnecker 2016). During this time, as Bello (2017: 16) reminds us, U.S. President Richard Nixon, regarding Chile, ordered the CIA to "make the economy scream". This included a covert financial blockade along with support for a right-wing counterrevolution, manifested in food shortages, lines, stockpiles and street protests, among various other forms of disruption that parallel what is being seen today in Venezuela. Furthermore, this was done in a context of depressed global prices of copper, upon which Chile depended for its foreign revenue. The drop in copper prices, together with the "failed socialist policies" of Allende, were ostensibly to blame for Chile's troubles, as reinforced through an international media campaign.

---

[7] See video entitled 'Declaraciones del director de empresas Polar I' ('Declarations of the director of Empresas Polar I'), accessible at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sSmShwmm17U.

While the full extent of U.S. involvement in Chile's counterrevolution would not be understood until years later when key documents were declassified, there are already ample examples of overt U.S. aggression toward Venezuela to point to, in the form of a string of intensifying economic sanctions spanning the Obama and Trump administrations, as well as an all-out economic blockade enacted under Trump. These have made it extremely difficult for the government to make payments on imports of essential goods such as food, medicines and machinery parts and to manage its debt (Weisbrot 2017, Harris 2017, Misión Verdad 2017). Trump's former Secretary of State Rex Tillerson, ex-CEO of Exxon Mobil (an offshoot of the Rockefellers' Standard Oil), sums up U.S. policy toward Venezuela in his statement that:

> We are evaluating all of our policy options as to what can we do to create a change of conditions where either Maduro decides he doesn't have a future and wants to leave of his own accord or we can return the government processes back to their constitution (BBC 2017).

Another State Department representative, in a press briefing prior to Tillerson's Latin American tour, largely focused on Venezuela, was quoted as saying:

> The pressure campaign is working. The financial sanctions we have placed on the Venezuelan Government has forced it to begin becoming in default, both on sovereign and PDVSA, its oil company's debt. And what we are seeing because of the bad choices of the Maduro regime is a total economic collapse in Venezuela. So our policy is working, our strategy is working and we're going to keep it on the Venezuelans. (U.S. Department of State 2018)

Bello (2017: 16-17) also reminds us, however, that "U.S. intervention [in Chile] was successful because it was inserted into an ongoing counterrevolutionary process" that "was largely determined by internal class dynamics" and that "the Chilean elites were able to connect with middle-class sectors terrified by the prospect of poor sectors rising up with their agenda of justice and equality". This reflection could not better capture the dynamics in Venezuela as well, which have similarly been characterized by the dialectics of revolution and counterrevolution, in which the middle class plays a pivotal role.

529827-L-bw-Schiavoni
Processed on: 15-3-2019

This brings us to another key feature of the present conjuncture, which are the street protests characterized as "food riots" in the dominant narratives, particularly the latest and most intense round of them in 2017, to which we now turn. An important piece of context underlying these is that while the current food lines began to become a phenomenon in 2013, they intensified over time, and are attributed with being a key factor in the transfer of control of the National Assembly from *chavista* majority aligned with the Bolivarian Revolution to opposition majority under the MUD (Mesa de la Unidad Democrática, Democratic Unity Roundtable) at the end of 2015. Among MUD's campaign strategies was its 'La Ultima Cola' ('The Last Line') commercial, depicting dissatisfied people standing in "the last line" they would have to endure – to vote for the MUD, which would do away with the food lines once in power.[8] Of particular note was the working-class appeal of the commercial, with the composition of the people in the line reflective of the majority of the population, in contrast to the wealthier and whiter base associated with the MUD. It did not take long for the MUD to return to this base, however, upon its ascent into the Assembly, with the 2nd Vice President of the new National Assembly, Freddy Guevara, openly calling for "the people" (i.e., MUD supporters) to take to the streets causing mass disruption, "until the only option of the dictatorship would be to accept the less traumatic solution" (El Nacional Web 2017, translated) – in a striking echoing of Tillerson's quote above.

What ensued was an assortment of manifestations, drawing from peaceful resistance tactics associated with global social justice movements, on the one hand, and acts of violence on the other. Largely limited to the wealthiest areas of major cities, these ranged from street barricades and vandalism, to picnics and barbecues, to candlelight vigils, to physical assaults, to the hurling of "puputovs" of human feces (Gupta and Veron 2017). But within this seemingly disparate set of tactics was precision on certain fronts, including a systematic attack on state-run social programs, such as the burning of buses providing subsidized public transportation and vandalism of public health facilities (Primicia 2017). Especially strong was the attack on the agrifood apparatus of the state, speaking to the ways in which both the symbolic and material dimensions of food can at once be drawn upon as a means of control. This included arson of the National

[8] The 'Ultima Cola' ('Last Line') commercial can be viewed at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TXeMn2sBqis.

Institute of Nutrition, vandalism of laboratories for the production of ecological farming inputs, and multiple burnings of food supplies destined for government feeding programs, including one on the magnitude of 40 tons of food, as well as the burning of vehicles associated with these programs (Alba Ciudad 2017, Blanco 2017, Koerner 2017b, Telesur Tv 2017).

Also among the burn targets, tragically, were people, specifically those seen as fitting the characteristics of *chavistas* (i.e., poor and brown-skinned). The most visible of these burnings was that of Orlando Figuera, a young Afro-Venezuelan supermarket worker, whose gruesome burning alive as countless onlookers did nothing to intervene, in a scene strikingly Victor Hugo-esque[9], was captured on video (Grandin 2017). While Orlando did not survive his attack, dying shortly after, another burn victim of similar demographics, Carlos Ramírez, did, albeit with severe burns covering his body. Ramírez described pleading for his life, shouting "Don't kill me! I'm not *chavista*! Please don't kill me!",[10] as a group of street protesters brutally beat him and set him ablaze (The Prisma 2017).

The racial elements of these attacks associated with the violent street protests, known as *guarimbas*, are apparent, and speak to the above-mentioned "class/race fusion" deeply embedded in the country's history (Cannon 2008: 731). The protesters are for the most part the grandchildren of the middle class that emerged over the period of modernization and whitening, with important links to the country's elite, forming a middle-class-elite alliance known as "*sifrinaje*" (López 2015). While this has been largely obscured in media accounts, a rare exception is found in a *Bloomberg Businessweek* article on the nightlife of the protesters ('The Manhattan of Venezuela Parties Against a Backdrop of Crisis'), whose gathering spots included upscale rooftop shisha bars, with one protester quoted as saying "You protest in the morning, but that doesn't mean you stop living" (Rosati 2011). While the protesters were not homogenous, those featured in this article challenge the narratives of desperate masses, while also highlighting the differentiated impacts of the protests, in which some managed to maintain their everyday lives in relative comfort, while others struggled to maintain theirs. Regarding the latter, another form of violence of the

---

[9] *See*, in particular, chapter 8 of Victor Hugo's *Les Miserables*, 'Billows and Shadows'.
[10] For interview with Ramírez, *see* https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tNy-Fap5IhhE.

protests, largely invisibilized, was their impacts on daily life of the poorest sectors, who did not have the luxury of missing work, for whom basic life activities became daily struggles, between transportation shutdowns caused by roadblocks and fear of physical violence. Particularly disadvantaged were the domestic and service sector workers who had to travel to and from the wealthier areas where the *guarimbas* were concentrated on a daily basis. Food access, already difficult from the shortages, lines and vandalism against government food programs, was further impeded due to the majority of supermarkets being concentrated these wealthier areas.

The dynamics of the *guarimbas* and their differentiated impacts reflect a continuity from the past, in which the elite looked upon the Afro-Indigenous majority with a complex and contradictory combination of subordination, disdain and dependency. The working-class people in the vicinity of the *guarimbas* were expected by the protesters to continue to serve them, while remaining largely invisible, and to the extent that they were visible, were looked down upon. This "othering" of the Afro-Indigenous majority associated with the Bolivarian Revolution by middle and upper classes of the opposition through, for example, use of racist slurs and images, has been well documented (e.g., López 2015, Eisen 2014, Ciccariello-Maher 2016, Cannon 2008). And yet, the elephant in the room was that the involvement of the working-class majority was in fact a missing link for the legitimacy of the *guarimbas*, their absence glaring. This has led some to ask "*¿Por qué no bajan los cerros?*" ("Why don't the hills come down?"), referring to the hillside *barrios* of Caracas, well-known hotbeds of rebellion, as seen during the Caracazo (e.g., Stefanoni 2017).

Meanwhile, similar dynamics played out in the countryside, where a series of "farmer protests" were featured in the media. These occurred in two main enclaves of agricultural modernization: the Andean region and the agricultural colony Colonia Turén of the Plains region. Those in the Andes happened concurrently with the urban *guarimba*s, reproducing their tactics and even surpassing their levels of violence, as they blocked the transport of produce destined for markets across the country. These were led by agricultural intermediaries and mid-scale producers identified as *gochos*, whose identity as "hard-working mountaineers" (Eisen 2014, no page) has "never been fully separable from racial superiority" (Ciccariello-Maher 2016: 57). Meanwhile, in Colonia Turén, hundreds of large-scale European-descended farmers held a Tractorazo, or tractor protest, called by FEDEAGRO, in May of 2017 in protest of a proposal by Maduro for

a constituent assembly process, and demanding more subsidies for industrialized agriculture as a way out of the "agrifood crisis". While in both cases presenting themselves as struggling for the rights of all farmers, both the *gochos* of the Andean *guarimbas* and the tractor-based farmers of Turén were in fact those who control much of the means of production, including serving as intermediaries to small-scale producers in the sale of inputs, often through speculative practices. In parallel to the dynamics of the urban *guarimbas*, small-scale farmers of both the Andean and Plains regions refrained from the protests.

Interestingly, the Tractorazo presented a very similar image to the "tractorcades" organized by progressive farm groups in the U.S. in response to the farm crisis of the 1980s and on a number of occasions since (Roman-Alcalá et al. 2018), even though the contexts of the two diverged significantly. This might not be a coincidence, given that within the *guarimbas*, imagery typically associated with the political left also abounded, as magnified by the international press. According to Ciccariello-Maher (2016: 49) in his analysis of the 2014 *guarimbas* that set a precedent for those of 2017: "When the Venezuelan right took to the streets under the guise of spontaneous popular resistance to an authoritarian regime, it had patiently studied the tools, imagery, and social media techniques more often associated with progressive or leftist causes" to "integrate [its] protests seamlessly into the narrative of global revolt and resistance".

The image conveyed by the international press has been one of "the people" rising in response to a "humanitarian crisis" wrought by an "authoritarian regime". In reality, however, the violence associated with the *guarimbas* has only served to further isolate the popular sectors from the opposition. A look behind the headlines and images shows some glaring contradictions, particularly in the description of *guarimbas* as "food riots", given the class and racial composition of the protesters crying "*hambre*" ("hunger"), described above. Furthermore, a quick glance over social media, such as the postings of Freddy Guevara, dispels any illusion of protests arising organically "from below". Finally, and crucially, both the targets and tactics of the *guarimbas* are a stark departure from the common characteristics of food riots observed over time, as "one of the oldest forms of collective action" (Patel and McMichael 2009: 9).

To the last point, E.P. Thompson (1971), in his detailed analysis of 18th century food riots in Britain, notes that far from being haphazard occur-

rences, the food riots of this period revealed a sophisticated collective understanding of economic structures coupled with shared logics of justice and fairness, which Thompson described as a sense of "moral economy". For instance, as prices of bread went up beyond that which was deemed fair, rather than converge upon bakeries, as the most immediate and obvious target, crowds focused more on the large millers and other establishments that were involved in the price setting. The goal was not simply to access bread for themselves but to demand that fairly priced bread be available to the whole of the poor working class. Such logics of justice, fairness, and concern over the collective moral economy continue to be seen in food riots of the present such as those in response to the food price crisis of 2007-2008, which Holt-Giménez et al. (2009) argue are better described as "food rebellions". Some of these actions, argue Patel and McMichael (2009:29), can be understood as manifestations of food sovereignty, or as movement toward it, whereby "those disenfranchised by the food regime seek to become sovereign".

The recent *guarimbas* in Venezuela, with such tactics as the burning of food as opposed to a redistribution of it (and food that had specifically been destined for the poor), and the burning of people, along with open calls for foreign "humanitarian intervention" aligned with the messaging of MUD, bear little resemblance to food riots seen elsewhere across the globe over history. Arguably much more fitting of a food riot or "food rebellion" in the Venezuelan context would be the above-mentioned Caracazo of 1989, as noted by Bello (2009) in his forward to Holt-Giménez et al.'s (2009) *Food Rebellions* book. While the causes of the Caracazo have already been discussed above, its consequences, as security forces opened fire upon civilians, also bear mentioning. Articles of the *New York Times* archives of this period include accounts of mass graves, people lined up at morgues in search of loved ones, imposition of curfews, cutting of civil liberties and press freedom and death estimates upwards of 600 people (New York Times 1989a; New York Times 1989b; Uhlig 1989), with a doctor quoted as saying "no country is prepared for what we have confronted this week" (Uhlig 1989). Interestingly, however, little international outcry against government repression was to be found in the media of this time, with then-President Andrés Pérez being looked upon sympathetically for having "inherited a deteriorating economic situation" that necessitated a variety of "tough" measures (New York Times 1989b). Today, in contrast, amidst widespread denouncements of government repression

regularly featured in the *New York Times* and elsewhere, a total of 14 deaths associated with the 2017 *guarimbas* have been directly traced to government security forces, while 23 have been directly traced to opposition violence (Venezuelanalysis 2017). While any acts of violence on the part of the government merit concern, attention and investigation, it bears asking why the international outcry has been so great now as opposed to the time of the Caracazo and why, as a media watchdog group has noted, "the imperfect state of democracy in Venezuela" is a source of such outcry while many atrocities in the world today go under-reported (Media Watch 2017, no page). "The answers", they conclude, "could hardly be more obvious" (Media Watch 2017, no page).

This brings us to petroleum, as a key reason why Venezuela has attracted so much interest, as acknowledged in the media, as well as a central part of the dominant narratives surrounding present-day Venezuela, in which petroleum is identified as essential to what had made the government under Chávez so popular (i.e., high petroleum prices along with his charisma) and what has made the government of Maduro less popular (i.e., low petroleum prices along with his lack of charisma). We will highlight several brief points with regard to this. First, economist Luis Salas demonstrates that while indeed petroleum prices were on an uptrend for much of Chávez's presidency, the price of petroleum being at or around the often-referenced USD 100/barrel was an exception as opposed to the norm. This occurred in the last stage of Chávez's presidency, between 2010 and 2012, whereas the average price per barrel over the course of his presidency was in fact USD 55 (Salas Rodríguez 2016). This happens to be right around where the price of petroleum is at the time of writing. Second, economist Pasqualina Curcio has demonstrated that the shortages are in fact part of a broader trend seen over the course of the Bolivarian Revolution, through both periods of high and low prices of oil, particularly at politically heightened moments such as the lead-up to elections (Curcio Curcio 2017). Furthermore, the shortages seen at present did not begin in 2014, when oil prices dropped, but beforehand, in 2013, while oil prices were still high.

All of the above complicates simplistic narratives around present-day Venezuela. Something missing from many of these analyses, which tend to be centered on the government and state, is the absolutely key role of capital and its relations with the state. In employing an interactive lens as part of a historical, relational and interactive approach, it is imperative to

look at the role of the elite in the current conjuncture, whose power extends throughout much of the agrifood system and who is using this moment of "crisis" to further consolidate its power while simultaneously attempting to dismantle the redistributive agrifood policies described above. The latter is toward several ends. First, it constitutes a material attack on much of the population, disproportionately impacting the poor working class, while further frustrating an already frustrated middle class. Second, it is an attack on the legitimacy of the government, both internally and externally, particularly through discrediting Venezuela's reputation as a global reference in the fight against hunger and in efforts toward food sovereignty, as recognized by the UN.

Within this scenario, three key actors of the elite have deployed a variety of actions using populist appeal to gain legitimacy while advancing the interests of capital. First was the 'Ultima Cola' campaign of the MUD to gain access to the National Assembly, after which it moved quickly to try to dismantle key agrifood policies of the Bolivarian Revolution, including agrarian reform laws and food distribution programs. MUD deputies especially attacked the newly passed Seed Law that had been a product of mass grassroots mobilization (see Chapter 4), mocking its recognition of the *conuco* and the seeds of Afro-descendant and Indigenous communities. In addition to inciting violence of their base, MUD deputies passed a declaration of "humanitarian crisis" in Venezuela, quickly picked up by the international press, along with an appeal to the U.S. for intervention. The U.S. government responded with a series of measures including increasingly tight economic sanctions that have ironically hampered the government's ability to respond to the crisis, as mentioned above. Meanwhile, as seen with the Tractorazo, FEDEAGRO has used the shortages as a pretext for advancing capital-intensive forms of agriculture, its promotional materials employing "*campesino*" imagery strikingly similar to that of the country's agrarian social movements, while it attempts to roll back their gains in agrarian reform.

In the midst of all this, Lorenzo Mendoza, owner of Polar, has emerged a savior figure (e.g., 'The Billionaire Mogul Fighting to Feed Venezuela's Hungry Masses' (Tomaselli 2017)) within circles of both domestic and global elite, receiving both a *Financial Times* 'Boldness in Business Award' and Woodrow Wilson 'Award for Corporate Citizenship' in 2017 alone. In an interview with *Financial Times*, Mendoza said, "I have lots of families depending on me" and spoke of his desire to "bring Venezuela back to

529827-L-bw-Schiavoni
Processed on: 15-3-2019

prosperity" (Schipani 2017). He also publicly hinted at presidential candidacy on numerous occasions, although did not ultimately run in the 2018 elections. These events are not isolated but highly interconnected, as seen, for instance, in a FEDEAGRO member turned MUD deputy organizing a 'Special Commission for the Study of the Agrifood Crisis' attended by representatives of Polar and FEDEAGRO, and in Mendoza's regular appearances in FEDEAGRO assemblies – public manifestations of alliances that run deep.

These elite alliances, however, are not only in opposition to the Bolivarian government, but are also connected to it in intricate ways. As related to food, these are largely centered around the importation complex and manifested through a series of interactions, both direct and indirect, and both within and outside of the law. Of the dollars of the state designated for imports, the vast majority, around 90 percent, go to the private sector, for importation of both food and raw materials and also to maintain their operations (Salas 2016). Top recipients include the country's largest national and transnational food suppliers, such as Cargill, Polar and Nestle (Gavazut 2014). Curcio Curcio (2017) has documented that the government has consistently given clear priority to the import of food, with dollars allocated for food import growing by 571.7 percent from 2003-2013, and with continued prioritization of dollars for food import since the fall in oil prices.

However, despite the private sector receiving steady amounts of dollars for import of essential goods, the shortages intensified. While a "flight of dollars" ("*fuga de dólares*") among the private sector is well known to exist (i.e., through investing some portion them offshore and/or exchanging them on the domestic parallel market as opposed to using them for their stated purpose of importing essential goods), this has been met with insufficient government oversight and enforcement, through a combination of corruption and incapacity. Regarding the former, there have been a number of highly visible cases of corruption among public officials in collusion with the private sector connected to the food import complex, in addition to those which have gone unreported.[11] Where there have been

[11] A well-known case is that of "Pudreval", in which several thousand tons of imported food that had been destined for government distribution programs were found rotting in containers. (*see* http://www.eluniversal.com/nacional-y-politica/140420/se-pudrieron-alimentos-valorados-en-bs-10-millones)

529827-L-bw-Schiavoni
Processed on: 15-3-2019

attempts to mitigate these practices, officials have faced personal attacks, including assassination attempts, framing, and defamation, on numerous occasions, speaking to the power of the interests involved.[12]

The many problems associated with Venezuela's food import and distribution complex point to various areas for much-needed reforms, from monetary policies to regulatory bodies. The nature of these reforms is subject to lively heated debate, particularly around contentious topics such as exchange rates and price controls, around which there are a variety of analyses and proposals (e.g., Weisbrot 2016, Mallett-Outtrim 2017, Curcio 2017). These debates are critically important. What we want to emphasize, however, in light of our theme, is that the problems highlighted above are symptomatic of the fundamental structural problems of a food system based on imports and dominated by the interests of capital, through deep alliances that have been forged over the course of history. Such conditions render Venezuela's food system susceptible to the use of food as a means of control, as seen at present. There are no quick fixes. This points to the need for wholesale change of this system, beyond individual reforms, which food sovereignty activists have indeed been calling for and working toward, building upon a history of resistance. This brings us to the next section.

3.6 Contemporary period: food as resistance ("En guerra hay que comer"[13])

We can see from the previous section the central role of food in conditioning the circumstances at present, both materially and symbolically, from profound impacts on diets, daily habits and overall sense of security to the shaping of domestic and international public perceptions, as the shortages serve as a pretext for economic sanctions and calls for regime change. Just as food is serving as a mechanism of control, however, it is also serving as a powerful tool for resistance. Here we will look the latter,

[12] A high-profile example was the physical attack of the superintendent of the government agency charged with overseeing flows of goods (SUNDDE) as he was overseeing a major campaign against practices of hoarding, smuggling and speculation in 2013 (*see* http://www.eluniversal.com/sucesos/131004/ultimados-tres-sujetos-durante-ataque-a-eduardo-saman).

[13] "In war, one must eat" - reflection of a Venezuelan food sovereignty activist on the present conjuncture

particularly among working-class communities, both urban and rural, who are the hardest hit by the current shortages and other challenges facing Venezuela's food system. Furthermore, present forms of resistance have not arisen in a vacuum, nor have they arrived upon a blank slate. Rather, they build upon a rich history of the use of food as a tool of resistance over time, including, most recently, food sovereignty efforts through the Bolivarian Revolution. As part of a historical, relational and interactive approach, we draw upon a relational lens to understand how these latest forms of resistance are articulating with pre-existing efforts to shape future trajectories of food sovereignty construction in Venezuela. We also look at emerging forms of resistance in relation to one another and in relation to similar efforts of the past, both drawing lessons and raising challenging new questions arising out of the current context.

First, if everyday life is the main battleground upon which the difficulties at present are playing out, it is also the frontline of resistance. Here we return to the work of Monica White, who has examined how when "Mississippi sought to starve black residents into compliance with the racial hierarchy" in the U.S. Jim Crow era, "mere survival of black agricultural cooperatives was a feat of resistance" (White 2018: 67-73). This idea of *survival as resistance* is highly relevant to working-class communities of Venezuela, as they forge alternative means of survival in the face of key staple foods being cut off, while refusing to abandon the political commitment to broader societal change that the Bolivarian Revolution represents to many of them. The collective nature of these actions, which White (2018) frames as a form of "collective agency", is absolutely essential, as they extend well beyond the realm of the individual to the collective, expressed in forms of mutual support and solidarity, without which daily survival might otherwise be impossible. When the shortages began, this was among the first lines of defense to be activated, as neighbors, for instance, shared and bartered food and other essentials with one another. Thus, while one of the responses to the shortages was the above-mentioned "parallel economy" of contraband goods, another arguably much farther-reaching response was what might be called a "parallel solidarity economy" reminiscent of Thompson's (1971) "moral economy" in the focus on collective wellbeing.

Complementing the concept of collective agency, explains White (2018: 7-8), is that of "community resilience", focusing on approaches commu-

529827-L-bw-Schiavoni
Processed on: 15-3-2019

nities draw upon to withstand extreme adversity. In the *barrios* of Venezuela, a key form of community resilience at the onset of the shortages was in the activation of survival techniques from the past embedded in communities' collective consciousnesses. These included a reclaiming of traditional food preparation techniques, by necessity, as the foods missing from supermarket shelves were substituted with foods that remained locally available through prior efforts toward food sovereignty, like plantains, cassava and sweet potatoes for processed starches, fresh sugarcane for refined sugar, etc. Perhaps most emblematic of the early days of the shortages was the substitution of corn flour with freshly ground corn for the preparation of *arepas*, as many dusted off their grandmothers' food grinders and put them to use. Another development of this moment was unprecedented numbers of urban dwellers growing what they could on window sills, patios and in community spaces, adding momentum to what had already been a nascent urban agriculture movement.

Such practices born out of daily survival connect to Figueroa's (2015) argument that it is in the spaces of everyday life where the workings of capitalism have yet to fully penetrate that seeds for contextually meaningful food sovereignty are to be found, manifested in everyday practices around food. The rapid unfolding of such survival techniques in Venezuela's *barrios* speaks to an enduring connection to agrarian life among many urban residents, despite waves of agricultural modernization, depeasantization, and urbanization. As mentioned earlier, those who migrated from the countryside into cities over the course of the twentieth century, the majority into vertical makeshift shantytowns covering the hillsides of Caracas, were met with few job opportunities and a lack of basic services. Practices brought from the countryside, from rearing poultry and other small livestock, to growing fruit and coffee trees, to maintaining traditional culinary techniques, were among their tools for survival. Additionally, some of these urban migrants maintained links to the countryside though family members remaining there, making periodic visits and bringing back supplies such as food, seeds, medicinal plants and building materials into the city. Remnants of their rural origins thus remain strong among many of the inhabitants of Venezuela's urban peripheries. The variations of dishes prepared from one household to another in Caracas' *barrios*, for instance, will often reveal families' distinct geographical origins, based on diverse local culinary traditions brought from different rural areas throughout the country.

529827-L-bw-Schiavoni
Processed on: 15-3-2019

Long flying below the radar, today such everyday food practices are being looked toward as key building blocks of food system transformation among working-class urban communities. Similar trends have manifested in the countryside, where diets had also been penetrated by industrial foods, and where communities have contended not only with food shortages, but also with diminished access to industrial inputs including seeds, feed and agrichemicals, also subject to both shortages and price speculation. Such conditions have prompted shifts among small-scale producers from commercial varieties to traditional varieties of staple foods, as well as shifts away from agrichemicals toward agroecological practices, with certain parallels to Cuba's special period, albeit with less formal coordination. Furthermore, more rural people who had not been directly engaged in agriculture have been returning to food production, some pooling land and resources into joint efforts.[14] Increasingly, urban dwellers have been joining such efforts as well, as a growing number of linkages are being made across the urban-rural divide to facilitate food provisioning in the face of the shortages.

The surge in interest in alternatives to industrially produced foods and revaluing of the countryside have provided openings for organized movements that had already been working toward such transformations, who have worked to forge connections between newly emerging grassroots responses and existing popular organization under the Bolivarian Revolution. Critically important is the extensive groundwork that had already been laid to facilitate such linkages, including existing popular structures, legal frameworks, and institutional alliances. Much of this has been activated as food sovereignty has shifted from what had been a largely political goal of the Bolivarian Revolution to one of immediate material urgency. As one long-time activist and government official explained, reflecting back on the food sovereignty efforts of the revolution, "We had the vision, and had many things in place, but what we lacked was urgency... Now we have the urgency, we know what we need to do, and have what we need to do it."[15]

An example can be seen in the rural Comuna Maizal, a product of both the agrarian reform process and the construction of *comunas*, mentioned

[14] Phone interview with food sovereignty activist and former government official based in Humocaro, Lara, 10 January, 2018.

[15] Interview, Caracas, 15 January, 2018.

529827-L-bw-Schiavoni
Processed on: 15-3-2019

above. When the shortages struck, the members of Maizal, comprised of 1500 families, had already been at work toward food sovereignty since 2009, particularly in the areas of corn and livestock production, and were able to help meet the food needs not only of themselves, but also of surrounding communities, reaching up to 15,000 families (Alba TV 2018). Maizal has even picked up where the state left off, reclaiming state-run factories that had been abandoned due to shortages and inefficiencies in management, and, together with workers, putting them back into production to meet local food needs. Another grassroots effort, one rising directly out of the conjuncture in 2015 called Plan Pueblo a Pueblo (Plan People to People), has built upon the pre-existing organization of the *comunas* to forge direct links between rural producers and urban inhabitants, reaching over 40,000 urban working-class families with regular distributions of affordable fresh food within one year of its formation, and over 60,000 families as of early 2018.[16] Working directly through the *comunas* has enabled Pueblo a Pueblo to reach a scale largely unparalleled by similar initiatives elsewhere, while avoiding common pitfalls of elitism and exclusivity in local food activism, as described further in Chapter 5.

There are other grassroots initiatives, old and new, that, while they might not be on the scale of El Maizal or Pueblo a Pueblo, are symbolically important for the glimpses into possibilities for transformation they afford. One such example, having emerged in 2014, is the Feria Conuquera, a large monthly alternative market in Caracas featuring agroecologically produced fresh foods and artisanal versions of many of the products missing from supermarket shelves. Beyond a market, the Feria serves as a hub of education and organizing around food sovereignty as well as functioning as a collective bringing together urban, peri-urban and rural food producers, herbalists, and artisans of varied backgrounds. What unites them all is the common identity of "*conuquero/a*", meaning one who works a *conuco*. Recalling the historic importance of the *conuco* described above, the assumption of this identity is seen as a form of resistance, rooted in struggles of the past, and is at once a political stance against the industrial food system and a reminder of shared origins. Another initiative is Mano a Mano Intercambio Agroecológico (Hand to Hand Agroecological Ex-

[16] Personal communication with member of Pueblo a Pueblo coordination team, Caracas, 5 January, 2018.

change) based in the Andes since 2010, challenging the control of intermediaries in circuits of distribution by forging direct links between urban and rural dwellers around principles of solidarity and horizontality (Romero 2012).

These and other grassroots efforts intersect in a variety of ways as they attempt to break cycles of dependency around the import complex while working to forge a new food system. A key area of convergence is around seeds, as expressed in the Plan Popular de Semillas (People's Seed Plan), an offshoot of the new national Seed Law, which many of these same activists themselves had helped to create (*see* Chapters 4 and 5). As the Law was passed right in the midst of the shortages at the end of 2015, including shortages of seeds and other inputs, a key focus has been on rapidly implementing it from the grassroots up, with an emphasis on seed production for food production, organized around the Plan. The Plan has thus served as a centerpiece linking diverse forms of organization, from nucleuses of production to seed sovereignty brigades, in various part of the country, including the Andes, Plains and Amazon regions, as well as urban areas (Romero et al. 2016, Pérez 2016, Venezuela Libre de Transgénicos/Semillas del Pueblo 2019)

While such grassroots responses were among the first to emerge in the face of the crisis, a host of government responses soon followed suit. Among the first was a reorganization of public management in prioritization of food sovereignty, including the creation of three separate ministries out of the Ministry of Agriculture and Land in early 2016. These were the Ministry of Urban Agriculture, believed to be the first of its kind globally, to support the surge of urban production that had arisen in response to the shortages; the Ministry of Fisheries and Aquaculture to prioritize fish, both marine and freshwater, as an alternative source of protein; and the Ministry of Productive Agriculture and Land as a continuation of the former ministry. In reflection of competing production paradigms reflected within the state, the Ministry of Productive Agriculture and Land prioritizes mid- to large-scale industrial agriculture, while a number of programs that had been supporting small-scale farmers were either cut or folded into others. At the same time, the Ministry of Urban Agriculture supports a diversity of small-scale, agroecologically oriented efforts, rural as well as urban and peri-urban.

There has also been a prioritization of food sovereignty across other agencies of the state, including those not explicitly connected to food and

agriculture, such as the Ministry of Women and the Ministry of Comunas, with the latter overseeing a Communal Growing Plan developed together with *comunas* to coordinate their production efforts around several key crops (*see*, e.g., Rojas 2017). Finally, in July of 2016, the Great Sovereign Supply Mission was created as an umbrella body focused on securing national supplies of food, medicine and other basic goods, from a national security perspective. Involving links between public institutions, the military and citizen bodies in response to the war-like characteristics of the current conjuncture, this new body highlights the elevated presence of the military in the agrifood system at present, a point of contention among food sovereignty activists.

Among the government responses to the crisis, that most intimately linked with popular organizing and most touching upon everyday life are the Comités Locales de Abastecimiento y Producción, Local Provisioning and Production Committees, known as CLAPs. CLAPs were initiated in 2016 as a response to the shortages, as a way of supporting food access, starting with the poorest fifth of the population, and now reaching well over half. The basic functioning of the CLAPs is that the government purchases food directly from suppliers, both private and public, and coordinates with organized community bodies to distribute mixed food packages by household. Communities are responsible for organizing themselves into CLAPs, conducting community censuses, and organizing regular community distributions, in which the food is sold at subsidized prices in units of 12-15 kg.

Through a massive coordinated push from both above and below, CLAPs reached and estimated 2 million families in their first year. Today there are more than 30 thousand CLAPs throughout the country with the aim of reaching 6 million families with regular distributions, nearly three-quarters of the population (Radio del Sur 2017, Correo del Orinoco 2018). As the flagship food program of the Bolivarian government at present and the most visible and tangible response at the current conjuncture, CLAPs have received much attention, both positive and negative, sparking extensive debate. Some within the political opposition, for instance, see CLAPs as a last gasp of the Maduro government in a populist strategy to maintain votes, a perspective reflected in much of the media. CLAPs are also subject to heated debate in food sovereignty activism circles of the Bolivarian Revolution, with some seeing them as a reversal of the transformative visions that many have been working toward.

In critically examining debates around the CLAPs, and in order to reflect on the articulation of CLAPs with broader food sovereignty efforts and visions, it may be helpful to glean insights from other moments in history when similar efforts arose in the context of revolution-counterrevolution dialectics. A particularly relevant example are the JAPs of Chile, in response to the counterrevolution at the time of Allende, mentioned above. The JAPs, short for Juntas de Abastecimiento y Control de Precios, Provisioning and Price Control Boards, were community bodies similarly responsible for coordinating local distribution of essential goods by household in response to practices of hoarding and price speculation. A key aspect of the JAPs, according to Castro (2014: 3), is that, "Beyond a form of organizing the provisioning of the population", they were "an instance of political action from the everyday".

This reflection on the JAPs connects to another instance of emergency food provisioning in the context of revolution-counterrevolution dialectics, seen in the "survival programs" of the Black Panther Party initiated in the late 1960s in cities throughout the U.S., in the face of a systematic assault on the Black population (Abu-Jamal 2004, Henyen 2009, Patel 2012). These included the Free Breakfast for Children Program and a Free Food Program distributing bags of goods not unlike those of the CLAPs. Panther co-founder Huey P. Newton likened the survival programs to "the survival kit of a sailor stranded on a raft". He added, "It helps him to sustain himself until he can get completely out of that situation. So the survival programs are not answers or solutions, but they will help us to organize the community around a true analysis and understanding of their situation" (Newton 1972: 102). While internal debates abounded within the Panthers as to how much of their energy to devote to the survival programs versus other political work (Abron 1998), Abu-Jamal (2004: 71) explains that they were at once an instrument of "political development and radicalization of the people" *and* a means of serving urgent human needs in the face of "real poverty and subsistence issues affecting many in the community".

What can be gleaned from the Panther survival programs and the JAPs of Chile is that the balancing of immediate material needs and broader transformative work is a tension common to revolutionary projects in the face of counterrevolution, and further that the very act of meeting material needs can itself be revolutionary when embedded in a broader agenda of

transformation. The dual charge confronting the CLAPs of meeting immediate needs while contributing to longer-terms visions is reflected in a number of "50-50" conditions characterizing the CLAPs at present, conditions in many ways reflective of the crossroads at which Venezuela's agrifood system lies today. First, according to the national coordinator of the CLAPs, 50 percent of the food in the CLAPs is imported, while 50 percent is domestically produced, conditions at once reflective of the country's historically entrenched food importation complex as well as the efforts of recent years to strengthen national production (Ñáñez 2017). A second condition has to do with the partnerships between the government and the private sector sustaining the CLAPs, in which companies are guaranteed access to raw materials in exchange for selling up to half of their processed goods to the state. A third condition has to do the CLAPs' double mandate of guaranteeing emergency food provisioning while also strengthening communities' productive capacities, reflected in the 'A' and 'P' of the CLAPs. At present, approximately half of the CLAPs are directly engaged in production, while half have yet to be (Contrapunto 2017). The question of model of production represents yet another layer of tension. A fourth "50-50" is reflected in the state-society partnership represented in the CLAPs, which came as a proposal from above that has been met by massive mobilization from below. In this sense, CLAPs can be understood as sites of direct state-society interaction around food, across multiple scales, from the local to the national. The tensions inherent in this balance of forces go in two main directions. On one end is the risk of the CLAPs promoting relations of clientelism between benefiting communities and the state, particularly local state officials, and on the other end is the risk of CLAPs displacing other forms of popular organization, particularly the communal councils and *comunas*--each possibility a subject of extensive debate in food sovereignty circles.

In the midst of all these tensions, and while many logistical challenges remain (particularly in remoter areas, where distributions are less frequent and regular than in urban hubs), CLAPs have yielded tangible results in reducing lines and increasing overall security. One national poll in 2016 (the same year CLAPs were launched) indicated a 57 percent average reduction in shortages of goods by household[17] and another indicated 58

---

[17] *See* 'Monitor País: Baja Índice de Desabastecimiento en Hogares a 57,3%' ('Country Monitor: Household Shortage Index Lowers by 57.3 Percent'),

percent of the population supporting them.[18] Thus, right now, as they are, CLAPs are important vehicles for food security in the face of the challenges of the current conjuncture. The question that interests us here in light of the theme of this study is what is the emancipatory potential of the CLAPs, or how might they be vehicles not only for food access, but also *food sovereignty*? Here the work of Fraser (2017) can be instructive, recalling her above-described "triple movement" framework focused on interactions among political forces of social protection, marketization and emancipation. Applied to the CLAPs, their most obvious and immediate orientation is that of social protection, but their social protection function is directly dependent upon the forces of the market. The continuing or strengthening of such an alignment, that is, tipping the balance of any of these 50-50 scenarios further in favor of capital, could, following Fraser (and following what we have observed of the domination of capital in the Venezuelan agrifood system), run counter to emancipation. The alternative, we argue, is the alignment of the CLAPs with the existing multiple fronts of resistance that we have just outlined above – or tipping the balance of the CLAPs further in the realm of popular power. That is, the alignment of CLAPs with the *comunas*, with efforts like Pueblo a Pueblo and the Popular Seed Plan, and with other manifestations of everyday resistance that are taking on a myriad of forms. This is not a one-way challenge for the CLAPs, however, but also a challenge for movements engaged in more radical political work to get more serious about and engaged in the pressing needs of social protection currently confronting the population. This is a task to be taken up collectively, with the CLAPs as a key vehicle, among others, or as "one expression of one response", in the words of Nicolas Maduro[19]. This points to a multi-way challenge of overall convergence of resistance efforts at the current conjuncture, toward the ultimate goal of emancipation.

---

http://hinterlaces.com/monitor-pais-baja-indice-de-desabastecimiento-en-hogares-a-573/.

[18] *See* 'Hinterlaces: 58% de los venezolanos respaldan los Clap' ('Hinterlaces: 58 percent of Venezuelans support the CLAPs') http://www.avn.info.ve/contenido/hinterlaces-58-venezolanos-respaldan-clap

[19] *See* 'Maduro: ¡Los CLAP no son una caja ni una bolsa, carajo! ¡Son pueblo vivo!' ('Maduro: CLAPs are not a box or a bag, damn it! They are living people!'), https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bdg9rJNrUcQ.

Another caveat of Fraser (2017: 41) is that the triple movement framework does not imply a wholesale rejection of markets in emancipatory projects, but "a new synthesis of marketization and social protection". This brings us to a key point, and a key vulnerability facing the Bolivarian Revolution, which is that such a synthesis has yet to happen. This places grassroots food sovereignty efforts in a vulnerable position vis-a-vis the market, particularly in the face of inflation and speculation that, along with the shortages, have disrupted access to basic goods such as agricultural inputs. This has produced a treadmill-like scenario in which for every response, there appears a new attack, and for every attack, a new response. Meanwhile, through a mix of complicity and necessity, the state is protecting agribusiness elite against economic vulnerability through such support as the provision of primary materials, guaranteed purchase of goods, provision of subsidized dollars, etc., while movements argue that this is the very sort of support that should in theory be going to socio-productive projects such as the *comunas* right now. While this reality reflects certain limitations of the state, it also represents certain limitations on the part of movements, who, prior to the current conjuncture, had distanced themselves somewhat from questions of the market, as if the market (and social protection) were something separate and distinct from questions of emancipation. However, while this had been part of the political culture among both movements and state actors, the current conjuncture is pushing a new way of thinking, as the importance of the market – and of social protection in the face of destabilization wrought by the market – has become painfully apparent.

In the face of the current conjuncture, there are some signs of new syntheses of marketization, social protection and emancipation emerging. One example is in the creation of new alternative currencies to facilitate local food production, distribution and consumption in the face of shortages and inflation, such as "*el panal*" of the Comuna El Panal in Caracas, local currency that is already being taken up horizontally by other grassroots efforts outside the *comuna* (Cambero 2017). Another example is in collaborations among *comunas* like Maizal and efforts like Pueblo a Pueblo with CLAPs to maximize joint food distribution capacities, as well as partnerships among CLAPs and cooperatives resulting from the agrarian reform process in the production of seeds and seedlings to support local agricultural efforts. Yet another example is in efforts by the Jesus Rivero Bolivarian Workers University to develop technological innovations to

substitute costly and increasingly scarce imported machine parts in order to address an urgent need for food sovereignty efforts in the realm of local processing. These and other rapidly unfolding developments, framed under the banner of "*agricultura cero divisas*" or "zero-dollar agriculture" among Venezuelan social movements, reflect movement toward greater economic (and socio-productive) autonomy, identified by White (2018) as a key element in a liberatory agenda around food. "Zero-dollar agriculture" represents a vision for a radically different food system for Venezuela, standing in stark contrast to the dollar-dependent agro-import complex.

Such developments present unprecedented openings toward food sovereignty construction in Venezuela at the same time that they bring to the fore challenging questions for movements to grapple with. First, recalling the "50-50" scenarios above, how to address immediate food needs while at the same time taking progressive steps away from dependency on the corporate agro-import complex? And within this process, how to deal with the deeply entrenched tastes for industrially processed foods, such as the appeal of "charismatic foods" epitomized by Harina P.A.N., forged over time, exemplifying Friedmann's (1995: 26) description of "a shifting balance between coercion and consent"? And how can popular organizing efforts be oriented around these two interconnected challenges, on multiple fronts, while neither competing with each other nor being co-opted by the state? All these questions point to the fact that at the current conjuncture in Venezuela, the urgent tasks of the short-term are defining the contours of broader transformation in the long-term, and that it is within the everyday that some of the greatest potential for emancipation exists.

3.7 Conclusion

The situation confronting Venezuela today is far more complex than that portrayed in the dominant narratives, and it demands more thorough analysis. Through the lens of food with a focus on questions of power related to race, class and gender, new elements emerge that are key to understanding the present conjuncture. These include (1) food as a vehicle for social differentiation over time, most fundamentally in the creation and maintenance of an elite, an elite-aligned middle class, and a class of "others"; (2) the concentration and consolidation of power in the agrifood system, maintained through elite alliances, both within and outside of the state structure, and through both overt and hidden forms of power; (3) increasing homogenization, uniformity and controllability of the agrifood system,

from production and importation to consumption, through racialized notions of science and modernity; (4) marketing strategies that forge intimate relationships with the public so that specific industrially processed foods (described here as "charismatic foods") pervade everyday life; (5) dependency on monopolized supply channels and on supermarkets for access to such products; (6) the disappearance of such products from supermarket shelves constituting an attack on everyday life, particularly that of working-class women; (7) the implication of the government in the products' disappearance, while the role of private capital remains largely hidden; (8) the attempted consolidation of power by the elite through proposals for the restoration of the missing products (and of "order" more generally), in opposition to state programs and policies, with appeals to the working class; (9) a rallying of the middle class, in the name of "the people", against the government and its alliance with the working class by coopting social justice imagery while committing racialized acts of violence; and, all the while, (10) a further strengthening of state-capital relations, constituting a further concentration and consolidation of power in the agrifood system.

While far from a comprehensive list, these elements reflect emerging trends in Venezuela today, stemming from elite alliances long in the making. Of particular note are the invisible – or so ubiquitous as to effectively be invisible – mechanisms of control in the realm of everyday life that facilitate the exertion of dominance over the population, especially the working poor. This is particularly true of everyday practices around food. Through processes of colonization, modernization and, today, globalization, the entire structure of the modern industrial food system – i.e., offering foods appealing to the tastes of the masses (tastes conditioned over time), but in a highly controlled and controlling way – can readily be made into a tool of control and domination, as in Venezuela today. As Dentico (2015: 1) reminds us, in her reflection on nutrition and pathologies of power:

> The linkage between food and health is intuitive. As people we can't survive without food. What is less obvious is the extent to which those two dimensions of every person's life – the way we eat and our wellbeing – mirror the democratic fabric of a society, the tenure of the social pact in any given community, and ultimately the degree to which citizenship is and can be exercized.

Just as food can be a mechanism for the curtailing of basic rights and liberties, so too can it be a tool of resistance and emancipation – a point generally overlooked in analyses of present-day Venezuela. Not only do important drivers of the challenges at present tend to get obscured, but so too do the multitude of responses coming from the grassroots, particularly, to borrow the words of White (2011: 13), "less formal, but no less important, forms of resistance". This phenomenon cannot be separated, we argue, from the common portrayal of the Venezuelan working class as passive victims rather than active agents. The stereotypes and "othering" that led to the common perception that the majority of Venezuelans were naively following Chávez, with his petrodollars and charisma, invisibilizing the agency of those who put – and kept – him in power, are doing the same today as they invisibilize, among other things, the unprecedented grassroots advances toward food sovereignty manifesting at present. Such stereotypes of the poor and poverty are so pervasive that it went seemingly unquestioned when a *New York Times* article on starvation in Venezuela (Kohut and Herrera 2017) featured a picture of people eating one of Venezuelans' most popular dishes, or when an article in *The Guardian* entitled 'Hunger eats away at Venezuela's soul as its people struggle to survive' (Graham-Harrison 2017) reported that in the fishing village of Chuao, "Diets have shifted back to patterns more familiar to parents and grandparents, to fish, root vegetables and bananas" – the type of dish for which many a foodie would pay dearly. This paper has aimed to demonstrate how a lens of food can be a powerful tool for moving beyond such well-worn narratives.

Returning to the questions posed at the start of this chapter – *What do food politics tell us about broader forms, organizations and relations of power in Venezuela today? And with what implications for food sovereignty construction?* – several points stand out. First, we can see the centrality of matters of race and class in the dynamics of the present, despite these having been downplayed, if not altogether obscured, in the dominant narratives on Venezuela. Second, we can see some of the ways in which power has been concentrated over time, maintained through elite alliances that both transcend and permeate distinct political regimes. With respect to the last point, we can also see that the transformations under the Bolivarian Revolution have been partial at best. This is very much the case regarding the dominant agro-import complex, which has been largely unaltered over the course of the Bolivarian Revolution, despite nearly two decades of efforts toward

food sovereignty. When mainstream narratives speak of the shortages being evidence of the "failures of socialism", they are missing the point that while a variety of socialist-oriented experiments are indeed underway, most notably in the construction of *comunas*, there is little "socialist" about Venezuela's predominant agrifood system. The shortcomings of efforts toward wholesale transformation of the agrifood system to date underscore the importance of simultaneous, coordinated efforts toward both building the new and dismantling the old, a theme revisited in Chapter 5.

Finally, another important lesson for food sovereignty construction is the hard and necessary work of attempting to undo and transform patterns of production and consumption have been deeply etched in the everyday life of society over time. The shortages of industrially processed food at present have been a major boon to traditional foods and food preparation techniques and the catalyst for all sorts of alternative food system efforts that have been born out of necessity. Such developments could and arguably do constitute important steps toward food sovereignty. But are these developments here to stay, or would they recede into the fringes if Harina P.A.N. were to become ubiquitous on supermarket shelves again? Until the historical legacy of the "monstrification" of Indigenous foods and the association of imported and industrially processed foods as being superior is addressed, the staying power of the current resurgence of local and traditional foods and food techniques is far from a given. This constitutes one of many fronts of effort on the part of Venezuelan food sovereignty movements, as they work to confront the immediate challenges at present while continuing to work toward the broader transformation that the challenges at present call for.

529827-L-bw-Schiavoni
Processed on: 15-3-2019

Prologue to Chapter 4

Chapter 4 applies the HRI framework to the process behind the passage of Venezuela's progressive new Seed Law passed in 2015, as a concrete example of attempted food sovereignty construction. It is the product, furthermore, of a collaborative research process involving many of the same social movement actors who had been directly involved in the subject matter of the research. Published as an article in *Journal of Peasant Studies* in 2018,[1] an anonymous reviewer characterized the piece as "a bold cracking open of the elite canon", adding:

> The fact that the authors represent a cohort of activists, scholars, and folks straddling these divides is a deep subversion of traditional intellectual practice. I am excited to see where this momentum takes us, in terms of asking what science is comprised of, who is considered 'expert', and what effects this organic intellectualism will have on both academic publishing and on the real-life work of constructing seed and food sovereignty.[2]

The collaboration behind the piece is the result of a convergence of several different projects and ideas. In January 2016, within days of the Law's passage, three international allies to the process, William Camacaro, Fred Mills and I, rapidly put together an article that was featured on the websites of *CounterPunch* (Camacaro et al. 2016a) and *The Ecologist* (Camacaro et al. 2016b) in order to draw international attention to the Law. From there, the three of us had been in discussions about converting the piece into an academic journal article and planned to ask Ana Felicien if she would join us, given her direct involvement in the process behind the Law. When I arrived in Venezuela and raised this with Ana, I learned that she and several others (Eisamar Ochoa, Silvana Saturno, Esquisa

[1] Felicien, A., Schiavoni, C.M., Ochoa, E., Saturno, S., Omaña, E., Requena, A. and W. Camacaro (2018). 'Exploring the 'grey areas' of state-society interaction in food sovereignty construction: the battle for Venezuela's Seed Law', *Journal of Peasant Studies*, early online release (doi: 10.1080/03066150.2018.1525363).

[2] Quote excerpted from the review of an anonymous reviewer shared with us by the editors of *Journal of Peasant Studies* on 9 July, 2018.

Omaña and Adrianna Requena) were already planning to write an academic article on the Law. At the same time, Semillas del Pueblo, a larger group of activists behind the Law that Ana and the others were also part of, had been talking about conducting a collective "systematization" of the events behind the Law's passage and an evaluation of its initial stages of implementation. The group was finding it difficult to make time for this in the midst of other pressing priorities, however, such as promoting public uptake of the Law while defending it against a series of political attacks. Discussions around a possible joint article served as a helpful prompting to reprioritize the collective systematization process. The project that ensued represented a merging of all three of these plans.

Such a merging amounted to far more than the sum of its parts, as the team of international researchers benefitted from working with those with intimate knowledge of the events that had transpired, while the team of Venezuelan researchers benefited from the perspectives and additional analytical lenses of those of us who had been more removed from the process, as well our support in the writing process. Furthermore, both teams were able to support the Semillas del Pueblo collective in conducting its systematization and evaluation process, while at the same time benefitting from the rich empirical material that resulted. If there were a downside to the merging, it would be that a process involving multiple parties with different priorities, schedules and work styles, and working across two different languages, would not lend itself to typical academic procedures or speedy publication. This was acknowledged early on, however, and clear priority was given to group process and collective buy-in over timeliness in all but the very final stages of article publication, in what might be understood as a form of *slow scholarship* (Mountz et al. 2015) or *slow knowledge* (Stirling et al. 2018).[3]

A key moment in our collective process was a day-long workshop held at el IVIC in October 2016 among the research team and additional members of Semillas de Pueblo, in which a large part of the systematization and evaluation was carried out and plans for the article, including analytical

[3] Special thanks to Kamal et al. (2015), whose study served as an inspiration in collective research and writing processes involving different forms of knowledge and knowledge generation, and thanks to Asfia Kamal for personally sharing some additional insights with us.

framing, were discussed and debated (*see* Figure 4.1 for an example of an output of that day, a visual representation of the "moments" of the Seed Law process that would appear in the article). We were also able to take advantage of three pre-organized gatherings of Seed Law activists taking place in the same time period – in Caracas and in the states of Anzoátegui and Mérida – to continue discussions on systematization, evaluation and the content of the article. Among the highlights of this stage of the process for me personally was the opportunity to "test drive" the HRI framework so to speak, by presenting it to a bright group of seasoned researchers and activists and soliciting their feedback. While initially an intimidating task, it was ultimately validating to see that the framework did seem to resonate with many of the researchers and activists, with some even taking it up enthusiastically.

This was also an important opportunity to receive critical feedback. Collaborators suggested that the *interactive* lens of HRI could be further refined to better fit Venezuelan realities. For instance, some felt that the work of Fox (1993, 2007), which figures prominently in the HRI framing, while helpful to a certain degree, did not adequately capture the blurring of state and societal lines under the Bolivarian Revolution. Fox's conceptualization of "state", "society" and "the state-society interface" as "three distinct arenas" (Fox 2005: 70) might apply well to a liberal democratic context, but not necessarily to an attempted revolutionary process. This led us to return to the literature, drawing more deeply, for instance, from the work of Ciccariello-Maher (2007, 2013) on the Bolivarian Revolution and of Wolford (2016) and Wolford and French (2016) on the Workers Party of Brazil. All in all, however, we found limited analytical frameworks to capture the dynamism at hand, noting this as an area for further work. A small contribution on our parts was our framing of "*gorras multiples*" to describe the shifting of roles across lines of state and society by the same actors, a common phenomenon in recent decades in Venezuela.

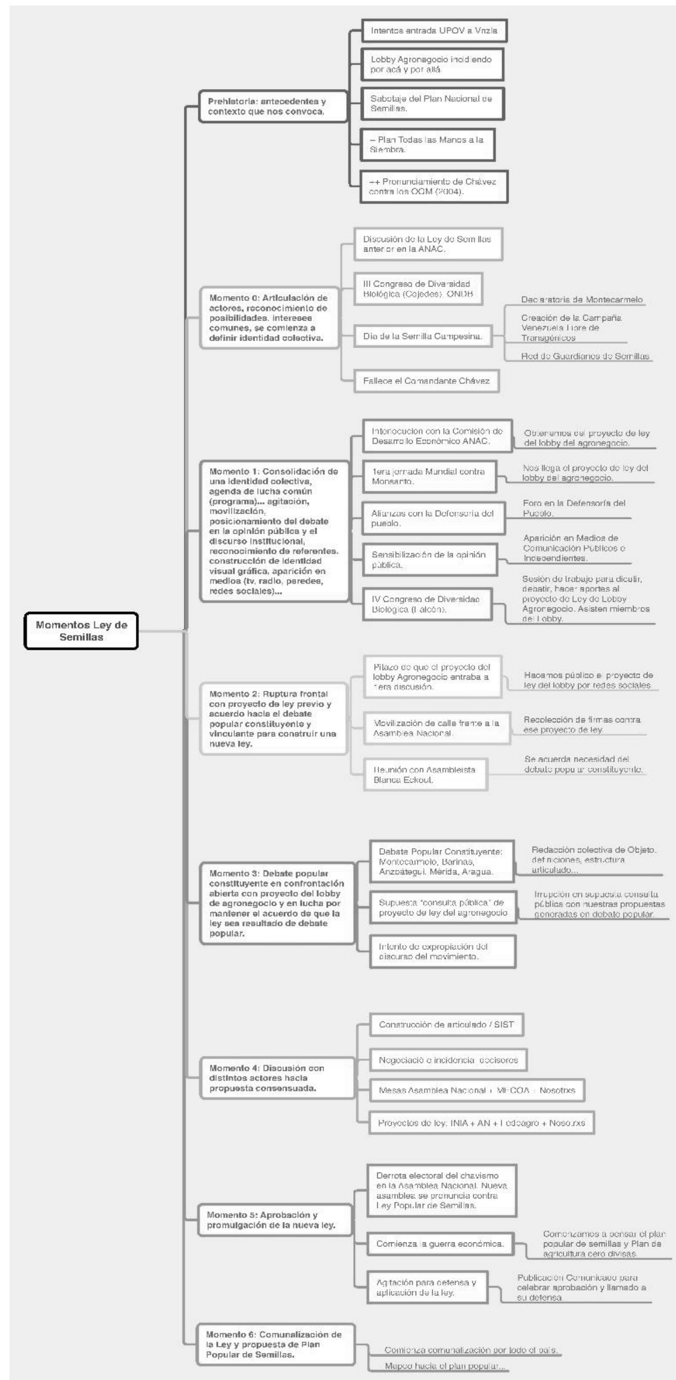
The following chapter is the article that resulted from collaborative research among Seed Law researchers and activists, reproduced here essentially as published, with minor formatting and stylistic edits. This chapter further enhances the HRI framing, and the overall dissertation, by applying HRI to a particular case study of food sovereignty construction in Venezuela. In particular, it further fleshes out the *interactive* lens of HRI in examining the complex and nuanced state-society dynamics conditioning food sovereignty construction under the Bolivarian Revolution. Another

529827-L-bw-Schiavoni
Processed on: 15-3-2019

added value of this chapter is that it spans the time period both before and during the current conjunctural crisis described in the previous chapter, giving readers a glimpse into some of the types of advancements toward food sovereignty that were underway prior to 2013 that had originally captured my attention and inspired this study, while at the same time demonstrating how such efforts have fared and adapted in the face of the currently unfolding circumstances. A final note is that this chapter does not represent a stand-alone project, but rather is part of a broader ongoing collaborative effort among activists and researchers both inside and outside of Venezuela who are focused on protecting, advancing, documenting and analyzing the pioneering piece of food sovereignty-related legislation represented by the Ley de Semillas (Seed Law) of 2015.

529827-L-bw-Schiavoni
Processed on: 15-3-2019 PDF page: 172

***Figure 4.1:** Visual representation of the "moments" of the Seed Law process identified during group systematization process in October 2016. Credit: Adrianna Requena*



529827-L-bw-Schiavoni
Processed on: 15-3-2019
PDF page: 173

4 Exploring the “gray areas” of state-society interaction in food sovereignty construction: the battle for Venezuela’s seed law

Abstract

In late December 2015, amidst plummeting oil prices, highly politicized food shortages and an all-around tense political climate in Venezuela, an unexpected event took place in the country’s National Assembly just days before a major shift in its political leadership. A new seed law was passed, with provisions including bans on genetically modified seeds and the patenting of life forms; recognition of both formal and informal seed systems; and protections for the seeds of the country’s peasant, Indigenous and Afro-descendant communities. The processes behind the Law’s passage were long, messy, dynamic and contentious, with unanticipated twists and turns, betrayals and alliances. This article shares an “intimate perspective” into these processes, as described by those directly involved in them, and as seen through the combined analytical lenses of a historical, relational and interactive approach to food sovereignty construction. This includes an exploration of the shifting of roles across state-society lines; the interaction of threats and opportunities as catalysts for collective action; and incremental shifts in power as social movements engage strategically in different types of spaces, including inside, outside, through and between formal structures of the state. Such an approach complicates simplified narratives around state co-optation of movements on the one hand or idealized depictions of state-society synergy on the other, revealing the many shades of gray involved. The aim is to contribute new insights into the complexities of state-society relations in the construction of food sovereignty, and into bottom-up policy-making processes more generally.[1]

[1] This is an Accepted Manuscript of an article published by Taylor & Francis in *Journal of Peasant Studies* on 16 November 2018, available online at: https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/03066150.2018.1525363

4.1 Introduction

In late December 2015, amidst plummeting oil prices, highly politicized food shortages, and an all-around tense political climate in Venezuela, an unexpected event took place in the country's National Assembly just days before a major shift in its political leadership. A new seed law was passed, with provisions including bans on genetically modified (GM) seeds and the patenting of life forms; recognition of both formal and informal seed systems; and protections for the seeds of the country's peasant, Indigenous and Afro-descendant communities. Agrarian and environmental movements from many countries have embraced this law as representing a radical break from prevailing global trends in seed legislation and governance and an unexpected win in an otherwise bleak political landscape (Camacaro et al. 2016a, International Planning Committee (IPC) for Food Sovereignty 2018). Such a landscape is characterized by ever-deepening corporate capture of the world's genetic resources, facilitated by a global architecture of legislation treating seeds as private property as opposed to a commons and upholding the rights of (private) breeders over those of farmers (Kloppenburg 2014, Montenegro de Wit 2017a, Peschard 2017, Wattnem 2016). Governments whose national laws are not harmonized with this global architecture are pressured to modify them toward these ends, and increasingly are. Wattnem (2016) points out that intellectual property rights laws are but one legal tool for dispossessing farmers of control over their seeds, with another being seed certification laws. Both are spreading throughout countries of the Global South, facilitating the further corporate enclosure of seeds while threatening the rights of farmers to engage in basic practices of seed saving and exchange long fundamental to human survival.

The passage of Venezuela's new Seed Law is thus seen as counterposing global trends of deepening corporate control of the world's genetic resources, and the crafting of national and international seed laws and treaties toward these ends. No less extraordinary are the domestic conditions in which the Law was passed, marked by economic crisis and deepening political polarization, calling into question the future of the country's political process known as the Bolivarian Revolution. Such conditions, in fact, had contributed to a major shift in Venezuela's National Assembly during elections earlier in December 2015, from a majority aligned with the Bolivarian Revolution (*chavista*) to an opposition majority, for the first

529827-L-bw-Schiavoni
Processed on: 15-3-2019 PDF page: 176

time since 1999. The passage of the Seed Law was among the final acts of the Bolivarian-majority National Assembly before stepping down. On the one hand, the fact that the Law was passed in such circumstances would seem to imply that it had been a pressing priority for the outgoing Assembly members. But then why had it taken them so long to pass it? If the Seed Law were simply coming from above, why had the government not passed it much sooner, and in a friendlier political climate? This is where the plot thickens, for the Law would not have been passed – and it very nearly wasn't – had it not been for a groundswell of mobilization from below, together with critical openings within the state. The processes behind the Law's passage were long, messy, dynamic and contentious, with unexpected twists and turns, betrayals and alliances. The Law itself represents an unexpected outcome of a process that had begun with a very different orientation, and that could have resulted in a dramatically different law. This article takes a closer look at this process, addressing the common question upon the Law's passage of *how did it happen?* We also address questions of timing, given that December 2015 was far from an obvious moment to push for a radical deepening toward food sovereignty in Venezuela (or was it?). In doing so, we aim to contribute new insights into the complexities of state-society interaction in the construction of food sovereignty, particularly with respect to policy-making processes.

There are several more specific objectives of this piece, building upon Schiavoni's (2017) historical, relational and interactive (HRI) approach to food sovereignty construction.[2] First, in taking a historical approach, not only do we set out to situate the events of the present in relation to those of the past, but, following Edelman and Leon (2013: 1698), we approach "contemporary processes as the history – conceptually and methodologically speaking – of the present". In documenting recent processes around

[2] Food sovereignty is broadly defined by transnational social movements as "the right of peoples to healthy and culturally appropriate food produced through ecologically sound and sustainable methods, and their right to define their own food and agriculture systems" (Nyéléni 2007a). Schiavoni (2017) argues for greater analytical distinction between food sovereignty as a vision versus food sovereignty construction as the process of attempting to realize that vision. Following Schiavoni, we approach the processes around the Seed Law as processes of food sovereignty construction, applying a historical, relational and interactive (HRI) set of lenses to them. For more on food sovereignty-related policy-making, *see* Godek (2015), Desmarais et al. (2017) and Wittman (2015).

the Law's passage and still-unfolding processes around its attempted implementation, we are generating a historical record of current events, recognizing them as history in the making. It is hoped that such a record may be helpful to future movement-building efforts and related scholarly pursuits. In addition to documentation, we are generating analysis in an area where much analysis has tended to fall short of capturing the complexities at hand, "largely because the analytical categories for 'actually existing' political systems fail to capture important gray areas" (Fox 1994: 180). Such gray areas are many in the case of the Seed Law process, especially when it comes to the complex state-society relations involved in a "society-driven campaign [that] at once worked both through and outside of the mechanisms of the state, and in collaboration with certain state actors and in antagonism with others" (Schiavoni 2017: 21). This is where both relational and interactive lenses are helpful. In focusing on the process-oriented nature of food sovereignty construction, a relational lens "helps us to be critical about the categories of analysis used in food sovereignty studies (and beyond), reflecting on how the meanings of certain analytical categories change as history marches forward" (Schiavoni 2017: 19). An interactive lens, furthermore, allows us to disaggregate the murky and often overlapping categories of *state* and *society* in order to examine the interactions shaping particular policy processes, in this case, the eventual passage and ongoing implementation of the Law.

Employing the HRI framework facilitates what Wolford and French (2016: 17) call "an 'intimate' perspective" that "allows us to understand the processes by which decisions get made and implemented and even their reception and impact". In this case the perspective is particularly intimate in that the processes presented herein are described and analyzed by those who have been directly engaged in them. This brings us to the rather unconventional authorship of this piece, in that it is written primarily by activists who have been among the key protagonists of the Seed Law process, most of whom also wear the hats of researchers, together with two international allies to the process, also both activists and researchers. The empirical material contained within is thus based on the direct experiences of those involved in the movement behind the Law. Beyond those who have authored this piece, additional activists involved in the Seed Law process have also contributed input. This was achieved through a series of workshops held over 2016 in which participants conducted a mapping of the events around the Law's passage and reflected on both challenges and

opportunities ahead. Through these workshops, the processes leading up to and directly following the Law's passage were collectively reconstructed, in a form of what Jackson (2006: 498) describes as *eventing*, in which "the contours of an event are produced and reproduced" through a dynamic process of social negotiation. Through this process, key events were identified, debated and broken down chronologically into six main moments identified by workshop participants, presented below. The identification of key moments is an example of approaching "history as period", in which political phenomena are analyzed in socially defined intervals of time (Collier and Mazzuca 2006: 473). Additionally, the authors presented a variety of proposed theoretical frameworks to workshop participants, explained in plain language, which were then discussed and debated in terms of their relevance to the Seed Law process. This article is largely a reflection of these discussions and debates.

This contribution thus represents a milestone for the movement behind the Seed Law in that it is the outcome of a collective process of critical internal reflection. Its collective development and authorship reflect the highly collective nature of the processes surrounding the Law. In taking such an approach, we have two additional aims. One is to present this case with the complexity it deserves, in its many shades of gray, particularly with regards to the state-society relations involved. In doing so, we challenge two dominant tendencies in much of the literature on Venezuela's Bolivarian Revolution, and on Latin America's "left-turn" countries more broadly – to paint scenarios in which social movements are largely coopted by the state, having fallen prey to clientelism or semi-clientelism, on the one hand, or rose-colored scenarios of state-society synergy on the other hand. What we're here to say, and empirically demonstrate, is that neither scenario reflects the complexities of our realities, as seen in the Seed Law process. A second related aim is to model a still relatively new and emerging form of scholarship in which social movements speak for themselves and conduct their own historical documentation and analysis both as scholars in their own right and in partnership with scholars. In doing so, we hope to serve as inspiration to movements elsewhere. In the sections to follow, we begin with an elaboration of our theoretical frameworks, relating them to the Venezuelan context, and specifically the context surrounding the Seed Law, and then employ these frameworks to explore the key moments of the "battle" over the Seed Law, as identified by

those who have been directly engaged in it. We conclude with key lessons and areas for further inquiry.

4.2 State-society interaction, political opportunity and *gorras multiples* in the seed law battle

A basic premise of this study is that to understand the processes leading up to and following the passage of the Seed Law, it is not sufficient to center the analysis on the state, nor on society, but on the dynamic interactions, and the often blurred and overlapping lines, between them. Key here is Fox's (1993) interactive approach to state-society relations, an eclectic approach drawing partly from Marxist and partly from Weberian traditions to understand state and social forces as mutually shaping one another.[3] Central to Fox's analysis are *state actors*, defined as "groups of officials whose actions push or pull in the same political direction" (Fox 1993: 29) and *social actors*, defined as "groups of people who identify common interests and share ideas about how to pursue them" (Fox 1993: 23). Influencing the dynamics among them is the dual imperative of the state of facilitating capital accumulation on the one hand while maintaining a sufficient level of social legitimacy on the other. Fox's work helps us to approach the state as comprised of diverse actors with competing interests and ideologies and varying degrees of autonomy and capacity. This, in turn, helps us to identify points of synergy between pro-reform state and societal actors, as mediated by institutions, which can push the boundaries of what is politically possible in a given setting.

In a similar vein, Migdal et al. (1994: 3), in their description of a "state-in-society perspective", stress the need "to disaggregate the state, paying special attention to its parts far from what is usually considered the pinnacle of power; to recognize the blurred and moving boundaries between states and societies; and to view states and societies as mutually transforming". This is highly relevant to the Venezuelan case, which is complicated by a frequent blurring of roles among pro-reform state and societal actors, with the wearing of *gorras multiples* (multiple hats) and the strategic shifting of roles across state-society lines being commonplace. This phenomenon

---

[3] This study adopts Fox's (1993, 11–12) definition of the state, namely, "compris(ing) the ensemble of political, social, economic, and coercive institutions that exercise 'public' authority in a given territory".

is not unique to Venezuela but seen among the continent's left-turn countries, as explored by Wolford (2016) and Wolford and French (2016) in the context of Brazil just prior to the ousting of Dilma Rousseff of the Workers' Party (PT). According to Wolford and French (2016: 16):

> Engagement with the everyday practicalities of governance, whether through active participation in state institutions through elected office, participatory councils, meetings, or even mobilizations and protest, is creating new political subjects both within and outside the institutions of the state […] Recent decades have seen social movement activists who are now part of the state […] and, in turn, state actors are engaging in movement activities, whether in cooperation with outsiders or as members of unions themselves.

Given these conditions, Wolford (2016: 90) argues for the "need to employ a radically new vocabulary that highlights substance and process rather than form. In other words, although the Brazilian state clearly exists as a unity of public institutions set apart from society, analyzing it as such obscures more than it illuminates". Instead, she argues, "we should focus on what state and society *do* – how groups of people govern (the traditional activity of the state) or organize (the traditional activity of social movements) in different ways in different places" (Wolford 2016: 90, emphasis added). This relates to the Seed Law battle in that there were moments when societal actors assumed roles typically be associated with that of the state, and vice versa. Furthermore, employing their *gorras multiples*, there are actors who shifted between distinct roles both inside and outside of the state. The categories of state and societal actors, while often fluid, are thus particularly so in this case.

With an eye to process over form, we also draw from work on "contentious politics" (e.g., McAdam et al. 2001, Tarrow 2011, Tilly and Tarrow 2015) to unpack the dynamics behind collective political struggle. Specifically, we look at the shifting ensemble of relationships among the various actors involved in the Seed Law battle over time, focusing on key political moments within the process. Particularly relevant within this body of work is Tarrow's (2011: 32) analysis of the factors conditioning "political opportunity structure", in which political opportunity is understood as "consistent – but not necessarily formal, permanent, or national – sets of clues that encourage people to engage in contentious politics". These include: (1) opening of access to participation for new actors; (2) evidence

of political realignment within the polity; (3) availability of influential allies; and (4) emerging splits within the elite (Tarrow 2011: 164–65). We draw from this framework to examine how the movement behind the Law was able to strategically seize political openings from within the state, while also looking at the flip side to understand tensions and blockages within the process, for instance, moments when those perceived as allies instead sided with elites or took a neutral stance.

There are, however, important limitations to the work on political opportunity structure and contentious politics more broadly, at least two of which bear noting. First, as emphasized by Gaventa and McGee (2010), while political opportunities are often presented and approached as openings originating from above, quite often these have been at least partially forged by prior mobilization from below, in a cyclical fashion. This gets back to the importance of a historical perspective as well as the importance of centering one's analysis on the iterative processes of interaction among state and societal actors to understand processes of collective claim making. Second, contention does not automatically imply opposition/antagonism between movements and a given government, which tends to be an assumed default in much of the contentious politics literature. Shifting and more complex configurations of governance make for more complex state-society interactions. Along this vein, Gaventa (2006: 23) notes, "Changing governance arrangements, which call for 'co-governance' and 'participatory governance' challenge our traditional categories of the rulers and the ruled, the policy-makers and the public". Gaventa offers a framework for analyzing such changing configurations of power in the form of the "power cube" for "analysing the spaces, places and forms of power and their interrelationship" (Gaventa 2006: 26). We will return to power cube analysis below, particularly as related to how the movements behind the Seed Law have engaged with and moved through different types of spaces, from "closed" to "invited" to "claimed/created".

Together, these interrelated sets of frameworks are employed for an exploration of the gray areas of the bottom-up policy processes comprising the battle over Venezuela's new Seed Law. We now draw from these to examine the political context forming a backdrop to the Seed Law process before turning to the process itself.

4.3 Getting to the gray: the political backdrop of the seed law battle

Shedding notions of state and society as singular entities with well-defined boundaries reveals a highly nuanced political landscape in Venezuela within which the battle over the Seed Law was fought. To examine this landscape, it is helpful to revisit the basic context of the Bolivarian Revolution, the country's primary political project since 1999, characterized by dynamic shifts in state-society relations. First, looking back before 1999, when over half of the population was living in poverty and facing a lack of decent work and basic services into the late 1990s, the general sentiment among the poor working-class majority of the population was that the government was not there to serve their interests (Hardy 2007, Weisbrot 2008). A gradual thinning of the state had been facilitated through privatization of already limited public services under neoliberal policies from the 1980s onward, triggering an institutional crisis and mounting dissatisfaction with the traditional two-party political system, increasingly manifested through social unrest and political mobilization (Lander and Fierro 1996, Maya 2003). The rise of the Bolivarian Revolution in 1999 reflected an achievement on the part of the disenfranchised majority to shift the power balance and claim the political space they had long been denied. The assumption of the presidency by Hugo Chávez Frías, on a platform of social justice, redistribution of wealth and sovereignty, was considered by many a major manifestation of popular power, captured in the common sentiment among popular sectors that, "We created Chávez" (Ciccariello-Maher 2013).

The last point is essential for understanding the dynamics of the Bolivarian Revolution. In the common tendency of political analyses to focus on the persona of Chávez without understanding Chávez in relation to the broader political project of which he was part, a disproportionate emphasis is placed upon the agency and actions of the state and state actors as opposed to the interactions of state and society that are actually the driving force of the Bolivarian Revolution. It then appears that the many forms of social mobilization that exist today under the banner of the Bolivarian Revolution began in 1999 and through openings forged from within the state. Such a take misses the decades and even centuries of social struggle that directly paved the way for the Bolivarian Revolution and that continue

to push it forward today, in dynamic tension with the Bolivarian government, at times serving as a radicalizing force from below (Ciccariello-Maher 2013, Schiavoni 2017). This connects back to Gaventa and McGee's (2010: 14) emphasis on the often cyclical nature of political opportunity, in which "[w]hat appears a new political opportunity may in fact have been shaped by previous collective mobilization and action". From this perspective, the rise of Chávez and emergence of the Bolivarian Revolution can be understood as the ultimate opening of political opportunity for Venezuela's popular sectors, touching upon each of Tarrow's (2011) four factors, and at the same time an opening directly forged by Venezuela's popular sectors. This point is captured in the following reflections of a long-time community activist of the barrio of La Vega, Caracas:

> Here, nothing comes from zero. The Venezuelan process does not come from zero, nor did it appear only when compañero Chávez appeared from the barracks. We [the community] are activists going many years back, since before the arrival of Chávez […]. We are social activists who believe in this process. We believe that this is our process, and that Chávez is the son of this process. (Mato et al. 2011: 64, translated)[4]

Going back to the start of the Bolivarian Revolution, a first point of order, in addition to addressing the immediate material needs facing the population, was to build the legal architecture necessary for broad-based popular participation in governance, toward a vision of "protagonistic and

[4] The repetition of "process" in this quote is indicative of the way in which many of those identified with the Bolivarian Revolution conceive of it, commonly referring to it as *el proceso* (the process). Given the partial, uneven, and ongoing nature of the Bolivarian Revolution, it departs from many traditional social science conceptions of revolution, such as Skocpol's (1979: 7) definition of revolution as "a rapid, basic transformation of a society's state and class structure…", and is a far cry from Tilly's (1978: 192) "revolutionary moment". More recent analyses of revolutions (e.g., Selbin 1999, Zahedi 2000), however, have pointed to the shortcomings of these and other earlier works in capturing the dynamics of contemporary forms of revolution, noting that there is no universally applicable theory of revolution in social sciences today and that this is an area meriting ongoing theoretical exploration. While not the focus of the piece, we hope it sheds some light into what might be understood as a contemporary "revolutionary process".

529827-L-bw-Schiavoni
Processed on: 15-3-2019

participatory democracy".[5] This would require rewriting the national constitution, followed by the establishment of new laws and institutions, and reform of existing ones. In July 1999, a constituent assembly was elected to lead the process of redrafting the constitution through a participatory national effort, with an emphasis on inclusion of historically excluded groups. The result by December 1999 was a radically different constitution, passed by popular referendum, that guaranteed a host of new rights to the population and laid the legal framework for direct citizen participation in governance. Since then, the Constitution has served as the highest reference point across state and society in the Bolivarian process.

The sense of propriety that many Venezuelans feel toward their constitution has been described by Ciccariello-Maher (2007, no page) as "what one might call a 'revolutionary reverence' for the law: not an a priori respect for the law but rather an admiration derived from the experience of revolutionary legislation imposed from below". Such reverence, however, is counterbalanced with a sort of *irreverence* as well. Having gone through the experience of changing the constitution and writing and rewriting articles and subsequent laws, through processes of trial and error, popular debate and consensus-building, there is a general sense of fluidity and malleability of legal structures. As one Seed Law activist reflected, with amusement, "While at an international meeting discussing protection of locally-held genetic resources, many participants seemed to feel constrained by existing national laws in their countries. We don't let that stand in our way here!".[6] Such sentiments that laws, policies and procedures can and should be changed in the interest of the public good, and that citizens have both the ability and responsibility to do so as needed, has been described by Seed Law activists as the "hackability" of the state and its institutions, with the "ultimate hacking" being the rewriting of the constitution in 1999.

In the years following 1999, a challenge facing the Bolivarian Revolution has been the tensions between the unharnessed popular power, or constituent power, that had brought the revolution about, and the constituted power of the state represented in a host of new and pre-existing laws

[5] For helpful explorations of efforts toward participatory democracy in Venezuela from a variety of perspectives, *see* Smilde and Hellinger (2011).

[6] All direct quotes by Seed Law activists in this chapter are from the above-mentioned workshop held in October 2016 or follow-up discussions at activities organized by Semillas del Pueblo from October through December 2016.

and institutions (Ciccariello-Maher 2013). Such tensions play out at the institutional level, where new actors have come into state institutions, while old actors have been called to assume new roles, including to work in greater collaboration with societal actors. This has afforded many social movements unprecedented access to the state, while further blurring the boundaries between state and society. Indeed, many key actors within the Seed Law process assumed several distinct roles, for instance being part of both an institution and a social movement, and shifted between these roles strategically, in the above-described phenomenon of *gorras multiples*. Added to this blurring is the construction of diverse citizen-run social institutions that interface directly with the state, albeit not without contention (Schiavoni 2015, 2017). The Bolivarian Revolution has thus opened up important spaces for the construction of popular power, in tandem with a new institutional architecture, while also raising inevitable tensions between competing forms of power. These tensions manifest both between forces aligned with the Bolivarian Revolution and those in opposition to it, as well as within the highly heterogeneous mix of groups and individuals, across state and society, identified with the Bolivarian Revolution.

4.4 Antecedents: competing agendas in Venezuelan seed policy

Interwoven with these state-society dynamics are Venezuela's equally complex agrarian politics. While food sovereignty is enshrined in national law, what this actually means and looks like is subject to diverse interpretations and intense debate and negotiation, including within the broad tent of the Bolivarian Revolution. There is no singular unified Bolivarian agenda for food sovereignty, with perspectives running the gamut from radical takes aligned with those of La Via Campesina to more mainstream paradigms involving large-scale, capital-intensive forms of production and distribution (Enríquez and Newman 2016, Schiavoni 2015, 2017). A key factor influencing the latter is the enduring legacy of the Green Revolution and related processes of agricultural modernization in Venezuela since the 1930s, deeply entrenched within ministries, universities and other institutions that have influenced the country's agrarian trajectory. Connected to this are deep ties between the state and private agribusiness, also forged during the modernization period, during which income from petroleum exportation supported the formation of an import-dependent agrifood

complex dominated by relatively few national and international firms (Felicien et al. 2018a).

Such historical alliances significantly shaped national norms and laws pertaining to seeds prior to the new Seed Law (Felicien 2016).[7] With the emergence of the first regulatory frameworks and programs for seed certification standards in the 1950s (Miranda 2014), public efforts became exclusively focused on the development of certified varieties in partnership with large-scale producers and agribusiness companies. These alliances are still in force, as evidenced, for instance, by various agreements between the Instituto Nacional de Investigaciones Agrícolas (National Institute of Agricultural Research, INIA) and associations of large-scale producers for the development of new varieties, representing an important state subsidy for the private seed sector. These include the registration of breeders' rights shared among INIA, public universities and associations of large-scale producers,[8] as well as the conducting of evaluations of public seed improvement programs in conjunction with large-scale producer associations and private companies.[9] Such partnerships have resulted in the

---

[7] Despite never having signed onto the Convention of the International Union for the Protection of New Plant Varieties (UPOV), the most important multilateral convention having to do with intellectual property rights (IPR) around crops, Venezuela had been essentially been following the UPOV IPR regime by virtue of its membership in the Andean Community of Nations (CAN) since 1973, guided by CAN's Decision 345 establishing the Common Regime on the Protection of the Rights of Breeders of New Plant Varieties, which was based upon UPOV. Once Venezuela withdrew from the CAN in 2011, until the new Seed Law of 2015, it fell back upon the Industrial Property Law of 1955, which does not permit patents on seeds.

[8] The breeders' rights of the certified rice variety Fundarroz PN-1 released in 2000 belong to the association between INIA, Universidad Nacional Experimental de los Llanos Occidentales 'Ezequiel Zamora' (The Ezquiel Zamora National Experimental University of the Western Plains, UNELLEZ), Fundación Nacional del Arroz (the National Rice Foundation, FUNDARROZ) and the Danac Foundation for Agricultural Research, which is associated with Empresas Polar, the country's largest food and beverage corporation (Pieters et al. 2011).

[9] Field evaluations of publicly-developed rice varieties have been carried out with the participation of associations linked to FEDEAGRO (Venezuela's national association of mid- and large-scale producers) and Empresas Polar (*see* Scandela

529827-L-bw-Schiavoni
Processed on: 15-3-2019

development of varieties that respond almost exclusively to the interests of agribusiness.

Another enduring agribusiness linkage is that certified seed production is dependent on genetic material imported from private companies and international germplasm banks. While there have been some attempts to address this, including via a National Seed Plan created in 2005, Venezuela's seed industry has continued to be highly dependent upon imported genetic material, quite likely due to the influence of the powerful private import complex and the state actors benefiting from it. This speaks to another reality in the political economy of seeds in Venezuela, which is extremely high levels of import dependence across the board. Domestically produced and certified seeds in fact make up a relatively minor part of the seed supply. Out of the 76 crops grown commercially in Venezuela, nationally produced certified seeds were available for only 8 of these at the time of the last agricultural census (rice, corn, potato, soya, sesame, cotton, black beans, and pinto beans), and in limited amounts (Laurentin Táriba 2015). The vast majority of commercial seeds are imported. An extreme example is in vegetable production, where, although production levels meet an estimated 80 percent of national demand, nearly 100 percent of the seeds are imported (Laurentin Táriba 2015).

The above realities underscore that altered state-society relations do not automatically translate into altered state-capital relations, as emphasized by McKay (2018) in his formulation of the *state-society-capital nexus*. Indeed, this remains very much an area of dispute in struggles for food sovereignty, and for broader societal transformation. Furthermore, even in instances where there has been a break between the state and the private sector, for instance in cases of nationalization of production plants, agro-input chains, etc., this does not necessarily do away with what McKay (2018: 416) calls an "agro-industrial bias" pervasive in institutions of the state. Such can even be seen in Cuba, despite its being widely recognized as a hub of agroecological innovation, described as the "paradox of Cuban agriculture" by Altieri and Funes-Monzote (2012). This "paradox" is arguably even more pronounced in Venezuela, where competing paradigms of agroecology and industrial agriculture are very much at the center of

n.d.). Rice is among the crops with the greatest genetic improvement in the country, but similar alliances exist around other crops including sugarcane, corn and sesame, among others.

many struggles over food sovereignty, the Seed Law battle being no exception.

This brings us to the flip side of the coin, which is that despite deeply entrenched linkages between private agribusiness interests and the state that have persisted through the Bolivarian Revolution, there has also been a progressive opening of spaces for the advancement of agroecology and food sovereignty. This has been partly facilitated by a favorable policy climate supported by the Constitution of 1999, which has provided a legal basis for food sovereignty construction, strengthened through a series of subsequent laws, including the Law of Integrated Agricultural Health (granting legal recognition of and support for agroecology) and the Organic Law of Food Security and Food Sovereignty (see Table 4.1). Perhaps even more significant have been the advancements largely outside of the formal laws and institutions of the state yet interlinked with them, in the form of social movements for agroecology and food sovereignty that have also grown in number and influence over the course of the Bolivarian Revolution. Schiavoni (2017: 21) describes these as "relatively autonomous from the state Bolivarian government, even when individually and collectively those within this movement consider themselves part of the Bolivarian Revolution". These movements have been pushing forward their own grassroots agendas with respect to food sovereignty, and specifically seeds, sometimes in cooperation with institutions of the state and other times at odds with them. Arguably, it is where and when these movements are able to find strategic leverage points vis-à-vis the state, based on shifting political opportunity structure, that the greatest advances with respect to food sovereignty are to be made. Examples of such advancements over the course of the Bolivarian Revolution predating the Seed Law are highlighted in Table 4.1 (*see also* Herrera et al. 2017). Such advancements, however, have been in a context of multiple tensions and contradictions with agribusiness-oriented policies, actors and agendas across state and society. These tensions have brought to the fore important debates over the model of agriculture for Venezuela, in which seeds have been a key element in dispute, conditioning a policy environment with both significant openings and barriers for progressive seed legislation.

529827-L-bw-Schiavoni
Processed on: 15-3-2019

Table 4.1: *Highlights of efforts toward food sovereignty in Venezuela that paved the way for the eventual passage of the Seed Law of 2015*

Effort	Year	Scale
Eradication of field trials of transgenic papaya: The Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources orders the incineration of transgenic papaya under field trial, based on the precautionary principle, and on December 17, Resolution 13 of the Legislative Council of the state of Mérida is decreed, requiring compliance with the ministerial order to eliminate GMO papaya.	2000	National
The Law of Land and Agrarian Development sets the legal framework for agrarian reform and recognizes the *conuco* as a historical source of agrobiodiversity.	2002	National
Public declarations against GMOs by President Chávez	2004, 2006	National, International
National Seed Plan coordinated by INIA	2005-present	National
Day of Peasant Seeds	2005-present	National
Founding of the Paulo Freire Agroecology Institute of Latin America	2007	International
Agreement on the occasion of the International Day of Biodiversity, Official Gazette No. 38.942 of May 30, 2008: “The country rejects the use of GMOs produced by transnational food and pharmaceutical companies, given their unknown effects on crops, health and life”.	2008	National
Declaration of President Chávez in support of open-source knowledge and against patents and GMOs.	2009	National

529827-L-bw-Schiavoni
Processed on: 15-3-2019 PDF page: 190

Resolution 024 of the Ministry of Popular Power for Education, creating the "all hands planting" initiative, which incorporates agroecology curricula into the primary and secondary education systems.	2009	National
Creation of public programs for seed research and innovation, including: socialist networks of technological innovation for the production of potato and corn seed; research projects on native Andean tubers	2002-present	Regional
La Via Campesina brigade in Venezuela, whose activities include seed production	2005 - present	International
Creation of the National Network of Bio-input Laboratories for the production of biological controls and biofertilizers through an agreement between Cuba and Venezuela. Some of these laboratories are managed directly by peasant organizations.	2008	National
Passage of the Integrated Agricultural Health Law and the Food Security and Food Sovereignty Law, which establish the precautionary principle with respect to GMOs, along with the promotion of agroecology and the right to quality food	2008	National
National Strategy for the Conservation of Biological Diversity is built participatively with social actors, recognizing GMOs as a threat to biodiversity and including among its actions the conservation of landraces.	2010-2020	National
Launch of the Plan de la Patria (National Plan), which establishes food sovereignty as a national goal; proposes the production of seeds in lands rescued through the agrarian reform process; recognizes the *conuco* as a reserve of germplasm; promotes peasant and Indigenous agriculture; and promotes agricultural production free of GMOs.	2013-2019	National

Agreement between the (state-run) Venezuelan Food Corporation and the Small Farmers Movement of Brazil (MPA)/La Via Campesina for seed production and exchange of experiences	2013	International

4.5 The stages of the Seed Law battle

With an understanding of the contexts conditioning the Seed Law, we now turn to the processes behind the creation and initial implementation of the Law, analyzed as processes of food sovereignty construction. This is based on collective reconstruction and analysis among some of the social movement actors who were most intimately involved, first via the *Venezuela Libre de Transgénicos* (GMO-Free Venezuela) campaign, and then, following the Law's passage, through the ongoing *Semillas del Pueblo* (Seeds of the People) initiative.

4.5.1 Moment zero: uniting forces

While we can see from the above that the battle around the Seed Law emerged out of various historical processes, the starting point for the current process as such could be considered 2012, with a confluence of events that we call *moment zero*. The first of these was the Third Venezuelan Congress of Biodiversity, organized by the Oficina Nacional de Diversidad Biológica (National Office of Biodiversity, ONDB) under the Environmental Ministry in May 2012 in the agricultural state of Cojedes. This event was significant both for its theme, "Land and Territory", including a focus on the rescue of traditional seed varieties, and for the participation of a wide variety of social movements, including both peasant movements and urban groups, as well as researchers and institutional actors from Venezuela and elsewhere in the region. Significantly, it was attended by a representative of the Sin Maíz No Hay País (No Corn, No Country) campaign of Mexico, who shared her experiences on a national campaign against GMO corn. A second key event was the seventh annual National Gathering on Peasant Seeds held in the community of Monte Carmelo in the state of Lara, organized by local communities and supported by INIA. This three-day activity culminated in the National Day of Peasant Seeds on 29 October. Just earlier the same month, the National Assembly had an-

529827-L-bw-Schiavoni
Processed on: 15-3-2019

nounced that it would be taking up the drafting of a new seed law, breathing a sense of urgency into these activities. Among the outcomes was the formation of a National Network of Seed Guardians, announced via what came to be known as the Declaration of Monte Carmelo. Among the objectives of this new network were facilitating citizen participation in the drafting of the new law and ensuring that it would be anti-GMO.

Building from the Monte Carmelo gathering, the national campaign *Venezuela Libre de Transgénicos* (GMO-Free Venezuela, also referred to as the Campaign) was launched. This would be the banner under which social movements and citizen groups would engage in the Seed Law process. While there were (and would be) various divisions among the many diverse groups involved in the Campaign, this was a moment of unity – of constructing common platforms, building networks, and identifying key allies. It is important to note here that while the two key events described above were each sponsored by institutions of the state (ONDB and INIA, respectively), each was a space for broad-based popular participation, and for movement building. The Monte Carmelo Declaration, for instance, was squarely by and for social movements, who used the space as their own. Yet the fact that these events had been sponsored by state institutions was an important opportunity for movements to identify influential allies. Both ONDB and INIA were considered by social movements to be mixed bags politically, recalling, for instance, INIA's agribusiness ties outlined above. But those from within these institutions who were involved in these events were considered more aligned with the social movements and would be important allies to them in the Seed Law process (albeit not without tensions at times).

A backdrop to the events of 2012 was the intensifying illness of Venezuelan president Hugo Chávez Frías, looked upon by many social movements as a key ally and point of political reference. Leaders of national peasant movements as well as international delegates of La Via Campesina had been highly influential to Chávez's take on food sovereignty matters, including his assuming an openly anti-GMO stance. In 2004, Chávez called for a "Venezuela Free from Transgenics" on his weekly television program 'Alo Presidente' (program no. 189). Then, in 2006 he participated in a region-wide social movement gathering in Brazil running parallel to UN meetings on biodiversity and biosafety and was the first signatory on a resulting 'Manifesto of the Americas' for biological and cultural diversity and against GMOs (La Agencia Latinoamericana de Información 2006).

529827-L-bw-Schiavoni
Processed on: 15-3-2019 PDF page: 193

When Chávez died in March of 2013, his staunchly anti-GMO stance was not yet reflected in the law, leaving movements without a legal framework to protect a position they had long taken for granted. Furthermore, the government he left behind contained a mix of agrarian tendencies, including those more aligned with industrial agriculture, reflected in a number of institutions of the state. Indeed, a common perception among social movements was that many government officials believed that peasant-based agriculture was politically correct but not technically correct, so they went along with policies supportive of peasants for reasons of political legitimacy. But there was always the risk of going in the other direction, and indeed this would become a key point of tension. Faced with such realities, the loss of Chávez was a wake-up call for social movements. It was also a moment of reaffirmation of the popular power that Chávez had represented to them.

4.5.2 Moment 1: politicizing the GMO debate

Such circumstances infused movements with a new sense of energy and urgency, especially with the risk of the clashing institutional orientations of the state shifting further away from radical agrarian politics and more toward depoliticized technological solutions. A fire was lit under the nascent campaign, which redoubled its efforts, steadily growing in number, diversity and recognition. By now, the Campaign included student, peasant, agroecology, consumer, feminist, sexual diversity and alternative media movements, among others, within its ranks. Of particular note was strong participation by both urban and rural movements, as well as by youth, who comprised the majority of the Campaign's coordination. Among the common threads uniting them were identification with food sovereignty principles as conceived of by transnational social movements; support for agroecology based on local knowledge and belief systems; rejection of industrial agriculture; and perhaps most importantly, a vision for popular control over the food system, as a prerequisite for both food sovereignty and popular power more broadly, for which people's control over seeds, or seed sovereignty, was deemed essential. These characteristics distinguished them from some others within the Bolivarian Revolution, particularly within the state, who may also have advocated for food sovereignty, but from a more state-centric and less radical stance, speaking to a variety of *competing sovereignties* at play (Schiavoni 2015), seen throughout the Seed Law battle.

529827-L-bw-Schiavoni
Processed on: 15-3-2019

This was a critical moment for what McAdam et al. (2001) describe as the collective identity formation of the Campaign, as well as for its positioning within the public sphere. Communications and media collectives played a key role in helping to shape its overall image and messaging. Significantly, the Campaign's main logo was Chávez donning a peasant's hat and wielding an ear of corn and a machete. This was an unabashedly *chavista* movement, and as such a reminder to all *chavistas*, including those in the ranks of the government, that Chávez was unabashedly pro-peasant and anti-GMO. The name of the Campaign (GMO-Free Venezuela, more literally translated as Venezuela Free from Transgenics) was also a direct quote from Chávez's first public declaration against GMOs. The invoking of Chávez was an example of the use of an "inherited cultural symbol" (Tarrow 2011: 29) for the building of identity, cohesion and political power, on the one hand, while it also served to politicize the GMO debate, which up until that point had been largely positioned within the National Assembly as a primarily technical matter. While addressing the technical side of the GMO debate, the Campaign stressed that the matter was above all political.

The first public event of the Campaign as such took place in May 2013 on the day of the globally coordinated 'March against Monsanto'. Campaign activists seized this day to raise public awareness of the forthcoming law and to send a message to the (then *chavista*-majority) National Assembly of the importance of popular participation in the law, and the importance of it being anti-GMO. Toward these ends, they collected signatures on a statement that they then brought directly to the National Assembly, into a session of the Sub-commission on Agrifood Development of the Commission on Finance and Economic Development, charged with overseeing the drafting of the Seed Law. Requesting the right to speak, Campaign representatives introduced themselves and then handed over the signatures, along with copies of the Monte Carmelo Declaration and a report on the impacts of GMOs. Having made their presence felt and asserting their right to participation, they were invited to take part in subsequent activities of the Sub-Commission pertaining to the Law, constituting an opening up of access to power in what had been a largely closed space. One of these representatives later reflected, "They didn't have much choice in the matter – we barged in uninvited, straight from the streets into the halls!". The legitimacy of the *chavista*-majority National

Assembly would have been called into question had the demands of the activists for participation not been heeded.

From there, different channels of work flowed. The Campaign was becoming increasingly known, with regular appearances in public and alternative news channels. The importance of media, particularly of social media, cannot be highlighted enough, given the limited capacity and lack of funding constraining this organic grassroots effort. One Seed Law activist explained, "We didn't have a cent, but we had Facebook!".

4.5.3 Moment 2: merging legislative and popular law creation

An important piece of context for the next series of events that ensued is that there are three forms of law creation in Venezuela – legislative, popular, and executive. The Seed Law was legislative, as it originated within the National Assembly. Under legislative law creation processes, first a technical commission is charged with laying out the basics of the law (in this case, the Sub-Commission on Agrifood Development), including its proposed objectives and structure. These proposals then enter into what is called the "first discussion" within the National Assembly. Then, if approved, the actual drafting of the law takes place. The draft law will then often enter a public consultation process, which is not obligatory, but is generally expected and encouraged. From there, the law enters the "second discussion", in which the National Assembly goes over it in detail in a plenary session, approving or rejecting it.

Just a day or so before the Seed Law was to enter the first discussion, members of the Campaign caught wind of this and saw a draft leaked to them by an ally from within. Though they had ostensibly been part of the drafting committee, they had been left out and had not been privy to this initial draft, which included safeguards for patenting of lifeforms and loopholes for the legalization of GMOs, while lacking mechanisms for popular participation. This was a strong message that the fact that both the seed activists and Assembly members identified as part of the Bolivarian Revolution did not automatically make them all politically aligned. Even the fact that the Campaign had what appeared to be natural allies on the inside – two Assembly members who were also peasant leaders involved with La Via Campesina – was apparently no guarantee. So they mobilized. This included the release of statements, more signature collection, street protests and the building of new alliances, including with *chavista* political parties. These efforts succeeded in opening up a space of negotiation with the

529827-L-bw-Schiavoni
Processed on: 15-3-2019 PDF page: 196

National Assembly via Blanca Eckout, an influential ally whose *gorras multiples* included serving as second vice president to the National Assembly as well as being among the leaders of the main *chavista* political party PSUV, in addition to having a social movement background herself, coming out of the alternative media movement. Eckout's background contrasted with that a of another key player within the National Assembly, José Alfredo Ureña, president of the Sub-Commission on Agrifood Development, whose background was that of a conventional agricultural technician. These different trajectories represent important divisions among allies that would prove to be key in the process.

Through Eckout's facilitation, members of the Campaign met directly with her and Ureña within the National Assembly, representing a further political opening for the Campaign. In this meeting, all present affirmed the necessity of the new Seed Law and agreed that the Law should be constructed together with popular movements. The process of creating the Law thus became a hybrid between a legislative and popular initiative, which was uncharted territory for all involved. Members of the Campaign made clear their intention that this would be a *popular constituent* process. That is, beyond a public consultation of an already written law, this would be a process through which the people themselves would create the law. This would be an ongoing source of tension between members of the National Assembly and the social movements involved.

4.5.4 Moment 3: public consultation vs. popular constituent debate

Coming out of the meeting in the National Assembly was lots of motion on the ground, and growing tensions between the consultative and constituent approaches to the drafting of the Law. As had been agreed, a series of public meetings were planned. The first one happened just days later, back in Monte Carmelo, on the National Day of Peasant Seeds, exactly one year following the Declaration and the unofficial launching of the Campaign. This meeting was organized jointly by movements and the National Assembly – and would be both the first and the last of such. While Ureña and another deputy were both present, the social movements took control. As these two *chavista* deputies had built their campaign four years prior around the idea of a "parliament of the street", they were expected to follow the lead of their constituencies. However, this apparent irreverence regarding their positions did not go over well with the two officials

present. From there, two different paths emerged – one was a series of public consultations organized by the National Assembly and the other was a popular constituent debate process organized by social movements together with allied actors and institutions of the state. The distinction between these two processes is important for the different configurations of power involved in each. Going back to Gaventa's (2006) "power cube", the public consultations proposed by the National Assembly members were spaces created by the National Assembly into which social movements and other societal actors were invited, making them *invited spaces*, while the popular constituent debates took place through self-organized processes in spaces created by the movements themselves, making them *created spaces*. These differences matter, since, as Gaventa (2006: 27) points out, those who create a given space "are more likely to have power within it".

The popular constituent debate process took on a life of its own. What began as a largely defensive effort by social movements to ban GMOs turned into something far more profound, as diverse actors from different regions contributed their contextually-specific input. It is through this process that proposals increasingly articulated what the Law should be *for*, not only against. This included a valuing of local knowledge and practices around seeds in peasant, Indigenous, and Afro-descendant communities, long invisible under the law, as well as a valuing of traditional forms of production, such as the *conuco*.[10] Participation in and collective ownership of the constituent process deepened from one gathering to the next, as new groups stepped up to host subsequent events, in a snowballing fashion. While organized primarily by social movements, allied state institutions also played a critical supportive role, facilitated by the *gorras multiples* of social movement activists embedded in them. Here the point of Migdal et al. (1994) on the importance of disaggregating the state bears revisiting, as members of the Campaign were simultaneously clashing with certain state officials and working collaboratively with others. In total, seven constituent debates were organized in six different states and in the capital district from 2013 to 2014. Simultaneously, five public consultations were

[10] The *conuco* is a diversified farming system historically managed by Venezuelan Indigenous and peasant communities based on traditional knowledge. It is an important element for the biocultural diversity of these communities.

529827-L-bw-Schiavoni
Processed on: 15-3-2019

organized by the National Assembly in five different states. Representatives of the Campaign were present to feed the outputs of the constituent debate process into the public consultations.

From there, a working group was organized by the technical team of the Agrifood Development Sub-Commission to settle upon the objectives and structure of the Law, which were approved in October 2014 upon reentry into the first discussion. While there had seemingly been agreement among the activists and National Assembly members going into the first discussion, once again, Assembly members went over the heads of the activists, adding additional content at the last moment. Thus, while the banning of GMOs was by now solidified, issues around patenting and around power and control in the certification and inspection of peasant seeds remained unresolved in the National Assembly’s version of the Law. The proposals coming out of the constituent debates, on the other hand, were much more radical, including diverse mechanisms for popular participation across various scales of governance as well as differentiated systems regulating certified commercial seeds and locally held traditional seed varieties.

It became apparent by this point that some key input that the movements were bringing into the public consultations of the National Assembly, coming from the popular constituent debates, was not in fact being incorporated into the drafting of the Law by the National Assembly. The activists thus took it upon themselves to draft their own version of the Law, article by article. Reflecting on the decision by social movements to both engage with formal channels and also break from them to create their own spaces as needed, an activist involved shared:

> It was not enough to hack the institutions. We needed to create our own spaces and processes. This generated much discussion and debate on the legitimacy of these [social movement-created] spaces and processes, and also about our intentions. Some of our allies from within the government, including some of the deputies, felt that we were discrediting their legitimacy. But the thing is that the formal channels available had very obvious methodological limitations. The usual consultative processes were insufficient for capturing the depths of the ideas coming from social movements and converting them into articles of the Law. So we needed to create other types of spaces, both to take more control, but also to allow for deeper dialogue, with more creativity and innovation. Without such spaces, we would have ended up with a very conventional law, because the methods

529827-L-bw-Schiavoni
Processed on: 15-3-2019

available to build the law [through formal channels] were quite conventional.

4.5.5 Moment 4: competing agendas, competing laws

The end of the last moment came with an interesting plot twist, which brings us to the start of the next. This is that both FEDEAGRO, the country's main confederation of mid- and large-scale producers, and INIA each came into the public consultations with their own versions of the Law as well. Added to the versions of the Law coming from the National Assembly and the Campaign, the result was four distinct versions of the Seed Law on the table by early 2015. With these four versions, several distinct focus areas emerged, highlighting important tensions. One was *the strengthening of institutions and the inclusion of new forms of production and management of farmer-held seeds, with state control and financing*. Such a focus could be seen in the proposals coming from both the National Assembly and INIA, both of which emphasized the creation of new institutions of the state for the control, inspection and authorization of all matters pertaining to both certified seeds and farmer-held seeds. Both also banned GMOs and gave a nod to popular power. A second focus area was *the protection of intellectual property and the promotion of genetic engineering*. As mentioned above, the private sector consortium FEDEAGRO, together with 26 additional associations of large-scale producers and two public agronomy schools, brought its own version of the Law to the table, as well, at the recommendation of Ureña. This project emphasized research for genetic improvement through modern biotechnology, especially genetic engineering, as well as recognition of intellectual property rights and breeders' rights as the only mechanism to protect private investment.

In sharp contrast to FEDEAGRO's version of the Law, and with important departures from those of INIA and the National Assembly, the version coming out of the constituent debate process focused on *the protagonistic participation of new social subjects, redistribution of power and control of genetic resources and recognition of farmers' rights*. This proposal included a *sui generis* system including, in differentiated forms, a certified seed system *and* a system for locally managed seeds, particularly those of peasant, Indigenous, and Afro-descendant communities. This signaled the recognition of new subjects in the national seed system, and recognition of their diverse forms of popular organization and systems of production, together with the actors who had traditionally been recognized under the certified seed

529827-L-bw-Schiavoni
Processed on: 15-3-2019

system, along with conventional mechanisms of seed certification and quality control.

By this moment, the Campaign had gained a considerable amount of recognition and influence, or what Abers and Keck (2013: 2) describe as *practical authority*, understood as "the kind of power-in-practice generated when particular actors (individuals or organizations) develop capabilities and win recognition with a particular policy area, enabling them to influence the behavior of other actors", putting the Campaign on more equal footing with state actors, including within the halls of the National Assembly. At the same time, the ensemble of state actors involved in the Law grew in both diversity and complexity. This resulted in important openings for the Campaign, both in terms of influential allies from within the state assuming new positions, as well as the deepening of divisions among different actors of the state. A particularly important opening occurred through the creation of a new ministry, the Ministry of Ecosocialism and Water, which replaced the former Ministry of the Environment. The above-mentioned National Office of Biodiversity (ONDB) fell within this new ministry, and several allies from ONDB, particularly those involved in the Biodiversity Congress, ended up assuming high-ranking positions within it.

Through these openings, the 2015 Biodiversity Congress was organized by the movements themselves, with the theme of 'seeds for life and for food sovereignty'. These new forms of partnership with the government opened a space in which the members of the Campaign, the Ministry of Ecosocialism, the Ministry of Agriculture (via INIA), and the National Assembly were able to come together to develop a final proposed version of the Law based on consensus. Through this process, the Law was discussed article by article, with some articles more contested than others, until a final version was eventually agreed upon. Particularly contentious was the proposal by the Campaign to use "free use licenses" inspired by the U.S.-based Open Source Seed Initiative (*see* Kloppenburg 2014) in place of patents, although it was eventually accepted. Also debated were questions of autonomy vs. state control/regulation of peasant seed systems, with some advocating special registration (distinct from commercial certification) for locally-held varieties, while the Campaign argued that this could be optional but not mandatory, eventually winning on that point as well. Members of the National Assembly played a facilitating role, while also assisting with legal language and with referencing existing legislature.

529827-L-bw-Schiavoni
Processed on: 15-3-2019

Regarding the latter, FEDEAGRO's version of the Law did not make it into this process because many parts of it, particularly its emphasis throughout on the patenting of life forms, were deemed unconstitutional. The version that resulted was largely a merging of the Campaign's version of the law, which focused more on producer-held seed varieties, and INIA's version of the law, which focused more on commercial seeds.

While there had been some internal debate within the Campaign as to whether certified commercial seeds (i.e. formal seed systems) and locally-held seeds (i.e. informal seed systems) should be housed under one law or separate ones, it was ultimately deemed most strategic to have both encompassed within a single law rather than there being separate laws on parallel tracks. This was for a number of reasons. First, there was recognition that many producers do not rely solely on one system or another, but on a combination of both, and that while certified seeds did not necessarily represent the ultimate vision of food sovereignty held by the activists, building up a more robust national commercial seed supply and transitioning away from import dependence for seeds was deemed a necessary step. This connects to a second point, which is that the Law was crafted in such a way as to reflect both the reality of the here and now as well as the aspirations for a radical transformation of the food system based upon principles of food sovereignty. That both short-term and longer-term visions are reflected in the Law, as well as mechanisms for the attempted transitioning from reality to vision (such as the free use licenses in place of patents) is part of what makes the Law so unique. Among the key features of the Law, in summary, are: recognition of both formal and informal seed systems, with differentiated treatment of each, including upholding the autonomy of communities to determine how to manage their locally-held seed systems; the banning of GMO seeds (including production, distribution and importation); the banning of patents; the granting of licenses for the free use of certified seeds developed with public funding; and the recognition, protection and strengthening of locally-held seed systems (characterized as "local, peasant, Indigenous and Afro-descendant seed systems" in the Law) that had long existed in the shadows of the formal seed system.[11]

[11] In discussions on how this new law articulates with international treaties concerning intellectual property that Venezuela is party to, the Venezuelan institute overseeing intellectual property matters, the Servicio Autónomo de la Propiedad

4.5.6 Moment 5: passage in the nick of time

In the months leading up to December 2015, the political situation in Venezuela had been intensifying on multiple fronts. In particular, shortages of key food items, especially precooked corn flour, a daily staple supplied by the country's largest private food company, resulted in long lines outside of supermarkets, a thriving parallel market, and general insecurity among the majority of the population (Felicien et al. 2018a). While such shortages were nothing new to the Bolivarian Revolution, especially at politically heated moments such as the lead-up to elections (Curcio Curcio 2017), this was the most extreme and sustained case of them yet, pointing both to the vulnerability inherent in dependency on industrially produced goods delivered through a highly consolidated private food distribution complex and to the deeply political nature of food. The shortages and the general insecurity prompted by them are believed to be a decisive factor in the outcome of the December 2015 elections, in which the majority of seats in the National Assembly shifted from *chavistas* to the opposition, whose electoral campaign had been built around ending the shortages (Felicien et al. 2018a). These elections, furthermore, had been marked by major voter abstention, indicating that the political leadership and legitimacy of the Bolivarian government were being called into question on multiple levels.

With the announcement of the election results, some within the more radical grassroots base of the Bolivarian Revolution spontaneously took to the streets, affirming that the construction of popular power would be undeterred by the election results, and calling upon the government to take heed and get with the program. Ending in front of the presidential palace, this march turned into an impromptu popular assembly with the president, who joined the protesters for direct dialogue and critical reflection. Included among this group were members of the Campaign, who addressed the president, demanding that the "debt" of the elections be paid by addressing the laws pending passage in the National Assembly, including the

Intelectual (Autonomous Intellectual Property Service, SAPI) has proposed that the free use licenses included in the Law could be treated as a *sui generis* system as an alternative to patents. Sui generis systems are technically allowed for, although highly contested, in the Agreement on Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPS Agreement) of the World Trade Organization, for instance.

529827-L-bw-Schiavoni
Processed on: 15-3-2019

Seed Law, the passage of which had been delayed. Thus, as with the period in 2013 when the loss of Chávez breathed a new sense of energy and urgency into the Campaign around the Seed Law, this moment of political setback in late 2015 provided the final push needed, across both state and society, to get the Seed Law passed once and for all. In the very last session of the National Assembly while still Bolivarian-majority, on 23 December 2015, the Law was approved and published into official gazette, with several accompanying statements by the president. Several institutions began to assume their roles in relation to the Law's implementation, as the Campaign pressed forward with its next steps, motivated by the Law's official passage at last. Meanwhile, the now opposition-majority National Assembly started to attack the Law almost immediately.

4.5.7 Moment 6: back to the grassroots

Following the passage of the Law in a particularly challenging environment, among the strategies of the Campaign, now under the banner of Semillas del Pueblo, or Seeds of the People, has been to push forward the Law's implementation as quickly as possible through a largely bottom-up strategy. This has been primarily carried out via a process of *comunalización*, or grassroots diffusion and uptake of the Law. Over the course of 2016, four multi-day workshops were carried out in four regions of the country, involving approximately four hundred participants from eighty different groups. The objective of these activities was to identify and analyze key elements of the Law, toward the goal of catalyzing popular organization for local seed production, and mapping the actors, capacity and limitations for seed production in different localities.

A major focus of these activities has been the development of the Plan Popular de Semillas, or People's Seed Plan, which, beyond simply being a plan on paper, is an ongoing process of articulation among grassroots actors from across the country to coordinate efforts on the production and exchange of seeds. A main goal is to build up locally controlled seed supplies as rapidly as possible, and to build links between local and national grassroots efforts around seeds. As a participant reflected, "With no seeds, there's no Seed Law". While this has been a largely autonomous and extremely low-budget effort, some support has come from the new Ministry of Urban Agriculture, which was formed right around the same time as the passage of the Law and has been an important new ally since. With a recent change of leadership of this ministry, however, from someone who

had come directly from the grassroots to a long-time government functionary, the future relationship between movements and the ministry is uncertain at the time of writing.

While the core team of organizers behind the Campaign has been largely immersed in efforts around *comunalización* and the development of the Popular Seed Plan, as a concrete response to the current food challenges facing the country, others who had been involved in the Campaign are working on multiple other tracks. Some, for instance, have been focusing more on institutional processes, such as the formation of a National Seed Commission consisting of various actors of the state (headed by the former president of INIA), along with some grassroots representatives, whose participation, while guaranteed by the Law, has not been without struggle. For the most part, however, the general sense is that the grassroots level is where the real action is at, and that uptake of the Law at the grassroots level is key at the moment, particularly as the Law remains under threat.

Indeed, the agribusiness agenda against the Law intensified over the course of the process of *comunalización*. The sectors allied with FEDEAGRO have been able to take advantage of new spaces of power opened up by the change of political orientation of the National Assembly, where the Commission on Science and Technology has initiated a process of discussion of the Law in alliance with the private sector. In these discussions, the shortages currently facing the country are being used as a pretext for revising the Law to harmonize it with global mainstream seed laws and treaties. The main arguments against the Law, revealing contentious *politics of knowledge* at play (Leach and Scoones 2007), are that it is anti-biotechnology (narrowly defined in these discussions as genetic engineering, whereas the Law uses the definition of biotechnology contained in the Cartagena Protocol); biased toward local seed systems (despite the Law's inclusion of differentiated systems for commercial and locally-controlled seeds); and above all, that it is "anti-scientific". Regarding the last point, members from the scientific community and civil society groups from 28 countries signed onto a letter in support of the Law and affirming its scientific integrity in May of 2016.[12]

---

[12] *See* 'Statement of International Solidarity with Venezuela's Seed Law: https://semilladelpueblov.wixsite.com/semillasdelpueblo/international-statement

529827-L-bw-Schiavoni
Processed on: 15-3-2019

While the Campaign has been defending the Law against attacks, it has focused the majority of its attention on actually implementing it, convinced that this is the most effective way to give the Law both legitimacy and staying power. Concrete outcomes thus far include increased production and distribution of native potato varieties in the Andean region; partnerships between agricultural cooperatives resulting from agrarian reform processes and newly-formed Local Provisioning and Production Committees (CLAPs) for the production and distribution of vegetable seeds in the Plains region; and large monthly seed exchanges among urban and peri-urban farmers in Caracas. Seed Law activists point out that such efforts would have been illegal or in violation of various rules and standards prior to the Law and are now flourishing thanks to it.

4.6 Conclusion

This article has shared an "intimate perspective" into the contested processes behind the passage of Venezuela's new Seed Law, as described by those directly involved, and as seen through the combined analytical lenses of a historical, relational and interactive approach to food sovereignty construction. Such an approach has facilitated more in-depth understanding into the processes behind key policy outcomes in efforts toward food sovereignty. There are ample learnings of broader relevance to be gleaned from the Seed Law battle, several of which we will highlight here. First, participatory democracy cannot be legislated into existence, but is constructed through ongoing practice, out of struggle. Or, as a seed activist framed it, "We've had to construct it *a coñazos* (by blows)". The government's formal commitment to participatory democracy did not mean that all state actors involved were onboard with the participation of the activists in the construction of the Law and willing to cede a certain degree of their power in the process. This includes some state actors with social movement backgrounds such as the deputies affiliated with La Via Campesina, demonstrating that the incorporation of social movement actors into state institutions does not in and of itself guarantee increased access for those in the trenches.

In addition to struggles over power, the activists contended with limited mechanisms of participation available through the state, navigating both how to most strategically engage with them and how to best work around them. This could be seen in the simultaneous processes of the public consultations and popular constituent debates, each technically a form of

529827-L-bw-Schiavoni
Processed on: 15-3-2019

"popular participation" yet quite distinct. Among the tasks of the activists, therefore, was a redefining of the very *terms of participation*. This involved breaking pre-established rules when attempting to play by them proved ineffective. Thus, while Michels and De Graaf (2017) point to the design of the participatory process as key to the efficacy of citizen participation in policy-making, we would argue that this is simply a starting point. No less important than pre-designed mechanisms of popular participation built into Venezuelan law was the willingness of the activists to break and/or adapt the rules as necessary – to barge into the halls of the National Assembly; to call out their allies that aligned with adversaries; and to demand not simply popular consultation but popular protagonism. This, we would argue, is in fact the essence of participatory democracy in action, or the makings of it, raw and unedited. As another of the activists involved reflected, invoking the words of poet Antonio Machado, "We make the road by walking". The Seed Law activists thus made use of the participatory mechanisms available to them without being limited by them, using them as a launchpad for deeper forms of participation than that which had already been defined.

Second, the manner in which the activists worked inside, outside, through and between formal structures of the state, simultaneously making strategic use of different types of spaces and creating new ones as needed, proved essential. Gaventa (2006: 38) has argued that "the transformative potential of spaces for participatory governance must always be assessed in relationship to the other spaces which surround them". He adds, "Creation of new institutional designs of participatory governance, in the absence of other participatory spaces which serve to provide and sustain countervailing power, might simply be captured by the already empowered elite". The ability of the Seed Law activists to make full use of existing mechanisms of popular power, therefore, was only as strong as their ability to create and maintain their own autonomous and semi-autonomous spaces and processes. Furthermore, there was an intentional emphasis on participatory methodologies in the social movement-created spaces, recognizing that key to developing the content of the Law was to model new, deeper forms of power-sharing and consensus building, in a form of prefigurative politics that modelled the types of citizen participation envisioned in the Law's eventual implementation. For example, as noted by Felicien and Schiavoni (2018: 14), "the rights of peasants are not

only included in the text of the Seed Law but also reflected in the participation of peasants in the Law's creation, in a concrete example of the exercising of peasants' rights". Such processes helped to bring the Law to life before it actually existed.

Third, the activists did not wait for political opportunities to arise, but steadily worked to broaden existing openings while forging new openings in the absence of them. Furthermore, action was oftentimes spurred not only by perceived opportunity but by perceived *threat*, understood as not only "the costs that a social group will incur from protest" but also "the costs it expects to suffer if it does not take action" (Goldstone and Tilly 2001: 183). This point is essential to our understanding of how the Seed Law battle unfolded as it did, because beyond the opening of political opportunities, what prompted the most intense, coordinated and rapid actions were in fact threats – the threat of a new seed law that would pave the way for legalization of GMOs; the loss of Chávez as the ultimate 'influential ally' within the state; and the shift of the National Assembly from *chavista*-majority to opposition-majority. This helps to explain why the Law was finally passed when it was at the end of 2015 – not because it was a particularly favorable political moment, but because the work of more than three years was potentially about to be lost, and the costs of not taking action were perceived as being high. Thus, even while the *chavista* Assembly members had their differences with the activists, when it came down to either losing the Law or pushing its passage forward, they chose the latter. Furthermore, after the loss of the elections, state actors identified with the Bolivarian Revolution were under considerable pressure to respond to the demands of their base. While beyond the scope of this article, Felicien et al. (2018a) have similarly described how numerous threats to Venezuela's food system at present, which have only intensified since 2015, have spurred a radicalization of food sovereignty efforts led by social movements. Deeper exploration of political threat, and the relationship between threat and opportunity, is thus an important area for further inquiry.

A final point has to do with approaching *law as process*. Just as some of the organizing efforts of GMO-Free Venezuela had prefigured the Law in certain ways, the more transformative elements of the Law reflect what McCann (2006: 21) describes as the *prefigurative potential of law* in which "[l]egal constructs shape our very capacities to imagine social or political possibilities". While the Law's passage represents a major win in the Seed

Law battle, the battle is far from over, as implementation is attempted amidst fierce political opposition and massive economic challenges. But in the midst of this, the activists involved have not lost sight of what has been achieved and draw instruction from the experience thus far. One thing they have learned is to expect the unexpected in contentious political processes involving dynamic state-society interactions. What began as an effort on the part of state actors to legalize GMOs ended with a law categorically banning them. And what began with an effort on the part of social movements to ban GMOs snowballed into something far more transformative, into a law that has become a global reference in progressive seed legislation and into a movement and network extending well beyond the Law itself.

A point emphasized by those who gave input into this study is that the grassroots efforts that spun out of the Seed Law process, including the Seeds of the People initiative and the People's Seed Plan, are no less important than the Law itself and can be understood as grassroots manifestations of it. This connects to another point emphasized by many involved in the Seed Law battle – that just as important as the content of the Law is the process through which it came to be, including the intense deliberation and envisioning that took place in social movement spaces, and the points of articulation, contentious as they were, between these processes and those of the state. As one activist reflected, "Our reverence is not so much for the Law as for the process around it, and what it represents – and that is what's worth fighting for – that's what we are fighting for today as we write".

529827-L-bw-Schiavoni
Processed on: 15-3-2019

Prologue to Chapter 5

This final chapter before the Conclusion captures some of my main reflections on food sovereignty practice and scholarship upon completing the fieldwork for the overall study. In a sense, this chapter brings the dissertation full circle, by zooming back out from Venezuela (while still very much drawing lessons from it) to focus on broader thinking and practice around food sovereignty construction, similar to Chapter 2. It also represents somewhat of a full circle for myself, as it connects to the food sovereignty organizing that I was engaged in prior to the work on this dissertation – work that led me to this dissertation, and work to which I hope to return. Just as I proposed the HRI framing through an organic process of scholarly exploration informed by activism, so too did I arrive at the *dialectics of building and dismantling* that are the focus of Chapter 5. Such a framing is not quite a direct extension of HRI, nor is it a departure from it. Rather, by applying the lenses of HRI to the case of Venezuela in the current conjuncture, the *dialectics of building and dismantling* represents a distillation of the burning questions and musings I was left with through the process of this research.

What excites me in sharing the following framework is that, in its simplicity, I believe it has something to contribute to both practitioners and scholars grappling with how to actually put food sovereignty into practice. Reflecting on my days as an organizer with the U.S. Food Sovereignty Alliance (USFSA) in the early aftermath of the food price crisis of 2007-2008, I can see how such a framework might have helped us navigate some of the inevitable tensions encountered in trying to bring together a diversity of groups, with equally diverse and varied strategies for change, into a then-nascent alliance. I recall, for instance, some of the tensions between grassroots "building" strategies, such as trying to build up local food systems, and bigger-picture "dismantling" strategies, such as trying to break up corporate monopolies through enforcement of antitrust law, among other measures. Which should take precedence? An eye to the dialectics of building and dismantling would emphasize not only the necessity but

529827-L-bw-Schiavoni
Processed on: 15-3-2019
PDF page: 211

also the *interrelationality* of both approaches. Without granting this framework more import than is due (as indeed the USFSA already inherently embodies a dual focus on building and dismantling to a certain degree, as do many food sovereignty efforts), I believe that a more intentional focus on the interplay of building and dismantling in food sovereignty construction could help clarify the interconnections between seemingly disparate efforts and ultimately help build stronger, more coordinated and more effective food sovereignty movements. I similarly believe that an eye toward building and dismantling might help scholars get further in theorizing on the *how* of food sovereignty construction, with implications for practice as well.

The following chapter has not yet been published as this dissertation goes to print; however, it has been designed as a stand-alone (single-authored) journal article with the intention of submitting it for publication.

5 The dynamics of building and dismantling in food sovereignty construction

Abstract

This piece explores the *how* of food sovereignty, offering some preliminary tools for future inquiry into such. Understanding food sovereignty as a process or set of processes, a dialectical lens is applied to food sovereignty construction to identify two opposing yet mutually co-constitutive processes inherent in it: that of *building* on the one hand and *dismantling* on the other. Part of what gives food sovereignty its transformative potential is its dual focus on dismantling the structures fostering injustice in the food system while at the same time striving to build viable alternatives. Arguably one cannot come before the other, or without the other, as the persistence of dominant structures will serve as an impediment to the full operationalization and scaling of alternatives, at the same time that if these structures are to be dismantled, something must be there to replace them. These dual processes are inherently relational, each shaping and shaped by the other in attempts to construct food sovereignty. While the simultaneous dismantling of the current dominant system and the building of something new is generally implicit in food sovereignty definitions and frameworks, it is argued here that both scholarly work on food sovereignty and activist pursuits of it stand to benefit from greater analytical clarity on the relationship between the two. Most fundamentally, what relationship do food sovereignty efforts have to the dominant agrifood system and the structures upholding it? How much of a break from the current system does food sovereignty construction entail, and how is this to be achieved? The key challenge is that food sovereignty must be constructed within the very system that it is intended to displace. This brings in inherent contradictions and defines the limits and possibilities of food sovereignty as a political project.

529827-L-bw-Schiavoni
Processed on: 15-3-2019

5.1 Introduction

As movements for food sovereignty have expanded and evolved in myriad directions over more than two decades, so too has scholarship on food sovereignty. This includes inquiry into the *why* of food sovereignty focused on the political backdrop against which it emerged and continues to evolve; the *who* of food sovereignty looking at the movements that thrust it onto the global stage and the new actors who have taken it up; the *what* of food sovereignty examining its meanings, tensions and contradictions as a concept; the *when* of food sovereignty historicizing it; and, increasingly, the *how* of food sovereignty exploring real-life attempts to construct it. While all of these areas of inquiry are interconnected and crucial, it is the last that is at its most incipient stage and arguably where the greatest yet-to-be-answered questions loom. This is in large part a reflection of the evolution of food sovereignty itself, including the growing interest in and uptake of it, and of a converging set of global crises that are pushing the need to move from vision to reality in pursuit of social and ecological transformation. Chief among the latter is the ongoing crisis of the food system evident in the wake of the food price crisis of 2007-2008, creating the impetus and openings for new institutional architecture around food, thus coinciding with a main objective of food sovereignty movements. At the same time, now with more than a decade of food sovereignty-related policies to look back upon, we can also see the limits of policy, or that policy is but one piece of a far more complex puzzle in trying to actually construct food sovereignty. The moment is ripe to ask what is and isn't working – and why – in attempts to construct food sovereignty, and what it would take to actually achieve it on a significant scale.

This piece aims to shed further light into understandings of the *how* of food sovereignty and to offer some preliminary tools for future inquiry into such. In doing so, it builds upon the growing consensus among scholars and practitioners that food sovereignty is best understood as a *process* or *set of processes* (Edelman et al. 2014, Iles and Montenegro de Wit 2015, Schiavoni 2017, Shattuck et al. 2015). To speak of the *how* of food sovereignty is to speak of ongoing, dynamic processes of attempted food sovereignty construction. From this point of departure, this study applies a dialectical lens to food sovereignty construction to identify two opposing yet mutually co-constitutive processes inherent in it: that of *building* on the one hand and *dismantling* on the other. That is, part of what gives food sovereignty its transformative potential is its dual focus on dismantling the

structures fostering injustice in the food system while at the same time striving to build viable alternatives. Arguably one cannot come before, or without, the other. The persistence of dominant structures will serve as an impediment to the full operationalization and scaling of alternatives at the same time that if these structures are to be dismantled, something must be there to replace them. These dual processes are inherently relational, each shaping and being shaped by the other in attempts to construct food sovereignty.

While the simultaneous dismantling of the current dominant system (with key features including industrial agriculture, industrial food processing and long-distance transport via corporate-controlled supply chains) and the building of something new is generally implicit in food sovereignty definitions and frameworks, it is argued here that both scholarly work on food sovereignty and activist pursuits of it stand to benefit from greater analytical clarity on the relationship between the two. Most fundamentally, what relationship do food sovereignty efforts have to the dominant agrifood system and the structures upholding it? How much of a break from the current system does food sovereignty construction entail, and how is this to be achieved? The key challenge is that food sovereignty must be constructed in the midst of the very system that it is intended to displace, or "to build alternative food systems in the shell of the old regime" (Sbicca 2014: 831). This brings forth inherent contradictions and defines the limits and possibilities of food sovereignty as a political project. How do we make sense of this from a broader perspective?

Inspiring this study are twelve years of observation and investigation of efforts toward food sovereignty in Venezuela, home to one of the longest-running attempts of national-level food sovereignty construction since the start of its Bolivarian Revolution in 1999, against a backdrop of enormous challenges and possibilities.[1] Most of the empirical data presented herein is derived from nineteen months of fieldwork in Venezuela from early 2016 through early 2018, as a crisis of the country's food system was unfolding.[2] This crisis was marked by shortages of basic food items, garner-

[1] *See* Schiavoni (2017) for an overview of challenges and possibilities in efforts toward food sovereignty construction in Venezuela.

[2] Field work took place over a 2-year period from March 2016 to February 2018, consisting of in-depth interviews with diverse state and societal actors; visits to

ing a host of responses from both above and below. Among the contributing factors to the shortages, four in particular stand out. First, there is compelling evidence that they are at least partly manufactured, especially given the particularity of the items missing from supermarket shelves and given that many, including the most highly consumed staple food among Venezuelans, precooked corn flour, can be traced back to a single supplier that is aligned with the political opposition to the government (Curcio Curcio 2017; Felicien et al. 2018a). The fact that these foods continue to be procured and consumed through other channels, and the regular discovery of stockpiles and smuggling operations, are further indications that goods are intentionally being diverted from supermarket shelves (Mills and Camacaro 2015). A second key factor since 2014 has been the sharp downturn in the price of oil, from which the country derives upwards of 95 percent of its foreign earnings, translating into fewer dollars available in government coffers (Lander 2017). While the shortages preceded the decline in oil prices by a year, decreased revenue from oil exportation has made it harder to mitigate their effects. Third, sympathizers and critics of the Bolivarian Revolution alike have identified economic policies of the government, such as its multi-tiered exchange rate system, as contributing to the shortages and/or exacerbating their effects (e.g., Lander 2017, Mallett-Outtrim 2017, Weisbrot 2016). Finally, an economic blockade imposed by the U.S. and its allies from 2017 onward has made even the purchase of emergency provisions extraordinarily difficult (Harris 2017, Misión Verdad 2017, Weisbrot 2017).

While each of these factors is critically important and merits further investigation, of greatest concern to this study are the *underlying conditions* of the Venezuelan food system that make the shortages possible, and possible with such sweeping and drastic effects. Such conditions, it is argued, stem from a centering of the economy around petroleum exportation and

---

sites of food production and food distribution (public, private and grassroots-led) in urban and rural areas in 12 states; participant observation in the form of accompaniment of grassroots food sovereignty efforts (including Semillas del Pueblo, Pueblo a Pueblo and the Feria Conuquera); participant observation in the form of living in a household in a working-class community of Caracas (including involvement in daily food procurement and preparation); text analysis, including historical archive review; and participation in relevant events.

associated processes of depeasantization and urbanization over the twentieth century that led to a rural exodus and growing demand for food for an increasingly urbanized population. Among the responses was the rapid consolidation of a powerful food importation and distribution complex on the one hand and, on the other hand, the modernization of much of what remained of Venezuela's agriculture sector, based on a Green Revolution-prescribed technological package, also delivered through the import complex. The result was a highly precarious food system – characterized by high levels of import dependency, corporate concentration and a bias toward industrialized food production and processing – subject to both internal and external price swings and political pressures. While such conditions predate the Bolivarian Revolution, they have persisted over the course of it, into the present, reinforced by government policies such as the granting to dollars at preferential exchange rates to the relatively few national and international firms that dominate the food system in an oligopolistic fashion (Curcio Curcio 2017, Gavazut 2014). Thus, while recent years had seen some fundamentally important gains both in agrarian reform in the countryside and in food access programs in highly populated urban areas, achieving the dramatic reduction of hunger to an average of 3.1 percent of the population over the period of 2008-2011 (FAO 2017), these were approached as largely separate projects rather than systemic shifts. Even with domestic production reinvigorated and the population better fed until recently, a weak link had always been in connecting the two. For instance, much of the food supplying the urban feeding programs that were so critical in reducing hunger was supplied through the food importation and distribution complex, which has remained largely unaltered over the course of the Bolivarian Revolution.

Of interest to this study is why, after nearly two decades of efforts toward food sovereignty, Venezuela's food system remains in such a vulnerable position. While the precise nature of the shortages is contested, the fact is that they are happening – and in a country that has explicitly been working toward food sovereignty across both state and society over a sustained period of time. What are the fault lines in Venezuela's food system that enable the shortages to happen, why have these not yet been addressed, and how might they be? Understanding this implies understanding the limitations of food sovereignty efforts to date, and the possibilities for overcoming them. Enríquez and Newman (2015) have argued that over much of the Bolivarian Revolution, the government was able to use

529827-L-bw-Schiavoni
Processed on: 15-3-2019

the country's oil wealth (which was fairly abundant, albeit with ebbs and flows, up until prices dropped in 2014) to fund parallel structures and institutions in the agrarian reform process. This occurred without significantly chipping away at pre-existing structures, including the country's notoriously unequal property structures. It is argued here that this critique is relevant not only to the country's state-led agrarian reform process, but also to broader food sovereignty efforts in Venezuela, particularly in reinforcing the dominant food importation and distribution complex. This gives rise to the question of *whether a push for alternatives in efforts to construct food sovereignty in Venezuela may have taken precedence over attempts at dismantling or otherwise transforming Venezuela's dominant agrifood system*.

This is the question inspiring this piece, which aims not only to generate insights into the challenges confronting the Venezuelan agrifood system at present, but to draw lessons for how scholars and activists think about, go about and analyze food sovereignty construction more widely. This brings us back to the above-mentioned *how* of food sovereignty, as the overarching focus. The pages to follow start off with presenting some preliminary frameworks for analysis of building and dismantling in food sovereignty construction, as well as identifying several emergent areas of inquiry meriting further exploration. The case of Venezuela is then revisited to see how some of these questions are playing out on the ground in a number of different responses to the current food shortages. The final section zooms back out to discuss broader implications for food sovereignty theory and practice.

5.2 Food sovereignty construction through a dialectical lens

First, how do we approach the dynamics of building and dismantling in food sovereignty construction from a theoretical point of view? Here it is argued that a *dialectical method of inquiry* inspired by Marxist scholarship can be helpful for understanding building and dismantling as opposing yet mutually co-constitutive processes inherent in food sovereignty construction. Not to be conflated with the extensive body of work on dialectics as a means of understanding the workings of capitalism, this method of inquiry is a distilling of the *methods* used by Marx in his theorizing on capitalism, applicable to socio-ecological systems more broadly (Harvey 1996, Levins

and Lewontin 1985, Ollman 1990, 2003).[3] There are a number of key elements of a dialectical method of inquiry that are particularly relevant to the puzzle at hand. First, at its essence, dialectical inquiry has to do with understanding *change and interaction* (Ollman 1990, 2003) through study of "processes, flows, fluxes, and relations" (Harvey 1996: 49). In particular, Ollman (2003: 127) emphasizes that, "The dialectical method of inquiry is best described as research into the manifold ways in which entities are internally related." This focus *on internal relations* is key, as processes are understood as internally *heterogenous*, consisting of diverse processes that co-constitute them. Such heterogeneity lends itself to internal *contradictions*. For Ollman (1990: 49), contradiction is understood as "union of two or more internally related processes that are simultaneously supporting and undermining one another". He elaborates elsewhere that:

> Consequently, their paths of development [i.e., of internally related processes] do not only intersect in mutually supportive ways but are constantly blocking, undermining, otherwise interfering with, and in due course transforming one another. Contradiction offers the optimal means for bringing such change and interaction as regards both present and future into a single focus. The future finds its way into this focus as the likely and possible outcomes of the interaction of these opposing tendencies in the present, as their real potential. (Ollman 2003: 17)

Going back to the matter at hand, if food sovereignty construction is understood as a process in flux, we can use a dialectical lens to take a look inside this process at the processes co-constituting it. In doing so, at least two seemingly contradictory processes can be identified – that of building on the one hand and dismantling on the other, as described above. Further, we can lean into these contradictions and make them our starting points for further inquiry to understand, in the words of Harvey (1996: 67-68), "in what ways these internalized tensions result in the kind of creativity or self-destructiveness which leads to new configurations of activity".

This bring us to another key element of dialectical inquiry, which is an interest in *possibilities for transformation*. According to Harvey (1996: 54), "In

---

[3] For a helpful overview of debates on dialectics, both inside and outside of Marxist traditions, *see* Harvey (1996), Ollman (1990, 2003), Bhaskar (1993) and Ciccariello-Maher (2017)..

529827-L-bw-Schiavoni
Processed on: 15-3-2019

the dialectical view, opposing forces, themselves constituted out of processes, in turn become particular nodal points for further patterns of transformative activity". The implication is that through digging into the areas of tension and contradiction between building and dismantling in food sovereignty construction, the greatest insights into the *how* of food sovereignty and its transformative potential are likely to be gleaned. In taking such an approach, applied to real-life struggles in Venezuela (and beyond), this study follows Ciccariello-Maher's (2017: 14) call to approach *dialectics as practice* – not "to take refuge in paradox or incommensurability" but instead for dialectical inquiry to be "localized and embedded in concrete material practice" toward "pressing subjectively forward in collective combat".

5.3 Logics of food system transformation and emergent areas of inquiry

Among the implications of applying a dialectical lens to food sovereignty construction is moving beyond scholarship that "overly praises the merits of various alternatives" on the one hand (Sbicca 2014: 818) or summarily dismisses them as not sufficiently challenging the status quo on the other hand. What is needed is a more critical and analytical approach to investigating on-the-ground alternatives that understands them *in relation to* the power structures in which they are embedded and intertwined. Furthermore, alternative building need not be, nor should it be, the only starting point of food sovereignty research, as important as it is. No less important than efforts that fit our perceptions of what food sovereignty "looks like" are those on the other end of the spectrum, engaging in one way or another with the predominant agrifood system that food sovereignty movements aim to dismantle. How do we go about reflecting this in our research? Here the work of Wright (2017) may provide some inspiration. In his "typology of anti-capitalist strategies", Wright looks at different approaches to anti-capitalism, classifying them into the four categories of *smashing* capitalism, *taming* capitalism, *escaping* capitalism and *resisting* capitalism. Such approaches vary in their goals, for instance, whether they seek to transcend existing structures or neutralize their harms, as well as varying in the targets of their strategies, whether institutions of the state, individuals, citizen groups or others. As Wright does not see smashing capitalism plausible in the foreseeable future, he points to the potential for the latter three approaches to be employed together toward a strategy he describes

as *eroding* capitalism. While Wright's is one among countless perspectives on getting beyond capitalism that form a rich body of work subject to extensive debate, what makes it noteworthy for the purposes of this study is its analysis of anti-capitalist strategies *as positioned in relation to* the capitalist system. What if we were to take a similar approach in explicitly analyzing efforts toward food sovereignty in relation to the dominant agrifood system?

Starting, as Wright did, with the concept of *smashing*, let us consider the idea of "smashing the dominant agrifood system". Although Wright does not see the smashing of capitalism as particularly feasible, if even desirable, at present, examination of social movement discourse around food sovereignty indicates that "smashing the dominant agrifood system" is not out of the realm of aspirations of food sovereignty movements, aspirations manifested in such actions as shutting down the meetings of the World Trade Organization, destruction of genetically modified crops, factory takeovers, and other more radical actions of food sovereignty movements that fall somewhere along the spectrum of *smashing* and *resisting*. Coming to *resisting*, this is arguably what food sovereignty movements do best, or what they have historically done the most, given that they arose largely in response to, and in resistance against, the impacts of neoliberal globalization upon the food system (Martínez-Torres and Rosset 2010). From overt forms of resistance such as protest to more covert forms of "everyday resistance" (Scott 1985) that make for "quieter" forms of food sovereignty (Visser et al. 2015), resistance has been and remains deeply embedded in the repertoires of food sovereignty movements.

The third element of Wright's typology, that of *taming*, arguably does not translate over very well to food sovereignty movements, which tend to be wary of the many proposals for taming the predominant agrifood system that have mushroomed since the food price crisis of 2007-2008. The idea of taming is reflected, for instance, in what Borras et al. (2013) have characterized as a "regulate to mitigate" approach to land grabbing espoused by many mainstream NGOs and development agencies. This approach has for the most part been staunchly opposed by food sovereignty movements, who opt instead for a more radical "regulate to block and roll back" approach. Such opposition to taming approaches is in fact among the trademarks of food sovereignty movements that distinguish them among other types of food movements, particularly those with a

529827-L-bw-Schiavoni
Processed on: 15-3-2019

friendlier take on market-based mechanisms (*see* Holt-Giménez and Shattuck 2011). Rather than taming, a more apt characterization might be that of *reigning in* the dominant agrifood system, for example, regulating it with the intent of diminishing its power, as reflected in the "regulate to block and roll back" response to land grabbing.

Last but not least is the fourth element identified by Wright of *escaping*. Here too some adjustment is needed if this is to be applicable to food sovereignty movements, for while *escaping* the dominant agrifood system is indeed an approach seen among some food movements, the general sentiment among food sovereignty movements is that such an approach is only an option for those who can afford it, whereas a guiding principle of food sovereignty is that there must be good food for all, requiring system-wide change. Escaping the dominant agrifood system is thus generally not among the aspirations or approaches of food sovereignty movements. And yet, practically speaking, they must start somewhere in building alternatives, and doing so at the margins of the dominant agrifood system, for example, in localized spaces that are to a certain degree buffered from it, is often the most viable starting point. Rather than escaping, this fourth approach might be best characterized as *building in parallel to* the dominant agrifood system.

This leaves us with *smashing the dominant agrifood system*, *resisting the dominant agrifood system*, *reigning in the dominant agrifood system*, and *building in parallel to the dominant agrifood system* as four distinct yet overlapping approaches that, for purposes of analysis, we might think of as *logics of food system transformation*. As with any typology, this one does not capture the myriad shades of gray involved, and it is certain that if debated in food sovereignty circles, it would become far more complex. That's the very idea. The point in putting forward this typology is to serve as a launchpad for further actions and analysis around food sovereignty grounded in a dialectical understanding of its construction. Additionally, there are some important questions, or areas of inquiry, that arise in considering these logics, questions that do not fit neatly into any particular one, as they are more crosscutting in nature. Three such emergent areas of inquiry will be discussed in brief before moving on to the empirical explorations.

529827-L-bw-Schiavoni
Processed on: 15-3-2019

5.3.1 Everyday life

First, what is the role of everyday life in the *how* of food sovereignty? Wright puts forward that, "One way to challenge capitalism is to build more democratic, egalitarian, participatory economic relations in the *spaces and cracks* within this complex system where this is possible", toward the intention that "[t]hese activities grow over time, both spontaneously and as a result of deliberate strategy", eventually sufficiently enough to displace capitalism from its dominant role (Wright 2017: 19-20, emphasis added). Almost as if in dialogue with Wright, Figueroa (2015), in her compelling work on food sovereignty in everyday life, also grounded in a dialectical approach, contends that it is in the realm of everyday life where capitalism has left the most cracks and thus the space from which some of the most meaningful alternatives toward the construction of food sovereignty emerge. Describing "everyday life" as "an ongoing, living process [that] is continually 'leaking out the sides', so to speak, of capitalist structures; its 'residue' confounding the attempts of abstraction and alienation to contain it" (Figueroa 2015: 505), she elaborates:

> In the spaces where people resist, or are discarded by, the march of capitalist development, the diverse social networks, practices, and resources they have always marshaled for daily subsistence become salient building blocks for new social configurations of collective survival that—if recognized, cultivated, and defended by conscious political action—can potentially emerge as practically viable, culturally meaningful, and self-determined pathways to food sovereignty as a means of transcending life under capitalism. (Figueroa 2015: 506)

But if everyday life is a fertile space for the building of alternatives in food sovereignty construction, what role, if any, does it to play in efforts related to dismantling? Felicien et al. (2018a: 14) touched upon this in their study of Venezuelan agrifood politics when they identified the realm of the everyday as not only a source of alternatives, but also forming the front line in the "colonization of taste" by the agrifood industry that has facilitated the deep penetration of industrially processed foods into most Venezuelan households. This has been to such an extent that a recent study of urban areas in the eastern part of the country (conducted before the peak of the shortages) found that an average of 90 percent of foods consumed daily by households were industrially processed foods (Ekmeiro Salvador et al. 2015). This implies that key to challenging the dominant agrifood

system is to work to loosen its grip on the most intimate spaces of everyday life. The realm of everyday life in many ways serves as a microcosm of the dialectics of building and dismantling in food sovereignty construction, holding much potential in both directions, making this a particularly worthwhile area to pay attention to in food sovereignty research.

5.3.2 Prefigurative politics

Wright and Figueroa both suggest that seeds planted in the cracks of the system can be nurtured over time to deepen these cracks, so to speak. This brings us to the question of *prefigurative politics*, or, as Wright has described elsewhere, "the practical task of building real-world alternatives that can be constructed in the world as it is that also prefigure the world as it could be and which help move us in that direction" (Wright 2015). The many manifestations of food sovereignty in the form of local food movements actively attempting to forge viable food systems alternatives from the community level up can be understood as an example of this (see, e.g., Pleyers 2017).[4] But if the alternative-building elements of prefigurative politics are obvious, what connection, if any, do they have with dismantling? This is a particularly timely matter to explore given that prefigurative politics are increasingly being referenced in food sovereignty-related literature (e.g., Felicien et al. 2018c, Roman-Alcala 2018, Wald 2015, White 2018), begging the question of how they fit into the dialectics of building and dismantling.

Smucker (2017) cautions that while prefigurative politics can in theory function complementarily with what he calls "power politics" (i.e., engaging with structures of power), instead they often end up serving as a distraction or barrier to system-wide change. He argues that, while prefigurative actions might start out connected to broader strategies for change, their tendency over time is to fill in for "concrete political goals with accompanying political strategies" (Smucker 2017: 123). The problem as he sees it is that these projects often take on a life of their own, such that a group's "particularized lifeworld can be strengthened without it ever having to actually *win* anything in the real world" and the very achievement of

---

[4] Noting, as Robbins (2015) reminds us, that not all local food efforts are grounded in food sovereignty principles, but here I am referring to those that are.

a utopian/prefigurative space "can be exalted over *what the space achieves*" (Smucker 2017: 114-117, emphasis in original). While Smucker's perspective is largely shaped by his experience with Occupy Wall Street, White (2018) offers a different view based on historical examination of organizing strategies of Black cooperatives in Jim Crow-era Mississippi. This is that, for those disenfranchised from engagement in the main political and economic systems, prefigurative politics can be an important means of both getting politicized and building power. She explains:

> Free spaces are critical for understanding, interrogating, and engaging democratic and revolutionizing principles that stand in stark contrast to the structures identified as oppressive. Through political education, community members engage in consciousness-raising and information exchange, which allows them to think creatively about the current political situation and how they would re-conceptualize those arrangements. It allows them to consider alternative ways of engagement with power […]. (White 2018: 9).

White's example demonstrates the potential of prefigurative politics to serve as an *entry point* into other forms of political action, including that aimed at dismantling, as with the eventual dismantling of the Jim Crow system.[5] A similar perspective is shared by Roman-Alcalá, who, in his explorations of the (relative) autonomist dimensions of food sovereignty efforts, finds that prefigurative action can "underpin future demands", noting the potential of "a hybridised approach involving prefigurative direct action and broader social mobilization" (Roman-Alcalá 2018: 8-9). Like everyday life (and in many ways a direct extension of everyday life, as noted by Lin et al. (2016)), prefigurative politics are an essential yet still relatively underexplored realm of food sovereignty construction likely holding important insights into the dialectics of building and dismantling, in terms of both promises and pitfalls.

---

[5] Here it bears reinforcing that, as with building, dismantling is a process, with efforts toward it often partial and uneven, as demonstrated by modern-day manifestations of Jim Crow and ongoing efforts toward dismantling them (*see* Alexander 2010).

529827-L-bw-Schiavoni
Processed on: 15-3-2019

5.3.3 Societal reach

While food sovereignty as a political concept and rallying cry has galvanized movements numbering in the millions, the matter of how to reach a critical mass in on-the-ground efforts toward food sovereignty construction, including how to most effectively scale localized efforts outward/upward, remains a pressing question, one which, according to Wald and Hill (2015: 8) is "discursively and critically pivotal". Such unresolved matters of reach and scale in many ways get to the heart of the dialectics of building and dismantling. As effective, inspiring, and impactful as local alternatives can be, much of the population, particularly the more than half of the global population living in cities, remains largely dependent upon the dominant agrifood system. Ultimately, solutions are needed that will reach and engage with this majority. Here it becomes difficult to go any further without talking about the state. Despite the autonomist leanings of many food sovereignty movements, as described by Roman-Alcalá (2018), for the most part, engagement with the state is acknowledged as necessary when it comes to working toward system-wide change. As has become increasingly clear over time, however, it is not a sufficient, if even desirable, goal for the state to "adopt" food sovereignty, as it is often justifiably questioned whether "food sovereignty" initiatives, when coming from the state, are indeed that (Clark 2015, Desmarais et al. 2017, Godek 2015, McKay et al. 2014). The task at hand is arguably to preserve the bottom-up, participatory nature of food sovereignty that is in many ways its heart and soul, *facilitated*, as necessary, by mechanisms of the state to overcome obstacles of scale and reach.

Azzellini (2018) provides some helpful insights into what this could look like in his observation that the policies under Venezuela's Bolivarian Revolution that have been the most successfully implemented and that have had the most staying power are those that built upon pre-existing citizen-organized efforts, which were promoted, expanded and over time given legal standing. He adds that such a practice is not unique to Venezuela, giving the example of labor policies in Italy based upon practices that had already been put into place by workers. This brings us back to the discussion of prefigurative politics above and the possibility for mechanisms of the state to serve as bridge of sorts between prefigurative politics and "power politics", to borrow Smucker's term. After all, the "pre-ness" of prefigurative action that is explicitly acknowledged in its name implies the potential/intention for a given action to be reproduced on a broader

scale. Whether, how, and to what extent the state fits in when it comes to scaling grassroots food sovereignty efforts is an important area for further exploration.

Finally, questions of scale and of the role of the state are no less important when it comes to dismantling. While it may be "an open question whether local actors necessarily have the capacity to successfully challenge dominant economic systems" (Wald and Hill 2015: 4), many food sovereignty movements have already arrived at the conclusion that they cannot go it alone, and it is for this very reason that they target the state, often employing human rights frameworks among their repertoires (Claeys 2015, Monsalve Suárez 2013). Since the corporate entities who are among the most powerful actors in the dominant agrifood system have little to no accountability to the populations they impact, making claims against them through the state, which is legally responsible for protecting the rights of its citizens under human rights frameworks, is an important strategy (Monsalve Suárez 2013). Of course, in employing this strategy, movements are under no illusions regarding the many ties between state and capital and the fact that the state is more often than not involved in *facilitating* the very systems they are aiming to dismantle (Edelman 2014, Schiavoni 2015). For this reason, it becomes important in the political strategizing of movements to have as clear a mapping as possible of the multifold linkages between state and capital in a given context, as well as a good mapping of pro-reform allies and potential allies within the state, in order to identify possible leverage points and openings. This is an area representing ample potential for collaboration between activists and researchers.

5.4 Crisis and transformation in Venezuela

Keeping in mind both the logics of food system transformation and emergent areas of inquiry discussed above, this section returns to Venezuela to take a look at recently implemented and still ongoing responses to the current shortages. The aim here is not to provide a comprehensive overview of the responses at present, but instead to examine four different types of responses, coming from both above and below, for the tough questions and important insights they offer into building and dismantling.

5.4.1 "Prosumer" efforts

As it became apparent, from 2014 onward, that the shortages were intensifying and continuing over a sustained period of time, new grassroots efforts emerged to mitigate the worst of their effects. Some were spearheaded by social movement activists who had already been working toward food sovereignty before the crisis struck, who not only marshaled existing partnerships and resources, but also seized the moment to work towards a deeper transformation of the agrifood system. Many of these now-ongoing efforts share the goal of bypassing the bottleneck in food distribution by forging more direct links between processes of production and consumption, and in the process, blurring the divides between the two, reflected in the commonly used term of *prosumidor(a)* (or *prosumer* in English).

One such effort, the Feria Conuquera (Conuco Fair), was launched in 2014 by a network of activists who were simultaneously involved in a multi-year battle over a new national seed law, described in the following section. Their motivation was both to provide alternatives to the products missing from supermarket shelves and to build a model in the here and now as a concrete step toward the long-term vision of food system transformation reflected in the law they were advocating. The latter is noteworthy in light of the discussion above in that it is an example of prefigurative action coming *out of* a policy-oriented process, as opposed to the other way around, demonstrating another possible way in which prefigurative politics and "power politics" can interact. The Feria has since functioned as both a space and a collective. As a space, it serves as a large monthly market in a public park in Caracas featuring affordably-priced agroecologically produced fresh foods and artisanal versions of many of the products subject to shortages, from alternatives to precooked corn flour to natural cleaning and personal hygiene products. It also features free hands-on workshops and serves as a space of political debate and a hub of food sovereignty education and organizing. As a collective, the Feria brings together urban, peri-urban and rural producers, herbalists and artisans to support each other through activities such as bartering of goods, seed exchanges, skill-sharing and work exchanges. Some are life-long food producers while others are looking to get their hands in the soil. Uniting them is the common identity of *conuquero/a*, meaning one who works a *conuco*, a form of traditional agriculture with Indigenous origins. Following decades

of agricultural modernization, depeasantization, and urbanization, assuming the identity of *conuqero/a* is at once an act of resistance and a reminder of shared origins (Schiavoni and Felicien, in press).

Among the challenges facing the Feria is how to confront issues of exclusivity, elitism and insularity that have plagued local food efforts in many contexts (Billings and Cabbil 2011, Brent et al. 2015, Holt-Giménez and Shattuck 2011, Trauger 2014), as well as the challenge of balancing internally-focused and externally-focused functions, as flagged by Smucker (2017). Some are drawn to the Feria specifically for its political bent. They see its primary function as serving as a first line of response against what they perceive as an *economic war* (*guerra económica*) facing the population and consider it inextricably linked with other food sovereignty efforts of the Bolivarian Revolution. Others come from a more apolitical "foodie" perspective, concerned mainly with access to sustainable/local/organic foods. A tension can thus be seen between an "escaping the dominant agrifood system" logic falling largely outside of a food sovereignty paradigm and logics of both resisting and building in parallel to the dominant system. Those falling within the former camp tend to be more focused on the strengthening of the Feria as a collective as an end in itself, while those in the latter camp are interested in strengthening the Feria to broaden its societal reach and impact, in contribution toward broader food sovereignty efforts. As one recently put it, "whatever we do right now has to prioritize those most vulnerable to the shortages or else all we're doing is gentrifying the *conuco*".[6]

Another grassroots *prosumer* effort that has already made impressive strides – in both scale and societal reach – is Plan Pueblo a Pueblo (Plan People to People), which forges direct links between small-scale farmers in the countryside and low-income urban communities. Initiated in 2015, it now reaches 60,000 urban families – close to 200,000 people. Among its strengths is that it works with self-organized communities, through pre-existing citizen-run social structures known as *comunas*.[7] Comuna members are responsible for conducting an inventory of community food needs by

[6] Personal communication via Skype, 16 November 2018

[7] For background on *comunas*, *see* Foster (2015) and Ciccariello-Maher (2016). As of 10 December 2018, there are 3040 registered *comunas* in Venezuela (Ministerio del Poder Popular para las Comunas y los Movimientos Sociales, n.d.).

529827-L-bw-Schiavoni
Processed on: 15-3-2019

household. Then, they pick up the food from the farmers and organize distributions. Meanwhile, the farmers focus on growing crops based on communities' needs, and the Pueblo a Pueblo teams help to build essential linkages, both linkages among urban and rural communities and strategic linkages with the state. Another distinguishing feature of Pueblo a Pueblo is a deliberate distinction from market-based models. Cost structure is collectively determined based on the realities of the farmers and consumers involved, not on arbitrary market pricing schemes. As an organizer explained:

> Food should not be treated as merchandise. We don't go by supply and demand. Why should potatoes cost more than carrots just because there's more demand for them right now? Who determines that potatoes cost more? The market dictates it. But we don't go by "the invisible hand of the market". We go by cost structure determined by the groups involved. We're not vendors, nor are we Santa Claus – we're into politics.[8]

Reflecting this philosophy, the prices paid by urban *comuna* members are substantially lower than going market rates (on average, one-third of the cost), while the small-scale farmers involved are guaranteed fair prices that they have helped set, rather than being at the mercy of intermediaries. The farmers are also relieved of the cost and burden of transportation of their goods. Additionally, Pueblo a Pueblo is intentional in their focus on the working-class *barrios* of Venezuela's urban peripheries. These are seen as natural partners, in that they are already engaged in radical experiments in self-organization and direct democracy, and, being among those most deeply impacted by the food shortages, are already engaged in grassroots responses to these by necessity. The approach of working through urban *comunas* has significantly boosted Pueblo a Pueblo's reach. Every family within a given geographic area covered by a given *comuna* is included in the initial census and is then automatically eligible to participate, and prices are structured to be accessible to the community at large.

Pueblo a Pueblo has reached a scale unprecedented by many other grassroots efforts of a similar nature, while bypassing common pitfalls of exclusivity and elitism, and yet some of its greatest assets also represent its greatest challenges. One such asset/challenge is that it meets both farmers and urban participants where they are. Those involved needn't be food

[8] Interview, Caracas, 10 April 2016.

sovereignty activists or self-identified prosumers; many are primarily concerned with improving their livelihoods or accessing affordable food for their families. This is both understood and welcomed. Such openness and accessibility are part of what attracts so much involvement. At the same time, operating at such a scale can make it challenging to advance the more political elements of the initiative, which are the main motivation among the activists who conceived of it. After all, Pueblo a Pueblo distributions don't necessarily *look* very different from more mainstream food distribution schemes to the untrained eye, even if operating on a distinct set of principles. This is where the educational and solidarity-building components of Pueblo a Pueblo, particularly *encuentros* (exchanges of sorts) between urban and rural participants, become extremely important.

Through the *encuentros*, the farmers understand whom they are producing for and why, and the urban participants understand who is feeding them and whose livelihoods they are supporting. Otherwise, it could be easy to give up when the going gets particularly rough and/or or when attractive and seemingly easier alternatives present themselves, such as an intermediary willing to pay a higher price to farmers to undercut the effort (as has happened) or when other less involved forms of food provisioning are facilitated by the government. Key to this, according to the organizers, is bringing visibility to agrarian issues long invisible in the public consciousness, despite having direct bearing for urban dwellers. The organizers are convinced that building shared understanding, solidarity and political commitment across the urban-rural divide is what it will take not only to sustain the initiative, but ultimately to transform the food system.

The two examples presented in this section offer important glimpses into the nitty gritty of alternative building in food sovereignty construction, particularly as related to challenges around reach and scale. At the same time, they both represent at least one form of dismantling, in an attempt to dismantle the urban-rural divide upon which the dominant agrifood system has been constructed and continues to depend. While this alone will not bring down the system, it is a fundamental task that, in conjunction with other efforts, simultaneously helps remove barriers and create new openings for building. Additionally, rather than look at these grassroots efforts in isolation, it is important to situate them within the broader efforts of building and dismantling of which they form part, which brings us to the next section.

529827-L-bw-Schiavoni
Processed on: 15-3-2019

5.4.2 Seed Law and the Popular Seed Plan

In late 2015, following a contentious three-year bottom-up policymaking process, a new national seed law was passed by the Venezuelan National Assembly. The Ley de Semillas, or Seed Law, would later be internationally recognized among food sovereignty movements as an "example for the world" (International Planning Committee (IPC) for Food Sovereignty 2018, translated). While the law-making process began well before the shortages, its passage and attempted implementation in the midst of them have made the Law an important component of resistance efforts. Although there are many features of both the Law and the processes around it that are noteworthy, this section focuses on the elements most directly relevant to questions of building and dismantling.[9] First, while rooted in multiple historical processes, the "starting point" as such for the Seed Law process was in 2012, when it was announced that the National Assembly would be creating the new law. This was prompted in large part by the intention to harmonize Venezuela's seed policies with those of the South American trade block Mercosur, which it had recently joined. As Mercosur is home to some of the world's largest producers of genetically modified (GM) soy, Venezuelan food sovereignty activists feared that this new law could pave the way for the legal introduction of GM seeds into the country, among other agribusiness-oriented reforms. These fears were compounded by similar trends in seed legislation seen elsewhere in the region and globe (La Via Campesina and GRAIN 2015). Although no cohesive national movement around seeds existed at this time, disparate groups concerned with food sovereignty, agroecology and consumer rights rapidly united across the urban-rural divide under the banner of 'Venezuela Libre de Transgénicos' (or 'GMO-Free Venezuela'), and began to mobilize.

GMO-Free Venezuela started off as largely defensive, targeting what it was *against*, reflecting logics of both resisting and reigning in the dominant agrifood system (as seen, for instance, in the main demand of banning GM seeds). Over time, as the Campaign grew in number, strength, and recognition, and as it grew more strongly linked with grassroots seed saving and exchange efforts across the country, it began to assume a more offensive

[9] *See* Felicien et al. (2018c) for a detailed account of the processes leading up to the Law's passage, as well as initial efforts toward implementation.

529827-L-bw-Schiavoni
Processed on: 15-3-2019

stance, increasingly articulating what it was *for*. This included support for the many community-held seed systems that continued to exist in the shadows of the commercial seed system, and a rebuilding of those that had been eroded over time through processes of agricultural modernization. Dissatisfied with the limited space for meaningful citizen participation in the drafting process led by the National Assembly, social movements took initiative to draft their own version of the Law. They did so progressively, through seven *popular constituent debates* held in six different regions of the country. Each was hosted by local movements to ensure that the content being drafted was based upon on-the-ground realities. Through ongoing contentious mobilization, in coordination with some key actors within the state and in antagonism with others, the final version of the Law that was eventually passed by the National Assembly in late 2015 largely reflected the version drafted by social movements, resulting in a radically different law from that originally conceived in 2012.

There are a number of features of the new Seed Law that make it a landmark piece of legislation and an important reference in the global struggle against the corporate seed enclosure. Chief among these is that it works on multiple tracks, or toward multiple horizons, simultaneously representing a pragmatic approach that reflects existing conditions and a visionary approach that builds toward an agrifood system radically different from that which exists today. Among the ways it does so is through recognition of both "formal" (i.e., commercialized and certified) and "informal" (i.e., community-managed) seed systems, or what are framed in the Law as "local, peasant, Indigenous and Afro-descendant" (hereafter LPIA) seed systems, with differentiated treatment of each. Within the formal seed system, which currently represents the dominant seed system, new regulations are imposed – most notably the banning of GM seeds (including production, distribution and importation), as well as the granting of licenses for the free use of certified seeds developed with public funding, in a significant break from the past.[10] At the same time, the Law recognizes, protects and includes mechanisms for strengthening long-marginalized LPIA systems. Reflected within the Seed Law are thus both shorter-term and longer-term visions of greater regulation and more fairness within the

[10] "Free" here is used "as in 'free speech', not as in 'free beer'" (Stallman 2002 cited in Kloppenburg 2014: 1238).

529827-L-bw-Schiavoni
Processed on: 15-3-2019

current predominant seed system as well as a revaluing and rebuilding of other types of seed systems as a basis for food sovereignty.

Activists involved in the drafting process recall that the question of whether the Law should encompass formal and informal seed systems had been subject to extensive internal debate. Some pushed for a law focused exclusively on LPIA seed systems, reflecting their ultimate visions for food sovereignty and what they were striving to build. But others argued, and eventually convinced the rest, that it was just as important that the law cover the formal seed system, representing what they ultimately sought to dismantle. Furthermore, they recognized that the two systems do not exist in isolation from each other, or on parallel tracks, but in fact intersect and interact with each other, including through the practices of small-scale farmers, many of whom use a combination of both systems. Commercial certified seeds are in fact seen as a lifeline and will continue to be until LPIA systems are eventually built up sufficiently over time, as is the vision.

Given these realities, there is a need to engage with the formal seed system to put it in the service of food sovereignty. As one activist explained, "We need to occupy the formal seed system".[11] An important means of doing so, she elaborated, is the transition away from patents (now banned by the Law) to "free use licenses" inspired by the U.S.-based Open Source Seed Initiative (OSSI). OSSI applies "legal mechanisms drawn from the open source software movement to plant breeding" in a strategy Kloppenburg (2014, 1225) describes as "re-purposing the master's tools". While some food sovereignty activists are critical of OSSI (*see*, e.g., Kloppenburg 2014, Montenegro de Wit 2017b), particularly because in their view it does not sufficiently break from the paradigm of seeds as a commodity, she feels that these critiques come from a place of idealism and purism that does not match the reality of actually working to transition from the existing system toward a new one. In other words, "free use licenses" are seen as a sort of mid-range tool in an effort to transition out of the existing seed system and into a new paradigm based on food sovereignty that is ultimately envisioned.

The ways in which the Seed Law reflects both the current realities of the existing agrifood system *and* a vision of the system ultimately desired, along with mechanisms to support getting from one to another, in many

[11] Personal communication by Skype, 15 April 2018.

529827-L-bw-Schiavoni
Processed on: 15-3-2019

ways epitomize the dialectics of building and dismantling. This also reflects Wright's (2017) concept of *eroding* the dominant system over time, in the idea that the commercial system is increasingly "occupied" and reigned in while community-based seed systems are built up, linked together and brought to scale, such that the latter eventually overtakes and displaces the former. In this light it can be understood why the Law has generated such fierce opposition among agribusiness interests and the politicians aligned with them. Of course, while the Law is symbolically important in and of itself, it is only as effective as the ability for it to be implemented. This is where the Popular Seed Plan comes in, which, beyond simply being a plan on paper, is an ongoing process of articulation among grassroots actors across the country to coordinate efforts on the production and exchange of seeds. This includes the linking of efforts between previously existing and recently emerging grassroots experiences, including those of Pueblo a Pueblo and the Feria, in order to scale local-level seed multiplication and exchange efforts.

Such efforts have been largely reflective of a "why wait for the state" approach to the Law (Franco and Monsalve Suárez 2018), although the activists involved express that the aim is to link back with the state, in recognition that grassroots efforts alone will not bring about the wholesale transition envisioned in the Law. The latter has proven challenging, however, in the face of competing tendencies within the state, including what the Seed Law activists see as a bias toward industrial agriculture pervasive throughout many state institutions, despite the existence of laws such as the Seed Law to the contrary. The challenge of competing agrarian tendencies within the state brings us to the next section.

5.4.3 Ministry of Urban Agriculture

Among the first responses of the government to the ongoing shortages was a reorganization of public management in prioritization of food sovereignty, including the creation of three separate ministries out of the Ministry of Agriculture and Land at the start of 2016. These three were the Ministry of Urban Agriculture, to support the surge of urban production that had arisen in response to the shortages and believed to be the first of its kind globally; the Ministry of Fisheries and Aquaculture to prioritize fish, both marine and freshwater, as an alternative source of protein; and the Ministry of Productive Agriculture and Land, as a continuation of the main functions of the former ministry. Out of these, the new Ministry of

529827-L-bw-Schiavoni
Processed on: 15-3-2019

Urban Agriculture garnered the most attention by Venezuelan food sovereignty movements, who received this development with a mix of both enthusiasm and concern. Among the reasons for enthusiasm was that recognition by the government of the importance of urban agriculture, to the extent of elevating it to ministry-level status, was a major vindication for the grassroots actors who had long been promoting it from within the trenches. This could be considered an example of prefigurative action (building upon survival methods of everyday life) being recognized and scaled up through government support. An impressive 29,000 urban production spaces, both pre-existing and new, were registered with the Ministry in its first year alone (Agencia Venezolana de Noticias 2016), along with the launching of new training and technical support programs, urban agriculture fairs and a media campaign to sensitize the public and broaden participation.

The new ministry quickly became an important ally to food sovereignty movements, not only those based in the city, but in the countryside as well, soon becoming an umbrella of sorts for many different types of small-scale, agroecological initiatives, as well as for some larger initiatives, such as cooperatives resulting from the agrarian reform process. Given this broadened scope, some food sovereignty activists argued that a more accurate name for the ministry would be the Ministry of Family Farming, in reflection of the model of agriculture promoted by it. And yet, while they felt this title would be more accurate, they also expressed concern. If this ministry were to more formally become an umbrella for the country's many different forms of small- and mid-scale, agroecological and family-based farming, would that not then leave the Ministry of Productive Agriculture and Land in service of large-scale industrial production? There has been mounting concern that this is increasingly becoming the case, not unlike the two separate agricultural ministries instituted under the Workers Party in Brazil – the Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock and Food Supply and the Ministry of Agrarian Development – representing two quite distinct and even clashing paradigms (Fernandes 2016). But in a country where food sovereignty is officially on the state agenda, wouldn't a ministry of 'productive agriculture' and a ministry devoted to family farm-based and agroecological agriculture be one and the same – or would that not be the goal? Why work on two parallel, and seemingly contradictory, tracks? When such questions were put to (now former) Minister of Urban Agri-

culture Lorena Freitez,[12] her perspective was that in a sector long dominated by the industrial model, the creation of this new ministry, exclusively promoting and supporting agroecology, serves as an important counterweight. While openly acknowledging the contradictions inherent in simultaneous state support for two different agricultural models, she stressed that an agroecological transition in Venezuela was going to take time and that in the meantime, people still needed to continue being partly fed through the existing system. At the same time, she added that this transition was being sped up due to material circumstances, as industrial inputs, traditionally accessed through importation, were becoming increasingly inaccessible. "The industrial model itself is in crisis", she explained.

The Ministry of Urban Agriculture appears most closely aligned with the *build in parallel* logic of food system transformation, representing a significant scaling and strengthening of alternatives on the one hand, but without there being a clear vision, let alone mandate, for dismantling the dominant system on the other hand. Furthermore, this is certainly not a vision consistently shared across agencies of the state, such as the larger and more powerful Ministry of Productive Agriculture and Land. Is the dominant food system nevertheless beginning to be dismantled, by virtue of current material conditions facing the country, or is it simply in the midst of being reconfigured? And what is the role, or what should be the role, of the state in such? Another concern among activists is that at the same time that the government is putting major emphasis on urban agriculture, increasingly less focus is being placed on agrarian reform, which had long been a main thrust of national food sovereignty efforts (Wilpert 2006). They fear that this might not be coincidental. "While we advocated for urban agriculture, we never intended for it to replace agrarian reform", lamented one activist.[13] She elaborated that while agrarian reform directly threatens the landed elite who remain among the country's most powerful actors, urban agriculture does not, and at a moment in which the government is under particularly intense political and economic pressure, it appears more inclined to make concessions with landowners and agribusiness as opposed to the much more difficult and conflict-ridden task of pushing forward with redistributive reforms. She concluded, "Urban agri-

[12] Interview, Caracas, 9 November 2016.

[13] Interview, Caracas, 17 March 2016.

529827-L-bw-Schiavoni
Processed on: 15-3-2019

culture is not *the* alternative – it's an option, or part of the solution. Movements must continue to work on both tracks – urban and rural, including urban agriculture and agrarian reform – and continuously work to bridge the two".

Such sentiments in many ways echo those of McClintock (2014), who challenges the "false dualism" of urban agriculture being either radical or neoliberal in its orientation (one to the exclusion of the other), concluding that both potentials exist in dialectical tension and that, "Rather than an end unto itself, we should instead view urban agriculture as simply one of many means to an end, one of many tools working in concert towards a unified vision of food justice, and of just sustainability, more broadly" (McClintock 2014: 166). For McClintock, as with the Venezuelan activist, urban agriculture's transformative potential rests in how it is articulated with other efforts. Coming back to the insights of the activist, we can get a glimpse into how the dialectics of building and dismantling could play out with the two agricultural ministries, if one were to support existing and newly emerging alternatives as the other recommitted to pushing forward the redistributive agrarian reform in such a way as to dismantle rather than reinforce existing property structures. While this hypothetical possibility is far from the current reality, some movements have recently been taking matters into their own hands as they reinvigorate the agrarian reform process from below through actions such as land occupations, demanding that the government follow suit (Dobson 2018; Pascual Marquina 2018).

5.4.4 CLAPs

In April 2016, shortly after the emergence of the Ministry of Urban Agriculture, the government launched what would become the primary national response to the shortages, Comités Locales de Abastecimiento y Producción (Local Provisioning and Production Committees, CLAPs). Similar to the early days of the Bolivarian Revolution, when communities organized themselves into thousands of *casas de alimentación* (feeding houses) in an effort that contributed to a radical reduction of hunger (FAO 2013), CLAPs represent a major convergence of mobilization from both above and below, and on an even greater scale. As it goes, the government purchases food directly from both private and public suppliers, and coordinates with organized community bodies (CLAPs) to distribute mixed food packages by household. Communities are responsible for organizing themselves into CLAPs, conducting community censuses, and organizing

regular community distributions, in which the food is sold at accessible prices in units of 12-15 kg. Through a massive coordinated effort, CLAPs reached an estimated 2 million families in their first year, focusing on the poorest segment of the population. Today there are more than 30 thousand CLAPs throughout the country aiming to reach 6 million families, nearly three-quarters of the population (Correo del Orinoco 2018, Radio del Sur 2017).

CLAPs were received enthusiastically by many citizen groups identified with the Bolivarian Revolution, who organized en masse to form the thousands of CLAPs now existing today; however, their reception among food sovereignty movements ranged from lukewarm to antagonistic. One area of critique was around their organization. While organized from below, some felt that such organization was overly prescribed from above in terms of both composition and functioning. This top-down approach was in departure from other more autonomous forms of citizen organizing associated with food sovereignty efforts. There was also a lack of clarity initially as to how CLAPs would articulate with pre-existing forms of citizen organization around food and agriculture. Some of these concerns have been at least partly resolved over time (for instance, many CLAPs are now integrated with pre-existing community efforts around food), while others remain, such as questions of autonomy, given the strong links between CLAPs and the government. The strongest critiques by far, though, are those having to do with the CLAPs being largely oriented around the dominant food system, since the main products delivered by the CLAPs are the very same industrially processed food products missing from supermarket shelves. Thus, while CLAPs have helped to mitigate the worst effects of the shortages, becoming a critical lifeline for a majority of Venezuelans, they have done so while reinforcing the dominant food system. As one food sovereignty activist stated, "They're CLAPs with the 'P' of Polar", Polar being the country's largest private food corporation, implicated in the shortages. "Polar doesn't even need to own its own trucks anymore. The government is doing the job of distributing its products now. It's doing Polar a great service", she added.[14]

Such reflections raise the question of whether CLAPs are even worth discussing as related to food sovereignty construction. At best, they might appear to represent a "taming of the system" largely outside of a food

[14] Personal communication, Caracas, 23 March, 2017.

529827-L-bw-Schiavoni
Processed on: 15-3-2019

sovereignty paradigm. However, there are a number of reasons why even radical food sovereignty activists such as the one just quoted consider CLAPs to be an important "arena in dispute" that could go in any number of directions, and one worth fighting for. First, while a main thrust of the CLAPs is distribution of processed basic food items in direct response to the shortages, this is not their only mandate. The P of the CLAPs in fact stands for production, and as of 2017, approximately half of the CLAPs – roughly 15,000 of them - were already engaged in matters of production in both rural and urban settings, with some having successfully integrated locally grown produce into the food distributions. This reflects the broader mandate of the CLAPs, which, according to the 2017 Constitutional Law of CLAPs, includes fostering "a new food culture", "new patterns of household consumption" and "new forms of socio-productive organization", as well as serving as mechanisms for the articulation of different popular power initiatives around food and agriculture, particularly those connected to the "communal economy", such as community councils and *comunas* (Asamblea Nacional Constituyente 2017, translated).

While CLAPs are arguably a long way off from achieving such goals, they have already made several important gains. One is that they represent an unprecedented level of citizen organization around food, on the magnitude that *could* form the basis for locally and nationally articulated food sovereignty construction. Another is that they increasingly serve as a means of connecting previously disparate government-supported efforts at food system transformation at the intersection of state and society, from production to processing to distribution. In the process, they help identify gaps in existing capacity as well as areas for further reform and transformation. For instance, while CLAPs continue to rely in part on the private sector, they are also serving as a catalyst for reviving state-run and worker-run food processing plants. These plants were established previously over the Bolivarian Revolution but had never gotten up and running at full capacity, nor had they managed to effectively distribute goods due to monopolized supply chains. This connects to an additional achievement of the CLAPs, and an area of further potential, as pointed out by another food sovereignty activist:

> There is a certain brilliance to the CLAPs. Almost overnight, they broke the stranglehold that supermarkets and a handful of corporate suppliers have

> had on food distribution since the days of Rockefeller.[15] They might not look radical yet, but the very premise of CLAPs – putting food distribution both into the public sphere and directly into the hands of organized communities – is itself radical and sets the stage for a very different functioning of the food system into the future…precisely what is necessary for food sovereignty.[16]

If it can be argued that CLAPs are a mixed bag (or box, as the case may be), at once embodying the potential to uphold and transform the current system, what are the implications for building and dismantling? Perhaps here it is instructive to reflect back upon the case of the Seed Law, as described above. Like the Seed Law, CLAPs have been conceived of in such a way that both reflects the here and now as well as a transformative vision for a food system radically different from that of the present. But unlike the Seed Law, there are less obvious mechanisms, if any, for transitioning from the present reality into the future vision. Nor does there appear to be a cohesive movement around them actively strategizing on getting from point A to point B, even though some individual CLAPs are indeed working on this. For instance, how to move from industrially processed foods that are so deeply engrained in everyday life to "a new food culture" and "new patterns of household consumption"? Taking inspiration from the Seed Law and the movement around it, one possibility would be for the CLAPs to take a more proactive approach of "reigning in" the dominant system in tandem with efforts at building alternatives, starting with successful alternatives that already exist and working to scale them out, as with the LPIA seed systems. And yet, the experience of the Seed Law has also demonstrated the type of retaliation that can come from "reigning in" efforts, and in the case of CLAPs, push-back by the private sector could place the emergency food distribution efforts upon which much of the population now depends at risk. The conundrum facing the CLAPs – of how to build towards a new system while still dependent upon the existing one – thus very much gets to the heart of the dialectics of

---

[15] Venezuela's first supermarket chain, CADA, was established in the 1940s through the Venezuelan Basic Economy Corporation (VBEC), a subsidiary of Nelson Rockefeller's International Basic Economy Corporation (IBEC) (*See* Rivas 2002 and Hamilton 2011).

[16] Interview, Caracas, 3 December 2017.

building and dismantling, with important implications for future trajectories of food sovereignty efforts in Venezuela.

5.5 Conclusion

The above empirical examples, while each being a preliminary glimpse into a far more complex picture, have aimed to demonstrate how attention to the dynamics of building and dismantling can be helpful for inquiry into efforts toward food sovereignty. For exploration into such, this piece has made the case for applying a dialectical lens to food sovereignty construction and has offered the *logics of food system transformation* as a preliminary typology to be used, and hopefully refined and built upon, as a springboard into further investigation. In summary, this study has laid out an approach that a) situates food sovereignty efforts in relation to the dominant agrifood system of which they are a response; b) examines the degree to which a given effort contributes – or could potentially contribute – to both dismantling the current dominant system and building alternatives; c) identifies the tensions and contradictions around building and dismantling in a given effort; and d) focuses in on these for the insights they offer into both the possibilities and limits of food sovereignty construction. Such an approach, it is argued, can help to paint a more comprehensive picture of the complexities of attempted food sovereignty construction on the ground in a given context, deepening our understanding of the *how* of food sovereignty.

Among the implications for food sovereignty research is a caveat for us to not become so enamored with alternatives that we lessen our focus on the systems out of and against which the alternatives have emerged. This underscores the importance of examining alternative building in tandem with examination of the structures upholding the dominant agrifood system – and the extent to which these are, or are not, being altered in attempted construction of food sovereignty. To fail to do so yields an incomplete picture at best and risks overlooking important barriers and constraints to the scaling of food sovereignty efforts, as well as missing opportunities for deeper transformation. A point meriting emphasis in this regard, often acknowledged by food sovereignty scholars and yet not always sufficiently reflected in our research approaches, is that food sovereignty is ultimately about power. An understanding of both possibilities

529827-L-bw-Schiavoni
Processed on: 15-3-2019

and limits in food sovereignty construction therefore requires an understanding of where the nodes of power reside in a given food system and to what extent these are or are not being reconfigured in attempted food sovereignty construction. Arguably, without meaningful transfers of power, there is no meaningful food sovereignty construction. Research into food sovereignty must therefore ask: How and where is power concentrated in the food system, and how and where is that power being redistributed? And if not, why?

Furthermore, as Gaventa (2016) has emphasized, when we talk of power, it is important to consider not only political but also economic power. The political involvement of citizens in the food system, while critical for food sovereignty, is not sufficient without a transfer of economic power. This could not be seen more clearly than in Venezuela today, where substantial levels of pre-existing citizen organization around food failed to prevent current shortages, even though they have proven fundamental to efforts to mitigate them. Furthermore, the initiatives that are proving most resilient against the shortages are precisely those where there had been a concerted focus on confronting the concentration of economic power in the food system and redistributing it among citizens. During the fieldwork for this study, this was witnessed with several more radically oriented *comunas* and cooperatives that had focused their efforts on building up a degree of economic autonomy earlier on in the Bolivarian Revolution and were able to draw upon this when crisis struck, as also described by Felicien et al. (2018a). Another example can be seen in Venezuela's fishing industry, following the banning of industrial trawling off the Venezuelan coast in 2008, together with a concerted effort to support artisanal fishing (Schiavoni and Camacaro 2009, Sharma 2011). Today the fish harvested by Venezuela's small-scale fishers, distributed to urban communities across the country via government-supported mechanisms such as ubiquitous "sardine caravans" present in many *barrios*, have been an important buffer against the shortages (YVKE Mundial/AVN 2018). That the power of the once highly concentrated trawling industry was broken up and redistributed to small-scale fishing communities has made such measures possible serves as an interesting case of building and dismantling which merits further exploration.

In summary, for a deeper understanding of food sovereignty construction, it is important to look at the interplay between dismantling the old and constructing the new. Where one is missing or underplayed, this can

529827-L-bw-Schiavoni
Processed on: 15-3-2019

shed light into barriers to food sovereignty construction. This is key to understanding what is being witnessed today in Venezuela, even as the implications extend far beyond Venezuelan borders. Relatedly, to examine efforts toward food sovereignty, it is important to understand where the nodes of power in the food system are and the extent to which food sovereignty efforts are (or are not) reconfiguring these. And when we talk about power, it is important to consider the intersections of both political and economic power, as one can only go so far without the other.

While the implications for food sovereignty research are many, these points are arguably no less relevant to those working to construct food sovereignty on the ground. In particular, there are three main points that practitioners of food sovereignty may find of direct relevance to their efforts. First is the importance of analyzing how various efforts toward food sovereignty intersect and interact with one another, particularly with an eye to building and dismantling, and incorporating such analysis into strategies for action. When we refer to food sovereignty construction in a given context, how cognizant are we that there are often radically different approaches that all fall under the banner of "food sovereignty" that exist in varying degrees of tension and synergy?[17] Being mindful of both building and dismantling does not imply that that every effort must explicitly encapsulate both, but it does imply that a given effort be situated within the dialectical relationship between the two. This speaks to the importance of understanding distinct food sovereignty efforts both in relation to one another and in relation to the dominant food system. This, in turn, gets to the heart of movement-building and speaks to the types of strategies that could be employed to understand how food sovereignty efforts are interlinked and where further effort and attention are needed. There is arguably room for a multitude of approaches in the attempted construction of food sovereignty, but these must be well coordinated in order to do the hard work of building while dismantling and dismantling while building. Perhaps this implies both more strategic building and more strategic dismantling, along the lines of "building to dismantle" and "dismantling to build"?

[17] I am speaking here not only from the perspective of a scholar, but also as a food sovereignty organizer and activist.

Second and relatedly, just as caution is called for in not skewing food sovereignty research toward questions of alternative building over questions of dismantling, similar applies to action planning in attempted food sovereignty construction. While food sovereignty activists often have a sharp analysis of the structures we are up against and in resistance to (reflected in social movement declarations and campaign framing), such analysis is not always reflected in our action planning. Take, for instance, the widely referenced *six pillars of food sovereignty* of the Nyéléni Food Sovereignty Forum of 2007 (Nyéléni 2007b), which continue to be an important reference for food sovereignty movements (and researchers) into the present:

> Food sovereignty …
> focuses on food for people
> values food providers
> localizes food systems
> puts control locally
> builds knowledge and skills
> works with nature

While these are critically important guideposts in the building of alternatives, perhaps they could become an even more powerful and effective tool for movements if superimposed with a build/dismantle lens. In other words, movements would strategize on what must be dismantled – and how – and what must be built in order to reach the goal reflected in each pillar. This is not to say that this is not already happening to some degree, but that there is the potential for it to be more internationally built into our practices.

Finally, a point stressed by Ciccariello-Maher (2017) is that rupture and conflict are inherent in dialectical processes. This brings us to the third and final point which is that rupture, conflict, and tension are all to be understood as part and parcel of the dialectics of building and dismantling, and that these are not to be shied away from but rather leaned into. A particularly salient example is in the attempted institutionalization of food sovereignty, from national-level policy making to efforts toward recogni-

529827-L-bw-Schiavoni
Processed on: 15-3-2019

tion of food sovereignty in global policy spaces. Many ardent food sovereignty activists would agree both that "institutionalization of food sovereignty" is somewhat a contradiction of terms at the same time that it is something that can and must be worked toward, as we seek to replace the existing system with something new. It should therefore come as no surprise when these processes end up being riddled with contradictions and conflict. More surprising, and perhaps more concerning, would be if they were not. A specific contemporary example is the recent recognition and uptake of agroecology, a key component of food sovereignty, by the UN Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), which is simultaneously being applauded and coming under fire in food sovereignty circles (*see*, e.g., Altieri and Rosset 2017, Chappell 2015). There is every reason why this does not sit comfortably with food sovereignty movements at the same time that there is every reason why food sovereignty movements have been working towards and pushing for this. The point is that as we broach the uncharted territory of actually trying to construct food sovereignty – in the here and now, under circumstances not as we please – tension, conflict and rupture are to be expected, as signs of motion in the dialectical processes of building and dismantling. And as they inevitably arise, they afford us the opportunity to go deeper, both in practice and in related research. Arguably that is precisely what the present moment calls for.

529827-L-bw-Schiavoni
Processed on: 15-3-2019

6 Conclusion

The overall aim of this work has been to advance food sovereignty thought and practice through informing scholarship by activism, and activism by scholarship, blurring the lines between the two where possible and appropriate. One main contribution, I hope, is to help advance thinking around how food sovereignty is researched. Toward this end, Chapter 2 laid out the HRI framework, while Chapters 3 and 4 demonstrated its application. Chapter 5 then shared the complementary framework of *the dialectics of building and dismantling*, developed over the course of the research. I hope that the frameworks presented herein will help to spark further thinking into what sorts of questions we ought to be asking about food sovereignty and how we go about investigating them.

But how we research food sovereignty of course concerns more than analytical framing, as important as it is. As Shattuck et al. (2015: 430) ask, "[H]ow can we continue to push the bounds of what food sovereignty research looks like, particularly engaged forms of research that challenge typical power dynamics and ways of knowledge generation […]?" and, "Similarly, how can we forge new ways of research that are most effectively informed and guided by the realities on the ground, and the people behind them?" Related to these questions, Chapters 3 and 4 are products of collaborative research projects melding scholarship and activism. Such an approach (and ethic) that champions the expertise of those working to put food sovereignty into practice has been a focal point of this research process, particularly in the case of Chapter 4.

Beyond the question of how to research food sovereignty, also motivating this study is the question of how to actually go about constructing it. Here it bears recalling the overall research question for this study: *How are state and societal actors interacting over time to shape the construction of food sovereignty in Venezuela in the context of competing approaches to and paradigms of food system transformation?* Without rehashing what has already been covered in preceding chapters, I will underscore some take-aways from the research.

529827-L-bw-Schiavoni
Processed on: 15-3-2019

Bernstein (2014: 1054) argues that questions of the state are the "elephant in the room" for food sovereignty. This study helps to crack open the state, or at least significantly demystify it, when it comes to food sovereignty construction. What we can see in the case of Venezuela is that support by social movements for a given government (in this case, the Bolivarian government currently under Maduro and previously under Chávez) is very much about the seizing and maintaining of political space within the state – political space that is an important precondition for the attempted construction of food sovereignty with significant societal reach. But this political space is highly contested, making attention to state-society interaction, both in practice and research, critically important. Social movements, in articulation with community-based efforts, must press forward in the task of food sovereignty construction even once food sovereignty is on the agenda of the state, or *all the more so* once food sovereignty is on the agenda of the state. This insight has helped me clarify what I had found so problematic about literature on food sovereignty construction, in Venezuela and elsewhere, focused on the state to the exclusion of societal actors. The state does not and cannot construct food sovereignty. At best the state can be commandeered to facilitate food sovereignty construction, or as Seed Law activists might say, the state can be "hacked" by social movements toward such ends, through ongoing processes of contestation. That is what has been seen at certain times, and not seen at other times, in Venezuela.

This connects back to the initial question posed in the introduction of *how are social movements navigating the terrain of the state*, and here at least four points bear emphasizing. First, as discussed in Chapters 4 and 5, is the necessity of strategic mapping of allies/adversaries and opportunities/threats across the lines of state and society, with attention to different gradients of each. As we have seen with the case of the Seed Law, not all allies are the same degree of ally, and these differences have important tactical implications. We have also seen the interrelationality of threats and opportunities, which at times may be one and the same. Furthermore, such strategic mapping must be *ongoing*, as state-society dynamics will always be very much in flux. Old allies cannot be taken for granted, while new ones, even surprising new ones, might emerge out of a given set of circumstances. This has been demonstrated time and again in Venezuelan food sovereignty struggles. Second, conditioning how social movements engage with the state is how they organize themselves and function in their own

529827-L-bw-Schiavoni
Processed on: 15-3-2019

spaces. This interrelationality of "inside" and "outside" spaces – and the broader issue of navigating multiple spaces – brings us back to Gaventa's (2006) "power cube" introduced in Chapter 4 and the importance of looking at *shifts in power* across multiple arenas, which gets to the heart of food sovereignty construction.

As Gaventa (2016) would later point out, however, and as discussed in Chapter 5, those working towards social transformation must be careful not to hone their focus too narrowly on political power without giving equal weight to economic power, and to the interrelation of the two. This brings us to a third point – that navigating the terrain of the state in food sovereignty construction involves simultaneous work not only across different spaces of power, but across different forms of power, with economic power being critical to address. Particularly helpful here is Fraser's (2017) "triple movement" framing introduced in Chapter 3, regarding the imperative of addressing the market, social protection and emancipatory efforts simultaneously, speaking both to some of the shortcomings of as well as some of the seeds of transformation currently underway within the Bolivarian Revolution. And this of course ties directly into the importance of a dual (and dialectical) focus on both building and dismantling, a key take-away of the fieldwork conducted for this study, as elaborated in Chapter 5.

If we accept that essential to food sovereignty construction is attention to multiple *spaces* and *forms* of power, a next point has to do with attention to the *balance* of power across state and societal lines. This is an area where the Venezuelan case offers movements elsewhere ample lessons to draw from, particularly when confronted by the rise to power of a progressive government (on whatever scale) and faced with "the contradictory realities of working with and through government rather than against it" (Wolford and French 2016: 5). Going back to the reflections of Smucker (2017) shared in the introduction, it is far more straightforward a matter to be positioned squarely against a given regime in power than the much murkier matter of trying to work with and through it, with all the many pitfalls entailed. Venezuelan food sovereignty movements have been navigating such challenges over the past two decades, demonstrating that it is possible to walk a fine line of support and critique and give and take.

Unfortunately, such nuanced positioning is often overlooked or misinterpreted by scholars, who, grasping for the familiar, e.g., in search of "civil society *as we conceive it*" (Ciccariello-Maher 2013b, emphasis in original) and

failing to find it, end up missing the highly complex state-society dynamics at play, both in food sovereignty struggles and more generally. Or, to borrow the words of Fraser (2017: 36), "focusing on what is absent, we ignore that which is present". What is present, upon careful inspection, is a dynamic tension between constituent power represented by social movements and citizen groups and constituted power represented by state actors, with the former serving at times as a radicalizing force for the latter (Ciccariello-Maher 2013a, Schiavoni 2017). This could be seen in the Seed Law battle and can also be seen today at the time as writing in the form of mounting protests by militant Venezuelan *campesino* movements, including a widely publicized twenty-day march to the capital, a hunger strike, and symbolic occupations of state agencies. Such protests are denouncing government corruption and "revolutionary reversals" such as a rollback of the gains of agrarian reform while at the same time affirming support for the Bolivarian government under Maduro (Dobson 2018; Pascual Marquina 2018). While such positioning might seem altogether contradictory at a glance, an "intimate perspective" (Wolford and French 2016) reveals how the *campesinos* see the Bolivarian government as staking out a claim in the state for popular power, while it is the task of popular power to steer the government and hold it accountable. Such attitudes, common among movements identified with the Bolivarian Revolution, challenge limited notions of citizen engagement in governance associated with representative democracy. Venezuelan social movements and citizen groups have a much more hands-on conception of democracy that progressive movements elsewhere might find instructive.

Indeed, now is a moment for being hands-on, if ever there were one. At the same time that they are making strong demands of the government, food sovereignty movements continue to partner with the government in a variety of ways in an attempt to meet the many challenges at present. One interesting example is in the recent reemergence of *casas de alimentación*, or "feeding houses". Ubiquitous when I first started visiting Venezuela, feeding houses are government-supported and community-powered initiatives to provide free nutritious meals to those most at risk of hunger and food insecurity. After being largely phased out with the near eradication of hunger in Venezuela prior to 2015 (and having been identified as a key support in this achievement), today feeding houses are being reinstated, once again in partnership between the government and communities (Felicien 2018). This time, however, more agrarian movements

are taking notice and getting involved. The Pueblo a Pueblo effort is already partnering with eleven feeding houses in rural areas to supply them with fresh produce, and is in the process of making links with others, while a Semillas del Pueblo activist recently toured feeding houses in Caracas to explore possibilities for linkages.

That feeding houses are attracting the attention of agrarian-oriented food sovereignty activists is significant for several reasons. First, it represents a further blurring of food security and food sovereignty approaches that have typically fallen along urban/rural lines, as well as a blurring of emancipatory efforts and social protection measures (touching upon the economic realm as well). Such developments also have the potential to address some of the shortcomings of feeding houses and other government-supported feeding programs of the past that had been highly dependent on "food from nowhere" (McMichael 2009), as described in Chapter 2, while at the same time building upon what *did* work in the past, in an interesting layering of approaches employed over the past two decades. While these linkages are still nascent as I write, they merit further attention and research for their transformative potential and speak to the ongoing dynamism of state-society interactions that continue to shape food sovereignty construction in Venezuela.

On one level, this very moment in Venezuela is perhaps the most fruitful moment for food sovereignty construction thus far over the course of the Bolivarian Revolution, since, as discussed in Chapter 3, food sovereignty has moved from being a political vision to also being an urgent material necessity, and relatedly, as discussed in Chapter 4, the combination of threats and opportunities at present is serving to push deeper and swifter movement toward food sovereignty on the ground. This in turn is driving new alliances and new, creative ways of operating and of stretching limited resources beyond what previously may have been imaginable. At the same time, on another level, this is also perhaps the least politically favorable moment for food sovereignty construction, as many of the resources and forms of institutional support that once existed have all but dried up at a time in which they could not be more needed. And while food sovereignty movements are radicalizing in many ways, the same, for the most part, cannot be said of the government. In the face of growing pressures, including a new round of economic sanctions and further financial isolation imposed by the U.S. and its allies at the moment of writing, concessions to the private sector continue to be made, key institutional

529827-L-bw-Schiavoni
Processed on: 15-3-2019

positions are being filled by "functionaries" as opposed to those from the trenches and some of the more radical political projects such as the construction of the *comunas* are being left to social movements to shoulder without the same level of state support they once felt in the past.

The moment would seem to be ripe for another radicalizing swing from below to shake up and recalibrate the balance of power among state and societal forces associated with the Bolivarian Revolution. Indeed, this is arguably already being attempted with the *campesino* march and related events, including a recent 1000+ person-strong *campesino* rally held in the state of Táchira (Vaz 2018a). Among the demands of the *campesinos*, tellingly, is a wholesale reform of the Ministry of Productive Agriculture and Land, discussed in Chapter 5. Given the aforementioned issues with this ministry, as well as the potential it has to contribute toward food sovereignty construction if transformed toward such ends, quite a bit of possibility hinges on this proposal. And yet, despite the president having agreed to this demand, among others, in a recent meeting with representatives of the *campesino* march (Dobson 2018), thus far no action on the matter has been seen. This is why the *campesinos* continue to mobilize, with increasing levels of militancy, at the time of writing. They are also joined by their urban counterparts, particularly urban-based movements who see a radical deepening of the construction of *comunas* as the way forward. As Robert Lanza of the *comuna* El Panal 2021 of Caracas explains:

> And we say: with the Mendozas[1] of the world we cannot come out of the current crisis... so we are against concessions. As barrio dwellers and campesinos, we are the insurgent subject that will make the Bolivarian Revolution flourish… if some do not want this, if some are afraid of Chavez and his radical proposal, all we can say is that for us there are no two ways to go about this. (Pascual Marquina and Lanza 2018)

El Panal is at the forefront of urban *comunas* actively working toward economic transformation, through, for instance, a variety of industrial projects (including a sugar packaging plant, a textile factory and several bakeries), multiple food sovereignty efforts across the urban-rural divide (including a close partnership with Pueblo a Pueblo) and its own communal

[1] By Mendozas, Lanza is referring to the Mendoza Fleury family that owns the country's largest private food and beverage company, Empresas Polar, as discussed in Chapter 3.

529827-L-bw-Schiavoni
Processed on: 15-3-2019

bank and communal currency (Vaz 2018b). And it is one of a number of groups that met recently at the time of writing for a day-long conference on popular power and economic policy focused on a radical scaling of alternative economic measures, of which food sovereignty was a key focus area (Vaz 2018b).

The assertion made in Chapter 2, at the start of this study – that "the jury is very much out on the future trajectories of the food sovereignty efforts currently underway in Venezuela" – remains as much the case as ever today. This brings us back to *food sovereignty as a process* and to the HRI framework, which seems a good note to nearly end on. As mentioned earlier, HRI had very much been informed by earlier interactions with Venezuelan social movements, who in many ways embody the elements of HRI in their ways of thinking and acting. Particularly striking has been the historical perspective apparent among countless grassroots activists with whom I have interacted – the understanding of their struggles as a direct extension of struggles of the past, as well their analysis of the historical roots of the challenges at present. To share just one example out of many, a veteran food sovereignty activist and community nutrition educator with the National Institute of Nutrition explained to me, "When people complain about how bad conditions are right now 'compared to before', I ask them *before when*?" She then went on to describe the harsh realities of her life growing up in a poor family in a Caracas *barrio* in the decades prior to 1999. She added, "The people have a wisdom – we're being quiet right now [not joining the street protests happening at that moment] because we understand where the bad is coming from, why, and what we represent by being here."[2] By "what we represent by being here", she was referring, again, to the political space claimed by popular power that the Bolivarian Revolution represents to her and many others after living through decades of poverty, food insecurity and political marginalization. As she sees it, the crisis at present represents the latest in a long line of struggles already endured by herself and her ancestors before her – one more struggle to also overcome.

It is such a historically-grounded understanding of the present that has led many of the grassroots activists I spoke with to categorically reject the "end of the progressive cycle in Latin America" framing that has become popular parlance in academic circles (Gilbert 2016). For them, this is not

[2] Interview, Caracas, 13 July 2017.

about a cycle but about permanent struggle – struggle long predating any recent political regime and struggle that will not cease before the end goal of liberation is reached. As such, food sovereignty movements are not wringing their hands in the face of the enormous challenges at present, nor have they gone into mere survival mode. Instead, they are working to address immediate needs at present while simultaneously working toward the deeper transformation that they have long envisioned. That this is happening against so many odds in Venezuela might provide inspiration to those fighting what feel like uphill battles in efforts toward food sovereignty construction elsewhere. I hope this study can be one small contribution toward that.

Before closing, I want to return to the point mentioned earlier regarding co-generation of transformational knowledge. As Levkoe et al. (2018: 4) have noted, building upon insights of activists in the field, food sovereignty construction itself is very much about knowledge co-creation. This is reflected in the fifth pillar of food sovereignty identified by social movements (*builds knowledge and skills*) as well as being a common thread running through each of the six pillars (Nyéléni 2007b). As such, academic research has tremendous potential to add value to already ongoing processes of knowledge co-creation in food sovereignty struggles, at the same time that if not done thoughtfully, it has the potential to undermine such processes. Key is for scholars to recognize and connect with the already ongoing processes of knowledge production amongst grassroots practitioners in the field – as well as local researchers/scholar-activists already accompanying these efforts – and to make this the starting point of the research process. This is what I attempted to do as I went along, but had I had the foresight of doing so more intentionally from the start, the outcome would likely have been even more fruitful. I propose that we build such practice into our research processes in an intentional manner, and that this become a basic norm of food sovereignty research.

This, I believe, represents the cutting edge of food sovereignty research and perhaps the most important ongoing conversation to be had among food sovereignty researchers and practitioners. Fortunately, such conversations are increasingly happening, as evidenced by a number of recent works on this very theme, fresh off the press as I write (e.g., Levkoe et al. 2018, Reynolds et al. 2018, Croog et al. 2018). Similar conversations are also happening in related fields (e.g., Stirling et al. 2018), and then of course there are those researchers whose work has been embodying such

529827-L-bw-Schiavoni
Processed on: 15-3-2019

principles all along, who serve as important points of reference (Kamal et al. (2015) and White (2018) being two of my personal inspirations). I take comfort in knowing that both current and future generations of researchers and activists will have more resources to serve as inspiration and guidance going forward. At the same time, as the Seed Law activists reflected, "We make the road by walking", and this will and must continue to be the case when it comes to co-generation of transformational knowledge, no matter how much further the literature advances in this area. Just as movements continue to evolve and adapt in the face of shifting agrifood politics, so too must our research. This is because, to borrow once again from the Seed Law activists, falling back on the same old approaches will not yield the types of new insights and ideas so urgently needed to address the social and ecological challenges currently confronting us.

For those coming at this work from within academia, this involves looking not only outward, but inward as well, challenging the norms that make academia inhospitable to this type of work, from how resources are allocated to how different forms and outputs of knowledge production are valued to the structures upholding patriarchy, racism and other forms of oppression within our own walls. I believe that working to dismantle these structures (while building something new) is not an endeavor to be done on the side, but is in fact part of the process of co-creation of transformational knowledge, in food sovereignty research and beyond. I feel deeply privileged, through my work in Venezuela together with a truly revolutionary group of activists and scholar activists, to have gotten a taste of what another form of scholarship, and another type of academia, might look like. This research is in large part an outcome of and a testament to that.

References

Abers, R.N. and M.E. Keck (2013) *Practical Authority: Agency and Institutional Change in Brazilian Water Politics*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Ablan, E. and E. Abreu (1999) 'The Cereal Flour Enrichment Program in Venezuela: Some Results during a Decreasing Food Purchasing Power Stage', *Food Policy* 24(4): 443-45.

Abrams, P. (1982) *Historical Sociology*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press.

Abreu Olivo, E. and E.A. de Flórez (2004) '¿Qué ha Cambiado en Venezuela Desde 1970 en Cuanto a la Disponibilidad de Alimentos Para el Consumo Humano?' ('What has Changed in Venezuela since 1970 Regarding Food Availability for Human Consumption?'), *Agroalimentaria* 9(19): 13-33.

Abron, J. M. (1998) '"Serving the people": The Survival programs of the Black Panther Party', in Jones, C.E. (ed.) *The Black Panther Party Reconsidered*, pp. 177-192. Baltimore: Black Classic Press.

Abu-Jamal, M. (2004) *We Want Freedom: A Life in the Black Panther Party*. Boston: South End Press.

Agencia Latinoamericana de Información (2006) 'Manifesto of the Americas: In Defense of Nature and Biological and Cultural Diversity', Accessed 20 June 2017 <http://www.alainet.org/es/node/114955>

Agencia Venezolana de Noticias (2016) 'Gobierno Instala Huertos en Cárcel Yare I para Producir Alimentos' ('Government Installs Gardens in Yare I Jail to Produce Food'). Accessed 17 September 2018 <http://elestimulo.com/elinteres/gobierno-instala-huertos-en-carcel-yare-i-para-producir-alimentos/>

Agencia Venezolana de Noticias (2013) 'Gobierno Nacional Mantiene Meta de Desnutrición Cero Para 2019' ('National Government Maintains Zero Hunger Goal for 2019'), Accessed 17 October 2015

529827-L-bw-Schiavoni
Processed on: 15-3-2019 PDF page: 256

<http://www.avn.info.ve/contenido/presidente-maduro-aspira-lograr-metadesnutrici%C3%B3n-cero-2019>

Alayón López, M. (2016) 'Evaluación de Las Políticas Alimentarias y Nutricionales en la República Bolivariana de Venezuela Periodo 1980-2012' ('Evaluation of the Food and Nutrition Policies in the Bolivarian Republico f Venezuela, 1980-2012'), Master's thesis. Caracas: Universidad Simón Bolívar.

Alba Ciudad (2017) 'Opositores Atacan Edificio CVAL de Barquisimeto e Incendian Clínica Móvil de Misión Nevado (+ Fotos)' ('Opposition Members Attack CVAL Building of Barquisimeto and Set Fire to Mobile Clinic of Mission Nevado (+ Photos)'). Accessed 20 April 2017 <http://albaciudad.org/2017/04/incendian-cval-barquisimetoclinica-movil-mision-nevado>

Alba Tv. (2018) 'Comuna El Maizal Garantizó Abastecimiento de Carne Para 15 Mil Familias' ('Comuna El Maizal Guarantees Supply of Meat for 15 Thousand Families'). Accessed 16 February 2018 <http://www.albatv.org/Comuna-El-Maizal-beneficio-a-15.html>

Alexander, M. (2010) *The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in the Age of Colorblindness*. New York: The New Press.

Alimi, E., L. Bosi and C. Demetriou (2015) *The Dynamics of Radicalization: A Relational and Comparative Perspective*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Alonso-Fradejas, A., E. Holt-Giménez, M.J. Robbins, S.M. Borras and T. Holmes (2015) 'Food Sovereignty: Convergence and Contradictions, Conditions and Challenges', *Third World Quarterly* 36(3): 431–48.

Altieri, M.A. and F.R. Funes-Monzote (2012) 'The Paradox of Cuban Agriculture', *Monthly Review* 63(8): 23–33.

Alzuru, A. (2015) 'La Mujer Como Objetivo Primario de la Guerra Económica' ('Women as the Primary Objective of the Economic War'), *Aporrea*. Accessed 2 April 2016 <https://www.aporrea.org/actualidad/a205399.html>.

Amodio, E. (2017) 'Alteridades Alimentarias: Dietas Indígenas y Españolas al Comienzo de la Conquista de Tierra Firme: Rechazos y Aceptaciones' ('Food Otherness: Indigenous and Spanish Diets at the Beginning of the Conquest of Tierra Firme: Rejections and Acceptances') in Amodio, E. and L. Molina (eds) *Saberes y Sabores: Antropología de la Alimentación en la Venezuela Colonial (Knowledge and Tastes: Anthropology of Food in Colonial Venezuela)*, pp. 177-192. Caracas: Fundación Centro Nacional de Estudios Históricos.

Anderson, J.L. (2017) 'Nicolás Maduro's Accelerating Revolution: Venezuela's President Has Outmaneuvered His Opponents. Can He Survive an Economy in Free Fall?', *New Yorker*. Accessed 10 January 2018 <https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2017/12/11/nicolas-maduros-accelerating-revolution>.

Andrews, G.R. (1985) 'Spanish American Independence: A Structural Analysis', *Latin American Perspectives* 12(1): 105-132.

Araujo, O. (2013) *Venezuela Violenta* (*Violent Venezuela*). Caracas: Banco Central de Venezuela.

Arsel, M., Hogenboom, B., and L. Pellegrini (2016) 'The Extractive Imperative and the Boom in Environmental Conflicts at the End of the Progressive Cycle in Latin America', *The Extractive Industries and Society* 3(4): 877-879.

Arsel, M., C.F. Mena, L. Pellegrini and I.M. Radhuber (2014) 'Property Rights, Nationalisation and Extractive Industries in Bolivia and Ecuador', in M. Bavinck, L. Pellegrini and E. Mostert (eds) *Conflicts over Natural Resources in the Global South - Conceptual Approaches,* pp. 109–23. London: CRC Press.

Asamblea Nacional Constituyente (2017) 'Ley Consitucional del Comité Local de Abastecimiento y Producción' ('Constitutional Law of Local Provisioning and Production Committees'). Accessed 17 September 2018 <https://www.scribd.com/document/370372951/Gaceta-Oficial-41330#from_embed>

Azzellini, D. (2018) 'Communes and Workers' Control in Venezuela: Interview with Dario Azzellini', interview on the Venezuelan communes and the new forms of participation by Investig'Action, *Venezuelananalysis*, 25 April. Accessed 17 September 2018 <https://venezuelanalysis.com/analysis/13780>

Baker, L.E. (2012) *Corn Meets Maize: Food Movements and Markets in Mexico*. Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers.

Banko, C. (2010) 'Las Casas Comerciales y la Economía Agroexportadora en Venezuela' ('Trading Houses and the Agroexportation Economy in Venezulea'), *Carta Económica Regional* 104: 7-18.

Bastidas, Y., A. Chassaigne, J. Alezones and A. Hernández (2015) 'Comportamiento Agronómico y Fitopatológico de Variedades de Maíz (Zea Mays L.) en los Estados Yaracuy y Guárico, Venezuela' ('Agronomic and Phytopathological Behavior of Corn Varieties (Zea Mays L.) in the States of Yaracuy and Guárico, Venezuela'), *Bioagro* 27(1): 17-26.

529827-L-bw-Schiavoni
Processed on: 15-3-2019 PDF page: 258

Battaglini, O. (2011) *El 27-F para siempre en la memoria de nuestro pueblo* (*The 27th of February forever in the memory of our people*). Caracas: Defensoría del Pueblo.

BBC (2017) 'Venezuela Crisis: Trump Warns Maduro over Jailed Opponents'. Accessed 3 August 2017 <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-latin-america-40798128>.

Beauregard, S. (2009) *Food policy for people: Incorporating food sovereignty principles into state governance, senior comprehensive report*. Los Angeles: Urban and Environmental Policy Institute, Occidental College.

Bello, W. (2017) 'Counterrevolution, the Countryside and the Middle Classes: Lessons from Five Countries', *Journal of Peasant Studies* 45(1): 21-58.

Bello, W. (2009) 'Foreword', in Holt-Giménez, E., R. Patel and A. Shattuck (eds) *Food Rebellions: Crisis and the Hunger for Justice,* pp. ix-xi. Oxford: Fahamu Books.

Bernstein, H. (2014) 'Food Sovereignty via the 'Peasant Way': A Sceptical View', *Journal of Peasant Studies* 41(6): 1031–63.

Bhaskar, R. (1993) *Dialectic: The Pulse of Freedom*. London and New York: Verso.

Billings, D. and L. Cabbil (2011) 'Food Justice: What's Race Got to Do with It?', *Race/Ethnicity: Multidisciplinary Global Contexts* 5(1):103-112.

Blanco Muñoz, A. (1983) *La Dictadura: Habla el General Marcos Pérez Jiménez* (*The Dictatorship: General Marcos Pérez Jiménez Speaks*). Caracas: Editorial José Martí.

Blanco, D. (2017) 'Fotos y Videos: Guarimberos Quemaron Sede del INN' ('Photos and Videos: Protesters Burned Headquarters of INN'), *Ultimas Noticias*, Accessed 28 April 2017 <http://www.ultimasnoticias.com.ve/noticias/sucesos/fotos-inn-despues-del-ataque-los-grupos-violentos/>.

Bobrow-Strain, A. (2013) 'White Bread Bio-politics: Purity, Health, and the Triumph of Industrial Baking', in Slocum, R. and A. Saldanha (eds) *Geographies of Race and Food: Fields, Bodies, Markets,* pp. 265-290. Farnham: Ashgate.

Borras Jr, S.M., J.C. Franco and C. Wang (2013) 'The Challenge of Global Governance of Land Grabbing: Changing International Agricultural Context and Competing Political Views and Strategies', *Globalizations* 10(1): 161-179.

Borras Jr, S.M., M. Edelman and C. Kay (2008) 'Transnational Agrarian Movements: Origins and Politics, Campaigns and Impact', *Journal of Agrarian Change* 8(2-3): 169–204.

Brem-Wilson, J. (2014) 'From 'Here' to 'There': Social Movements, the Academy and Solidarity Research', *Socialist Studies/Études Socialistes* 10(1): 111-132.

Brem-Wilson, J. (2015) 'Towards Food Sovereignty: Interrogating Peasant Voice in the United Nations Committee on World Food Security', *Journal of Peasant Studies* 42(1): 73-95.

Brem-Wilson, J. and P. Nicholson (2017) 'La Vía Campesina and the Academy: A Snapshot', in Anderson, C., C. Buchanan, M. Chang, J.S. Rodriguez and T. Wakeford (eds) *Everyday Experts: How People's Knowledge Can Transform the Food System*, pp. 139-151. Coventry: The Centre for Agroecology, Water and Resilience.

Brent, Z.W., C.M. Schiavoni and A. Alonso-Fradejas (2015) 'Contextualising food sovereignty: the politics of convergence among movements in the USA', *Third World Quarterly* 36(3): 618–35.

Briceño-Iragorry, L., V.B. Gabriela and B.L. Alexandra (2012) 'Obesidad ¿Es una Realidad en Venezuela? Epidemiología Pandemia del Siglo XXI' ('Obesity: Is it a Reality in Venezuela? Pandemic of the 21st century'), *Colección Razetti* 13: 59–90.

Burnett, K. and S. Murphy (2014) 'What place for international trade in food sovereignty?', *Journal of Peasant Studies* 41(6): 1065–84.

Caldeira, J. and W. Tovar (2013) 'Venezuela con Tradición y P.A.N. Documental Sobre la Evolución de las Campañas Publicitarias de Harina P.A.N desde 1960 al 2011' ('Venezuela with Tradition and P.A.N. Documentary on the Evolution of the Publicity Campaigns of Harina P.A.N. from 1960 to 2011'), Undergraduate thesis. Caracas: Universidad Católica Andrés Bello.

Camacaro, W. and F. Mills (2015) 'Revolution, Counter Revolution and the Economic War in Venezuela', *CounterPunch*, Accessed 27 January 2015 <https://www.counterpunch.org/2015/01/27/revolution-counter-revolution-and-the-economic-war-in-venezuela>.

Camacaro, W., F.B. Mills and C.M. Schiavoni (2016a) 'Venezuela Passes Law Banning GMOs, by Popular Demand', *CounterPunch*, Accessed 4 January 2016 <http://www.counterpunch.org/2016/01/01/venezuela-passes-law-banning-gmos-by-popular-demand-2/>

529827-L-bw-Schiavoni
Processed on: 15-3-2019 PDF page: 260

Camacaro, W., F.B. Mills and C.M. Schiavoni (2016b) 'Venezuela's 'People as Legislators' Ban GMOs, Protect Traditional Seeds', *Ecologist*, Accessed 2 January 2017 <https://theecologist.org/2015/jan/02/venezuelas-people-legislators-ban-gmos-protect-traditional-seeds/>.

Cambero, F. (2017) 'Venezuelan Community Group Launches Currency to Combat Cash Shortage', *Reuters*, Accessed 22 December 2017 <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-venezuela-economy/venezuelan-community-group-launches-currency-to-combat-cash-shortage-idUSKBN1E92RG>.

Cannon, B. (2008) 'Class/Race Polarisation in Venezuela and the Electoral Success of Hugo Chávez: a Break with the Past or the Song Remains the Same?', *Third World Quarterly* 29(4): 731-748.

Carbonell, W.J. and H. Rothman (1977) 'An Implicit Food Policy: Wheat Consumption Changes in Venezuela', *Food Policy* 2(4): 305–317.

Carney, J. (2013) 'Fields of Survival, Foods of Memory', in Slocum, R. and A. Saldanha (eds) *Geographies of Race and Food: Fields, Bodies, Markets,* pp. 61-78. Farnham: Ashgate.

Carvallo, G. (1995*) Proceso Histórico de la Agricultura Venezolana* (The Historical Process of Venezuelan Agriculture). Caracas: Cendes/Fondo Editorial Tropykos.

Carvallo, G. and J.R. Ríos de Hernández (1984) *Temas de la Venezuela Agroexportadora (No. 1)* (*Topics of Agroexporting Venezuela (No.1)*). Caracas: Fondo Editorial Tropykos.

Castro, K.C. (2014) 'Participación Social de Mujeres: La Experiencia de las JAP, Santiago 1971-1973' ('Social Participation of Women: The Experience of the JAP'), presented at the VII Workshop on Recent History, Universidad Nacional de La Plata, Argentina (6-9 August 2014).

Castro, M. and K. Vyas (2015) 'Venezuela's Food Shortages Trigger Long Lines, Hunger and Looting', *Wall Street Journal*, Accessed September 1 2017 <https://www.wsj.com/articles/venezuelas-food-shortages-trigger-long-lines-hunger-and-looting-1440581400>.

Chappell, M.J. (2018) *Beginning to End Hunger: Food and the Environment in Belo Horizonte, Brazil, and Beyond.* Berkeley: University of California Press.

Chappell, M.J. (2015) 'Final Day at the FAO Regional Agroecology Seminar in Brazil – The Struggle Ahead' Institute for Agriculture & Trade Policy (Weblog June 2015) accessed 17 September 2018 <https://www.iatp.org/blog/201506/final-day-at-the-fao-regional-agroecology-seminar-in-brazil-%E2%80%93-the-struggle-ahead>.

529827-L-bw-Schiavoni
Processed on: 15-3-2019 PDF page: 261

Chassaigne, A. (2010) 'Evaluación de Híbridos Experimentales de Maíz en Fincas de Agricultores: Estrategia de Fundación Danac para Aumentar la Adopción de Cultivares mejorados' ('Evaluation of Experimental Maize Hybrids in Farmers' Farms: Strategy of Danac Foundation to Increase the Adoption of Improved Cultivars'), *Gestión y Gerencia* 4(3): 4-19.

Chassaigne-Ricciulli, A., V. Barrientos-Acosta and A. Hernández-Jiménez (2012) 'Obtención de Una Población de Maíz para Tolerancia a Factores Adversos en Tres Estados de Venezuela' ('Obtaining a Maize Population for Tolerance to Adverse Factors in Three States of Venezuela'), *Bioagro* 24(3): 221-226.

Chiasson-LeBel, T. (2016) 'Neo-extractivism in Venezuela and Ecuador: A Weapon of Class Conflict', *The Extractive Industries and Society* 3(4): 888-901.

Ciccariello-Maher, G. (2016) *Building the Commune: Radical Democracy in Venezuela*. New York: Verso Books.

Ciccariello-Maher, G. (2013a) *We Created Chávez: A People's History of the Venezuelan Revolution*. Durham: Duke University Press Books.

Ciccariello-Maher, G. (2013b) 'So-Called 'Civil Society' in Post-Chávez Venezuela', Center for Economic and Policy Research, Accessed 17 May 2016 <http://cepr.net/blogs/the-americas-blog/so-called-civil-society-in-post-chavez-venezuela>.

Ciccariello-Maher, G. (2007) 'Dual Power in the Venezuelan Revolution', *Monthly Review* 59(4): 43–57.

Claeys, P. (2015) *Human Rights and the Food Sovereignty Movement: Reclaiming Control*. London: Routledge.

Claeys, P. and J. Duncan (2018) 'Do We Need to Categorize It? Reflections on Constituencies and Quotas as Tools for Negotiating Difference in the Global Food Sovereignty Convergence Spac', *Journal of Peasant Studies* (online release):1-22 <doi: 10.1080/03066150.2018.1512489>.

Clapp, J. (2014) 'Food Security and Food Sovereignty: Getting Past the Binary', *Dialogues in Human Geography* 4(2): 206–11.

Clark, P. (2016) 'Can the State Foster Food Sovereignty?: Insights from the Case of Ecuador', *Journal of Agrarian Change* 16(2): 183–205.

Clark, P. (2010) 'Sowing the Oil? The Chavez Government's Policy Framework for an Alternative Food System in Venezuela', *Humboldt Journal of Social Relations* 33(1): 135–65.

Cleaver, H.M. (1972) 'The Contradictions of the Green Revolution', *The American Economic Review* 62(1/2): 177-186.

529827-L-bw-Schiavoni
Processed on: 15-3-2019 PDF page: 262

Collier, R.B. and S. Mazzuca (2006) 'Does History Repeat?' in R. Goodin and C. Tilly (eds) *The Oxford handbook of Contextual Political Analysis*, pp. 472–89. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Contrapunto (2017) 'Bernal Asegura: CLAP Benefician a 6 Millones de Familias Semanalmente' (Bernal Assures: CLAPs Benefit 6 Million Families Weekly). Accessed 8 March 2018 <http://www.contrapunto.com/noticia/bernal-asegura-clap-benefician-a-6-millones-de-familias-semanalmente-161102/>.

Corbin, J. and A. Strauss (2008) *Basics of Qualitative Research: Techniques and Procedures for Developing Grounded Theory*. Thousand Oaks: SAGE Publishing.

Correo del Orinoco (2018) 'Memoria y Cuenta 2017: Los CLAP Tienen la Meta Permanente de Llegar a 6 Millones de Hogares en 2018' ('Report and Accounting 2017: CLAPs Have the Permanent Goal of Reaching 6 Million Homes by 2018)', *Correo del Orinoco*. Accessed 18 January 2018 <http://www.correodelorinoco.gob.ve/memoria-y-cuenta-2017-los-clap-tienen-la-meta-permanente-de-llegar-a-6-millones-de-hogares-en-2018>.

Croog, R., A. Hayes-Conroy, V.H. Gutierrez-Velez and A.S. Montoya (2018) 'Real World Food Justice and the Enigma of the Scholar-Activist Label: A Reflection on Research Values', *ACME: An International E-Journal for Critical Geographies* 17(4): 1024-1044.

Crossfield, P. (2011) 'Venezuela's Radical Food Experiment', *The Nation* 293(14): 32-34.

Cuárez, A. (2017) 'El Valle: Una Zona Popular Con la Mirada en el Porvenir' ('El Valle: A Popular Zone with a Look Toward the Future'), *Ultimas Noticias*, Accessed 8 September 2017 <http://www.ultimasnoticias.com.ve/noticias/comunidad/el-valle-una-zona-popular/>.

Curcio, P. (2017) 'Propuestas para Detener la Inflación Inducida en Venezuela' ('Proposals to Stop Induced Inflation in Venezuela'), *Aporrea*, Accessed 12 January 2018 <https://www.aporrea.org/economia/a253093.html>.

Curcio, P. (2016) 'Apenas 20 Empresas Controlan la Oferta de Alimentos y Medicinas en el País' ('Only 20 Companies Control the Supply of Food and Medicines in the Country'), *Correo del Orinoco*. Accessed 17 May 2017 <http://www.correodelorinoco.gob.ve/apenas-20-empresas-controlan-oferta-alimentos-y-medicinas-pais/>.

Curcio Curcio, P. (2017) *The Visible Hand of the Market: Economic Warfare in Venezuela*. Caracas: Ediciones MinCi.

Dávila, J. (2014). 'Contribución de la Misión Agrovenezuela en el marco de la soberanía alimentaria' ('Contribution of Mission AgroVenezuela within the Framework of Food Sovereignty'), Master's Thesis. Caracas: Universidad Simón Bolívar.

Dentico, N. (2015) 'Nutrition, Pathologies of Power and the Need for Health Democracy', *Development* 57(2): 184-191.

Denzin, N. K. and Y.S. Lincoln (2003) *Strategies of Qualitative Inquiry, 2nd Edition*. Thousand Oaks: SAGE Publications.

De Schutter, O. and K. Cordes (2011) 'Accounting for Hunger: An Introduction to the Issues' in De Schutter, O. and K. Cordes (eds) *Accounting for Hunger: The Right to Food in the Era of Globalisation*, pp. 1–24. Oxford: Hart Publishing LTD.

Desmarais, A.A., P. Claeys and A. Trauger (eds) (2017) *Public Policies for Food Sovereignty: Social Movements and the State*. London: Routledge.

Desmarais, A.A. and H. Wittman (2014) 'Farmers, Foodies and First Nations: Getting to Food Sovereignty in Canada', *Journal of Peasant Studies* 41(6): 1153–73.

Dobson, P. (2018) 'Venezuela's Marching Campesinos Meet Maduro, Denounce Corruption & Revolutionary 'Reversals'', *Venezuelanalysis*, Accessed 4 August 2018 <https://venezuelanalysis.com/news/13975/>.

Domínguez, F. (2016) 'Las Complejidades de la Seguridad y la Soberanía Alimentaria en Venezuela' ('The complexities of food security and sovereignty in Venezuela'), *Revista de Políticas Públicas* 20(Número Especial): 157-168.

Edelman, M. (2009) 'Synergies and Tensions between Rural Social Movements and Professional Researchers', *Journal of Peasant Studies* 36(1): 245-265.

Edelman, M. (2014) 'Food sovereignty: Forgotten genealogies and future regulatory challenges', *Journal of Peasant Studies* 41(6): 959–78.

Edelman, M. and A. Leon. (2013) 'Cycles of Land Grabbing in Central America: An Argument for History and a Case Study in Bajo Aguán, Honduras', *Third World Quarterly* 34(9): 1697–722.

Edelman, M., T. Weis, A. Baviskar, S. Borras Jr., E. Holt-Giménez, D. Kandiyoti and W. Wolford (2014) 'Introduction: Critical Perspectives on Food Sovereignty', *Journal of Peasant Studies* 41(6): 911–31.

529827-L-bw-Schiavoni
Processed on: 15-3-2019 PDF page: 264

Ekmeiro Salvador, J., Moreno Rojas, R., García Lorenzo, M. and Cámara Martos, F. (2015) 'Patrón de Consumo de Alimentos a Nivel Familiar en Zonas Urbanas de Anzoátegui, Venezuela' ('Pattern of Food Consumption at the Family Level in Urban Areas in Anzoátegui, Venezuela'), *Nutrición Hospitalaria*, 32(4):1758-1765.

El Nacional (2017) 'Guevara: Toda Venezuela a la Desobediencia Civil Masiva' ('Guevara: All of Venezuela to Massive Civil Disobedience'), *El Nacional*. Accessed 23 June 2017 <http://www.el-nacional.com/noticias/oposicion/guevara-toda-venezuela-desobediencia-civil-masiva_183194>.

Emirbayer, M. (1997) 'Manifesto for a Relational Sociology', *American Journal of Sociology* 103(2): 281–317.

Encylopaedia Britannica (2019) 'Casiquism', Accessed 2 January 2019 <https://www.britannica.com/topic/caciquism>.

Enríquez, L. (2013) 'The Paradoxes of Latin America's 'Pink Tide': Venezuela and the Project of Agrarian Reform', *Journal of Peasant Studies* 40(4): 611–38.

Enríquez, L.J. and S. Newman (2016) 'The Conflicted State and Agrarian Transformation in Pink Tide Venezuela', *Journal of Agrarian Change* 16(4): 594–626.

Evans, P. (ed.) (1997) *State-Society Synergy: Government and Social Capital in Development*. Berkeley: University of California.

Felicien, A. (2018) 'Hunger Games and Defending Food Rights in Venezuela', *Veneuelanalysis*, Accessed 21 November 2018 <https://venezuelanalysis.com/analysis/14155>.

Felicien, A. (2016) 'Historia de las Leyes de Semillas y la Modernidad en la Agricultura' ('History of Seed Laws and Modernity in Agriculture') in M. Pérez, A. Felicien and S. Saturno (eds) *Semillas del Pueblo: Luchas y Resistencias Por la Protección y Reproducción de la Vida (Seeds of the People: Struggles and Resistance for the Protection and Reproduction of Life)*, pp. 21–49. Caracas: Editorial La Estrella Roja.

Felicien, A. and C.M. Schiavoni (2018) 'Law as Process: Focusing on and Beyond the Legal Dimensions of Seed Activism in Venezuela', paper presented at International Workshop on Seed Activism: Global Perspectives, The Graduate Institute, Geneva, Switzerland (28-29 May).

Felicien, A., C.M. Schiavoni and L. Romero (2018a) 'Food Politics in a Time of Crisis: Corporate Power vs. Popular Power in the Shifting Relations of

529827-L-bw-Schiavoni
Processed on: 15-3-2019 PDF page: 265

State, Society and Capital in Venezuela's Food System', Emancipatory Rural Politics Initiative Conference Paper No. 9, The Hague: Institute of Social Studies.

Felicien, A., C.M. Schiavoni, and L. Romero (2018b) 'The Politics of Food in Venezuela', *Monthly Review* 70(2): 1-19.

Felicien, A., C.M. Schiavoni, E. Ochoa, S. Saturno, E. Omaña, A. Requena, and W. Camacaro (2018c) 'Exploring the 'Grey Areas' of State-Society Interaction in Food Sovereignty Construction: The Battle for Venezuela's Seed Law', *Journal of Peasant Studies* (early online release): 1-26 (doi: 10.1080/03066150.2018.1525363)

Fernandes, B.M. (2016) 'Development Models for the Brazilian Countryside: Paradigmatic and Territorial Disputes', *Latin American Perspectives*, *43*(2): 48-59.

Figueroa, M. (2015) 'Food Sovereignty in Everyday Life: Toward a People-centred Approach to Food Systems', *Globalizations* 12(4): 498–512.

Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) (2017) 'Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of)'. Accessed 20 November 2017 <http://www.fao.org/faostat/en/#country/236>.

Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) (2016) 'República Dominicana Da un Paso Decisivo Hacia la Erradicación del Hambre' ('Dominican Republic Has Taken a Decisive Step Towards the Eradication of Hunger'), Accessed 3 September 2016 <http://www.fao.org/americas/noticias/ver/es/c/418849/>

Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) (2015) 'Venezuela and FAO Create SANA, a New Cooperation Programme to Eliminate Hunger', Accessed 16 October 2015 <http://www.fao.org/americas/noticias/ver/en/c/283757/>

Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) (2013) '38 Countries Meet Anti-Hunger Target for 2015', Accessed 17 October 2015 <http://www.fao.org/news/story/en/item/177728/icode/>

Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) (2002) 'Feature: FAO in Venezuela: Ploughing Oil into the Land - Venezuela Fosters Rural Development to Bolster Food Security', Accessed 27 December 2015 <http://www.fao.org/english/newsroom/news/2002/9788-en.html>

Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) (1994) 'El Maíz Blanco: Un Grano Alimentario Tradicional en los Países en Desarrollo' ('White Corn: A Traditional Food Grain in Developing Countries'). Accessed 4 December 2015 <http://www.fao.org/3/a-w2698s.pdf>.

Foster, J. (2015) 'Chávez and the Communal State: On the Transition to Socialism in Venezuela', *Monthly Review* 66(11): 1–17.

Fox, J. (2007) *Accountability Politics: Power and Voice in Rural Mexico*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Fox, J. (2005) 'Empowerment and Institutional Change: Mapping 'Virtuous Circles' of State-society Interaction', in Alsop, R. (ed.) *Power, Rights, and Poverty: Concepts and Connections*, pp.68-92. Washington, D.C.: The World Bank.

Fox, J. (1994) 'The Difficult Transition from Clientelism to Citizenship: Lessons from Mexico', *World Politics* 46(2): 151–184.

Fox, J. (1993) *The Politics of Food in Mexico: State Power and Social Mobilization*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.

Franco, J. and S. Monsalve Suárez (2018) 'Why Wait for the State? Using the CFS Tenure Guidelines to Recalibrate Political-Legal Struggles for Democratic Land Control', *Third World Quarterly* 39(7): 1386-1402.

Fundación Danac (2017) 'Programa Maíz' ('Corn Program'). Acccessed 21 May 2018 <http://danac.org.ve/press/test/>.

Fung, A. and E.O. Wright (2003) *Deepening Democracy: Institutional Innovations in Empowered Participatory Governance*. London: Verso.

García-Casal, M.N. and M. Layrisse (2002) 'Iron Fortification of Flours in Venezuela', *Nutrition Reviews* 60(supplement 7): S26–S29.

Gaventa, J. (2016) 'Can Participation 'Fix' Inequality?: Unpacking the Relationship between the Economic and Political Citizenship', Innovation Series no. 5. Antigonish: The Coady International Institute.

Gaventa, J. (2006) 'Finding the Spaces for Change: A Power Analysis', *IDS Bulletin* 37(6): 23–33.

Gaventa, J. and R. McGee (2010) 'Introduction: Making Change Happen - Citizen Action and National Policy Reform' in J. Gaventa and R. McGee (eds) In *Citizen Action and National Policy Reform: Making Change Happen*, pp. 1–43. New York: Zed.

Gavazut Bianco, L.E. (2014) 'Dólares de Maletín, Empresas Extranjeras y Modelo Económico Socialista: Un Análisis Inédito que le Sorprenderá' ('Briefcase Dollars, Foreign Companies and the Socialist Economic

Model: An Unpublished Analysis that will Surprise You'), Análisis Estadístico de la Base de Datos publicada por CADIVI 2004-2012 (Statistical Analysis of the Database published by CADIVI 2004-2012). Accessed 17 September 2018 <https://www.aporrea.org/ddhh/a184873.html>.

Gibson-Graham, J. K. (2006) *A Postcapitalist Politics*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

Gilbert, A. (2004) 'The Urban Revolution', in R. Gwynne and C. Kay (eds) *Latin America Transformed: Globalization and Modernity*, pp. 93–116. New York: Oxford University Press.

Gilbert, C. (2016) 'Pintando la Realidad de Gris: Cuando se Habla de "Fin de Ciclo"' ('Painting Reality Gray: When One Speaks of "the End of the Cycle"'), *Aporrea*, Accessed 11 July 2018 <https://www.aporrea.org/ideologia/a228977.html>.

Giunta, I. (2014) 'Food Sovereignty in Ecuador: Peasant Struggles and the Challenge of Institutionalization', *Journal of Peasant* Studies 41(6): 1201–24.

Godek, W. (2015) 'Challenges for Food Sovereignty Policy Making: The Case of Nicaragua's Law 693', *Third World Quarterly* 36(3): 526–43.

Goldstone, J.A. and C. Tilly (2001) 'Threat (and Opportunity): Popular Action and State Response in the Dynamics of Contentious Action', in R.R. Aminzade, J.A. Goldstone, D. McAdam, E.J. Perry, W.H. Sewell, Jr., S. Tarrow and C. Tilly (eds) *Silence and Voice in the Study of Contentious Politics*, pp. 179–194. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Gouveia, L. (1997) 'Reopening Totalities: Venezuela's Restructuring and the Globalisation Debate', in Goodman, W. and M.J. Watts (eds) *Globalising Food: Agrarian Questions and Global Restructuring*, pp. 225-238. New York: Routledge.

Graham-Harrison, E. (2017) 'Hunger Eats Away at Venezuela's Soul as Its People Struggle to Survive', *The Guardian*, Accessed 12 January 2018 <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2017/aug/26/nicolas-maduro-donald-trump-venezuela-hunger>.

Grandin, G. (2017) 'Burning Man in Venezuela', *The Nation*, Accessed 18 March 2018 <https://www.thenation.com/article/burning-man-venezuela>.

Guédez, A. (2015) 'La Mujer, las Colas y el Rostro de la Revolución' ('Women, Lines and the Face of the Revolution'), *Aporrea*, Accessed 22 August 2016 < https://www.aporrea.org/oposicion/a202732.html>.

Gupta, G. and C. Veron (2017) 'Venezuelans Prepare Fecal Cocktails to Throw at Security Forces', *Reuters*, Accessed 7 June 2017

529827-L-bw-Schiavoni
Processed on: 15-3-2019

<https://www.reuters.com/article/us-venezuela-politics-feces/venezuelans-prepare-fecal-cocktails-to-throw-at-security-forces-idUSKBN1852MZ>.

Gwirtz, J. A. and M.N. Garcia-Casal (2014) 'Processing Maize Flour and Corn Meal Food Products', *Annals of the New York Academy of Sciences* 1312(1): 66–75.

Hamilton, S. (2011) 'From Bodega to Supermercado: Nelson A. Rockefeller's Agro-Industrial Counterrevolution in Venezuela, 1947-1969', paper presented at the Yale Agrarian Studies Workshop, New Haven, CT (4 November).

Henyen, N. (2009) 'Bending the Bars of Empire from Every Ghetto for Survival: The Black Panther Party's Radical Antihunger Politics of Social Reproduction and Scale', *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* (99)2: 406-422.

Hardy, C. (2007) *Cowboy in Caracas: A North American's memoir of Venezuela's democratic revolution*. Willimantic, CT: Curbstone Books.

Harnecker, M. (2016) 'Venezuela: Economic War or Government Errors? Marta Harnecker on the Crisis's Context', *Green Left*, Accessed 8 December 2016 <https://www.greenleft.org.au/content/venezuela-economic-war-or-government-errors-marta-harnecker-crisiss-context/>.

Harris, R. (2017) 'Lamenting Venezuela's "Humanitarian Crisis" While Blocking Its Resolution', *Counter Punch*, Accessed 12 January 2018 <https://www.counterpunch.org/2017/12/29/lamenting-venezuelas-humanitarian-crisis-while-blocking-its-resolution>.

Hart, G. (2006) 'Denaturalizing dispossession: Critical Ethnography in the Age of Resurgent Imperialism', *Antipode* 38(5): 977–1004.

Harvey, D. (1996) *Justice, Nature and the Geography of Difference*. Oxford: Blackwell.

Harvey, N. (1998) *The Chiapas Rebellion: The Struggle for Land and Democracy.* Durham: Duke University Press.

Henderson, T.P. (2016) 'The Class Dynamics of Food Sovereignty in Mexico and Ecuador', *Journal of Agrarian Change* 18(1): 3-21.

Hernández, J. L. (2008) *Elementos Claves Para la Discusión Sobre la Problemática Agraria Venezolana* (*Key Elements for the Discussion on Venezuelan Agrarian Issues*). Mérida: Universidad de los Andes.

Herrera, F.F., O. Domené-Painenao and J.M. Cruses (2017) 'The History of Agroecology in Venezuela: A Complex and Multifocal Process', *Agroecology and Sustainable Food Systems* 41 (3-4): 401–415.

Hobsbawm, E.J. (1972) 'The Social Function of the Past: Some Questions', *Past and Present* 55(1): 3–17.

Holt-Giménez, E., Patel, R. and A. Shattuck (2009) *Food Rebellions: Crisis and the Hunger for Justice*. Oxford: Fahamu Books.

Holt-Giménez, E. and A. Shattuck (2011) 'Food crises, food regimes and food movements: rumblings of reform or tides of transformation?', *Journal of Peasant Studies* 38(1): 109–44.

Hospes, O. (2014) 'Food sovereignty: The Debate, the Deadlock, and a Suggested Detour', *Agriculture and Human Values* 31(1): 119-130.

Howell, N. (2007) 'Human Hazards of Fieldwork', in Robben, A.C.G.M. and J. A. Sluka (eds) *Ethnographic Fieldwork*, pp.234-244. Oxford: Blackwell Publishing.

Ichijo, A. and R. Ranta (2016) *Food, National Identity and Nationalism: From Everyday to Global Politics*. New York: Springer.

Iles, A. and M. Montenegro de Wit (2015) 'Sovereignty at What Scale? An Inquiry into Multiple Dimensions of Food Sovereignty', *Globalizations* 12(4): 481–97.

Iles, A. and M. Montenegro (2013) 'Building relational food sovereignty across scales: An example from the Peruvian Andes', paper presented at Food Sovereignty: A Critical Dialogue, Yale, CT (14–15 September).

Instituto Nacional de Nutrición (2013) *Sobrepeso y Obesidad en Venezuela: Prevalencia y Factores Condicionantes* (*Overweight and Obesity in Venezuela: Prevalence and Conditioning Factors*). Caracas: Fondo Editorial Gente de Maíz.

International Planning Committee (IPC) for Food Sovereignty (2018) 'Declaración de los participantes de la Consulta Regional de América Latina y Caribe sobre la Implementación de los Derechos del Agricultor – TIRFAA' ('Declaration of the participants of the Regional Consultation of Latin America and the Caribbean on the Implementation of Farmers Rights – ITPGRFA'), Accessed 14 June 2018

<http://www.foodsovereignty.org/es/consulta-alc-tirfaa/>

Ireland, J. (2008) 'Lessons for Successful BOP Marketing from Caracas' Slums', *Journal of Consumer Marketing* 25(7): 430-438.

Jackson, P.T. (2006) 'The Present as History', in R. Goodin and C. Tilly (eds) *The Oxford Handbook of Contextual Political Analysis*, pp. 490–508. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Jarosz, L. (2014) 'Comparing Food Security and Food Sovereignty Discourses', *Dialogues in Human Geography* 4(2): 168–81.

Kamal, A.G., R. Linklater, S. Thompson, J. Dipple and Ithinto Mechisowin Committee (2015) 'A Recipe for Change: Reclamation of Indigenous Food Sovereignty in O-Pipon-Na-Piwin Cree Nation for Decolonization, Resource Sharing, and Cultural Restoration', *Globalizations* 12(4): 559-575.

Kappeler, A. (2013) 'Perils of Peasant Populism: Why Redistributive Land Reform and "Food Sovereignty" Can't Feed Venezuela', paper presented at Food Sovereignty: A Critical Dialogue, Yale, CT (14–15 September).

Kerkvliet, B.J. (2005) *The Power of Everyday Politics: How Vietnamese Peasants Transformed National Policy*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press.

Kimura, A.H. (2013) *Hidden Hunger: Gender and the Politics of Smarter Foods*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press.

Kloppenburg, J. (2014) 'Re-purposing the Master's Tools: The Open Source Seed Initiative and the Struggle for Seed Sovereignty', *Journal of Peasant Studies* 41(6): 1225–1246.

Koerner, L. (2017a) 'Authoritarianism in Venezuela? A Reply to Gabriel Hetland', *Venezuelanalysis*, Accessed 7 June 2017 <https://venezuelanalysis.com/analysis/13136>.

Koerner, L. (2017b) 'Opposition "National Sit-in" Unleashes Fresh Wave of Violence, 4 Dead', *Venezuelanalysis*, Accessed 25 April 2017 <https://venezuelanalysis.com/news/13074/>.

Koerner, L. (2015) 'Venezuela Recognized by FAO for Halving Malnutrition', *Venezuelanalysis*, Accessed 7 June 2017 <https://venezuelanalysis.com/news/11410>.

Kohli, A. and S. Vivienne (1994) 'State power and social forces: On political contention and accommodation in the third world', in J. Migdal, A. Kohli and V. Shue (eds) *State Power and Social Forces: Domination and Transformation in the Third World*, pp. 293–326. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Kohut , M. and Herrera, I. (2017) 'As Venezuela Collapses, Children Are Dying of Hunger', *New York Times*, Accessed 19 December 2017 <https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2017/12/17/world/americas/venezuela-children-starving.html>.

529827-L-bw-Schiavoni
Processed on: 15-3-2019 PDF page: 271

Kritz, M. M. (1975) 'The impact of international migration on Venezuelan demographic and social structure', *The International Migration Review* 9(4): 513-543.

La Via Campesina and GRAIN (2015) 'Seed laws that criminalise farmers: resistance and fightback', *GRAIN*, accessed 17 September 2018 <https://www.grain.org/article/entries/5142-seed-laws-that-criminalise-farmers-resistance-and-fightback>.

Lander, E. (2014) 'Venezuela: Terminal crisis of the rentier petro-state model?', *TNI*. Accessed 5 January 2016 <https://www.tni.org/en/publication/venezuela-terminal-crisis-of-the-rentier-petro-state>

Lander, E. and L.A. Fierro (1996) 'The Impact of Neoliberal Adjustment in Venezuela, 1989–1993', *Latin American Perspectives* 23(3): 50–73.

Lappé, F.M. and J. Collins (2015) *World Hunger: 10 Myths*. New York: Grove Press.

Laurentin Táriba, H.E. (2015) 'Desempeño de la Agricultura Venezolana en el Contexto de la Soberanía Alimentaria Nacional' ('Performance of Venezuelan Agriculture in the Context of National Food Sovereignty'), *Agroalimentaria* 21(40): 97–114.

Lavelle, D.B. (2016) 'Petro-Socialism and Agrarianism: Agrarian Reform, Food, and Oil in Chavista Venezuela', PhD thesis. Berkeley: University of California, Berkeley.

Lavelle, D. (2013) 'A Twenty-first Century Socialist Agriculture? Land Reform, Food Sovereignty and Peasant–state Dynamics in Venezuela', *International Journal of Sociology of Agriculture and Food* 21(1): 133-154.

Leach, M. and I. Scoones (2007) 'Mobilising Citizens: Social Movements and the Politics of Knowledge', IDS Working Paper Series No. 276. Brighton, UK: IDS.

Levins, R. and Lewontin, R.C. (1985) *The Dialectical Biologist*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.

Levkoe, C. Z., J. Brem-Wilson and C. R. Anderson (2018) 'People, Power, Change: Three Pillars of a Food Sovereignty Research Praxis', *Journal of Peasant Studies*, online release <doi: 10.1080/03066150.2018.1512488>.

Lezama Hernández, E.M. (2006) 'Lo Global y lo Local en Venezuela: El Proceso Modernizador y su Impacto en Ciudad Guayana 1960-2000' ('The Global and the Local in Venezuela: The Modernization Process and Its Impact on Ciudad Guyana 1960-2000'), PhD Thesis. Granada: Universidad de Granada.

529827-L-bw-Schiavoni
Processed on: 15-3-2019 PDF page: 272

Li, T. (2010) 'To Make Live or Let Die?: Rural Dispossession and the Protection of Surplus Populations', *Antipode* 41(1): 66–93.

Lin, C.S., Pykett, A.A., Flanagan, C. and Chávez, K.R. (2016) 'Engendering the Prefigurative: Feminist Praxes that Bridge a Politics of Prefigurement and Survival', *Journal of Social and Political Psychology* 4(1): 302-317

Lind, D. and E. Barham (2004) 'The Social Life of the Tortilla: Food, Cultural Politics, and Contested Commodification', *Agriculture and Human Values 21*(1): 47-60.

Llambí, L. (1988) 'Small Modern Farmers: Neither Peasants nor Fully-fledged Capitalists?', *Journal of Peasant Studies* 15(3): 350–372.

Llambí, L. and L. Gouveia (1994) 'The Restructuring of the Venezuelan State and State Theory', *International Journal of Sociology of Agriculture and Food* 4(1): 64-83.

Local Food Rules (2018) 'Food Sovereignty Municipalities – LFCSGOs Adopted – by County'. Accessed 2 January 2019 <http://localfoodrules.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/03/LFCSGOsList-Adopted.pdf>

Lombardi, J. (2003) 'Prologue: Venezuela's Permanent Dilemma', in Ellner, S. and D. Hellinger (eds) *Venezuelan Politics in the Chávez era: Class, Polarization and Conflict*, pp. 1-6. Boulder: Lynne Rienner Publishers.

Long, N. (1992a) 'Preface' in N. Long and A. Long (eds) *Battlefields of Knowledge: The Interlocking of Theory and Practice in Social Research and Development*, pp. ix-xii. London: Routledge.

Long, N. (1992b) 'Conclusion' in N. Long and A. Long (eds) *Battlefields of Knowledge: The Interlocking of Theory and Practice in Social Research and Development*, pp. 268-277. London: Routledge.

López, O. (2015) *Dale Más Gasolina. Chavismo, Sifrinismo y Burocracia* (*Add More Gasoline: Chavismo, Sifrinismo and Bureaucracy*). Caracas: Fundación Casa Nacional de las Letras Andrés Bello.

Lovera, J. (1988) *Historia de la Alimentación en Venezuela*. (*The History of Food in Venezuela*). Caracas: Monteávila Editores.

Mallett-Outtrim, R. (2017) 'Will Venezuela's Latest Exchange Rate Reforms Help?', *Venezuelananalysis*. Accessed 17 September 2018 <https://venezuelanalysis.com/analysis/13154>.

Magdoff, F. and B. Tokar (2010) *Agriculture and Food in Crisis: Conflict, Resistance, and Renewal*. New York: Monthly Review Press.

Marcano Marin, E. and S. Ellner (2015) 'It is Necessary to Contextualize the Pragmatic and Populist Policies of the Chavista Government: An Interview with Steve Ellner', *Venezuelananalysis*. Accessed 12 December 2015 <http://venezuelanalysis. com/analysis/11505>

Marshall, C. and G. B. Rossman (1999) *Designing Qualitative Research*, *4th Edition*. Thousand Oaks: SAGE Publications.

Martinez-Torres, M.E. and Rosset, P.M. (2010) 'La Vía Campesina: The Birth and Evolution of a Transnational Social Movement', *Journal of Peasant Studies*, 37(1):149-175.

Mason, J. (2002) *Qualitative Researching, 2nd Edition*. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications.

Marx, K. (2008) *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte*. Rockville: Wildside Press. (Orig. pub. 1852.)

Mato, D., A.M. Fermín and E.R. Torres (2011) *Interculturalidad y comunicación intercultural: propuesta teórica y estudio de experiencias de participación social en la gestión de servicios públicos en una comunidad popular de la ciudad de Caracas* (*Interculturality and intercultural communication: theoretical proposal and study of experiences of social participation in the management of public services in a popular community in the city of Caracas).* Caracas: Universidad Central de Venezuela.

Maya, M.L. (2003) 'The Venezuelan "Caracazo" of 1989: Popular Protest and Institutional Weakness', *Journal of Latin American Studies* 35(1): 117–37.

McAdam, D., S. Tarrow and C. Tilly (2001) *Dynamics of Contention*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

McBeth, B. S. (1983) *Juan Vicente Gómez and the Oil Companies in Venezuela, 1908-1935*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

McCann, M. (2006) 'Law and Social Movements: Contemporary Perspectives', *Annual Review of Law and Social Science* 2: 17–38.

McClintock, N. (2014) 'Radical, Reformist, and Garden-Variety Neoliberal: Coming to Terms with Urban Agriculture's Contradictions', *Local Environment* 19(2):147-171.

McKay, B. M. (2018) 'The Politics of Agrarian Change in Bolivia's Soy Complex', *Journal of Agrarian Change* 18(2): 406–424.

McKay, B., R. Nehring and M. Walsh-Dilley (2014) 'The 'State' of Food Sovereignty in Latin America: Political Projects and Alternative Pathways in Venezuela, Ecuador and Bolivia', *Journal of Peasant Studies* 41(6): 1175–200.

McKeon, N. (2015) *Food Security Governance: Empowering Communities, Regulating Corporations*. London: Routledge.

McMichael, P. (2016) 'Commentary: Food Regime for Thought', *Journal of Peasant Studies* 43(3): 648-670.

McMichael, P. (2015) 'The Land Question in the Food Sovereignty Project', *Globalizations* 12(4): 434–51.

McMichael, P. (2014) 'Historicizing Food Sovereignty', *Journal of Peasant Studies* 41(6): 933–57.

McMichael, P. (2009) 'A Food Regime Genealogy', *Journal of Peasant Studies* 36(1): 139–69.

McMichael, P. (2000) 'The Power of Food', *Agriculture and Human Values* 17(1): 21-33.

McMichael, P. (1990) 'Incorporating Comparison within a World-Historical Perspective: An Alternative Comparative Method', *American Sociological Review* 55(3): 385–97.

McMichael, P. and M. Schneider (2011) 'Food Security Politics and the Millennium Development Goals', *Third World Quarterly* 32(1): 119-139.

Media Roots (2017) 'Abby Martin in Venezuela – Supermarkets to Black Markets'. Accessed 10 January 2018 < http://mediaroots.org/abby-martin-in-venezuela-supermarkets-black-markets/>

Media Watch (2017) 'Preferred Conclusions: The BBC, Syria, and Venezuela', *Venezuelanalysis*, Accessed 20 September 2017 <https://venezuelanalysis.com/analysis/13375/>.

Menser, M. (2014) 'The Territory of Self-determination: Social Reproduction, Agroecology, and the Role of the State', in P. Andrée, J. Ayres, M. Bosia, and M. Massicote (eds) *Globalization and Food Sovereignty: Global and Local Change in the New Politics of Food*, pp. 53–83. Toronto: University of Toronto Press.

Michels, A. and L. De Graaf (2017) 'Examining Citizen Participation: Local Participatory Policymaking and Democracy Revisited', *Local Government Studies* 43(6): 875–881.

Migdal, J. (1994) 'The State in Society: An Approach to Struggles for Domination', in J. Migdal, A. Kohli and V. Shue (eds) *State Power and Social Forces: Domination and Transformation in the Third World*, pp. 7–36. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Migdal, J., A. Kohli and V. Shue (eds) (1994) *State Power and Social Forces: Domination and Transformation in the Third World*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

529827-L-bw-Schiavoni
Processed on: 15-3-2019 PDF page: 275

Mills, F. and W. Camacaro (2015) 'Venezuela Takes Control of Its Border as Bogotá and Caracas Bring Their Cases to UNASUR', Accessed 15 December 2015 <http://www.coha.org/venezuela-colombia-border-dispute/>

Mills, F. and W. Camacaro (2013) 'Venezuela and the Battle Against Transgenic Seeds', Accessed 15 November 2015 <http://www. coha.org/venezuela-and-the-battle-against-transgenic-seeds>

Ministerio de Comunicación e Información, Government of Venezuela (1999) 'Constitution of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela', Accessed 17 July 2013 <http://venezuela-us.org/live/wp-content/uploads/2009/08/constitucioningles.pdf>.

Ministerio del Poder Popular para las Comunas y los Movimientos Sociales (n.d.) 'Consulta Pública' Accessed 10 December 2018 <http://consulta.mpcomunas.gob.ve/>.

Ministerio del Poder Popular para las Comunas y los Movimientos Sociales (2016) Últimas Comunas Registradas' ('Latest Comunas Registered'), Accessed 30 May 2016 <http://www.mpcomunas.gob.ve/>

Mintz, S.W. and C.M. Du Bois (2002) 'The Anthropology of Food and Eating', *Annual Review of Anthropology* 31(1): 99-119.

Miranda, F. (2014) 'Situación Actual de la Certificación de Semillas en Venezuela' ('Current Status of Seed Certification in Venezuela'), paper presented at XIV Jornadas Científicas de la Facultad de Agronomía de la Universidad del Zulia, Maracaibo, Venezuela (14-16 October).

Misión Verdad (2017) 'Four Effects of the Blockade Against Venezuela', *Venezuelanalysis*. Accessed 10 December 2018 <https://venezuelanalysis.com/analysis/13529>.

Monsalve Suárez, S. (2013) 'The Human Rights Framework in Contemporary Agrarian Struggles', *Journal of Peasant Studies* 40(1): 239-290.

Montenegro de Wit, M. (2017a) 'Stealing into the Wild: Conservation Science, Plant Breeding and the Makings of New Seed Enclosures', *Journal of Peasant Studies* 44(1): 169–212.

Montenegro de Wit, M. (2017b) 'Beating the Bounds: How Does 'Open Source' Become a Seed Commons?', *Journal of Peasant Studies*. Available at https://doi.org/10.1080/03066150.2017.1383395.

Mountz, A., A. Bonds, B. Mansfield, J. Loyd, J. Hyndman, M. Walton-Roberts, R. Basu, R. Whitson, R. Hawkins, T. Hamilton and W. Curran (2015)

'For Slow Scholarship: A Feminist Politics of Resistance Through Collective Action in the Neoliberal University', *ACME: An International E-Journal for Critical Geographies 14*(4): 1-24.

Murphy, S. (2014) 'Expanding the Possibilities for a Future Free of Hunger', *Dialogues in Human Geography* 4(2): 225–8.

New York Times (1989a) 'Dozens of Venezuelans Killed in Riots Over Price Increases'. Accessed 17 May 2017 <http://www.nytimes.com/1989/03/01/world/dozens-of-venezuelans-killed-in-riots-over-price-increases.html>.

New York Times (1989b) 'Price Riots Erupt in Venezuela'. Accessed 17 May 2017 <http://www.nytimes.com/1989/02/28/world/price-riots-erupt-in-venezuela.html>.

Ñáñez, P. (2017) 'Bernal: 50% de Productos Que Conforman los CLAP Son de Producción Nacional' ('Bernal: 50% of the Products Comprising the CLAPs are from National Production'). Accessed 22 January 2018 <http://globovision.com/article/freddy-bernal-el-50-de-los-productos-que-conforman-el-clap-son-de-produccion-nacional>.

Nordstrom, C. (2007) 'War on the Front Lines', in Robben, A.C.G.M. and J. A. Sluka (eds) *Ethnographic Fieldwork*, pp. 245-258. Oxford: Blackwell Publishing

Nuñez, M.A. (2007) 'How Far is the Venezuelan Revolution Advancing?', Accessed 17 November 2015 <http://www.inmotionmagazine.com/opin/man_59points.html>

Nuñez Nuñez, M.A. (1990) *El Reto al Hambre (The Challenge of Hunger)*. Merida: Universidad de los Andes.

Newton, H.P. (1972) *To Die for the People*. New York: Vintage Books.

Nyéléni (2007a) 'Declaration of Nyéléni', Accessed 16 November 2015 <http://www.nyeleni.org/spip.php?article290>

Nyéléni (2007b) 'Synthesis Report: Nyéléni 2007 - Forum for Food Sovereignty', Accessed 13 November 2015 <http://www.nyeleni.org/IMG/pdf/31Mar2007NyeleniSynthesisReport-en.pdf>

O'Connor, J. (1973) *The Fiscal Crisis of the State*. New York: St. Martin's Press.

Ollman, B. (1990) 'Putting Dialectics to Work: The Process of Abstraction in Marx's Method', *Rethinking Marxism* 3(1): 26-74.

Ollman, B. (2003) *Dance of the Dialectic: Steps in Marx's Method.* Champaign: University of Illinois Press.

Osorio, E. (1985) *Geografía de la Población de Venezuela* (*Geography of the Population of Venezuela*) Caracas: Editorial Ariel-Seix Barral Venezolana.

Ozegovic, E. (2011) 'Marketing to the BOP: A Case Study Research', Master's Thesis. Copenhagen: Copenhagen Business School.

Page, T. (2010) 'Can the State Create Campesinos?: A Comparative Analysis of the Venezuelan and Cuban Repeasantization Programmes', *Journal of Agrarian Change* 10(2): 251–72.

Paget-Clarke, N. (2008) 'Interview with Miguel Angel Nuñez: The Science of Sustainable Agriculture Is Agroecology', Accessed 6 December 2015 <http://www.inmotionmagazine.com/global/man_int07.html>

Papail, J. and M. Picquet (1989) 'Ciudades y Petróleo: Aspectos Históricos y Prospectivos de la Población Urbana de Venezuela' ('Cities and Oil: Historical and Prospective Aspects of the Urban Population of Venezuela'), *Estudios Demográficos y Urbanos* 4(1): 161-196.

Pascual Marquina, C. (2018) 'Campesinos March Across Venezuela Demanding Gov't Rectify Agrarian Policy', *Venezuelananalysis*, Accessed 26 July 2018 <https://venezuelanalysis.com/news/13966>.

Pascual Marquina, C. and R. Lanza (2018) 'The Commune and 21st Century Socialism: A Conversation with Robert Longa of El Panal Commune', *Venezuelananalysis*, Accessed 25 November 2018 <https://venezuelanalysis.com/analysis/14161/>.

Patel, R. (2013) 'The Long Green Revolution', *Journal of Peasant Studies* 40(1): 1-63.

Patel, R. (2012) 'Survival Pending Revolution: What the Black Panthers Can Teach the US Food Movement'. Accessed 25 January 2018 <https://foodfirst.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/12/BK18_2-2012_Summer_Survival_Pending_Revolution.pdf>.

Patel, R. (2009) 'Food Sovereignty', *Journal of Peasant Studies* 36(3): 663–706.

Patel, R., Bezner Kerr, R., Shumba, L., and L. Dakishoni (2015) 'Cook, Eat, Man, Woman: Understanding the New Alliance for Food Security and Nutrition, Nutritionism and Its Alternatives from Malawi', *Journal of Peasant Studies* 42(1): 21-44.

Patel, R. and P. McMichael (2009) 'A Political Economy of the Food Riot', *Review (Fernand Braudel Center)* 32(1): 9-35.

Patton, M. Q. (2002) *Qualitative Research and Evaluation Methods (2nd ed.)*. Thousand Oaks: SAGE Publications

529827-L-bw-Schiavoni
Processed on: 15-3-2019

Pearson, T. (2013) 'The Scarcity Diaries', *Venezuelananalysis*. Accessed 10 January 2018 <https://venezuelanalysis.com/analysis/10147>

People's Knowledge Editorial Collective (eds) (2017) *Everyday Experts: How People's Knowledge Can Transform the Food System'.* Coventry: The Centre for Agroecology, Water and Resilience.

Pérez, M. (2016) 'Experiencias de Reconocimiento, Rescate y Producción de Semillas Campesinas, Indígenas y Afrodescendientes Desde el Poder Popular en Venezuela' ('Experiences of Recognition, Rescue and Production of Peasant, Indigenous and Afro-descendant Seeds through People Power in Venezuela'), in M. Pérez, A. Felicien and S. Saturno (eds) *Semillas Del Pueblo: Luchas y Resistencias por la Protección y Reproducción de la Vida (Seeds of the People: Struggles and Resistance for the Protection and Reproduction of Life)*, pp. 87-152. Caracas: El Perro y la Rana and Editorial La Estrella Roja.

Perkins, J.H. (1997) *Geopolitics and the Green Revolution: Wheat, Genes, and the Cold War*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Peschard, K. (2017) 'Seed Wars and Farmers' Rights: Comparative Perspectives from Brazil and India', *Journal of Peasant Studies* 44(1): 144–168.

Petras, J. and H. Veltmeyer (2014) *Extractive Imperialism in the Americas: Capitalism's New Frontier*. Leiden: Brill.

Pieters, A.J., E. Graterol, E. Reyes, R. Álvarez and A. González (2011) 'Cincuenta Años de Mejoramiento Genético del Arroz en Venezuela. ¿Qué se ha logrado?' ('Fifty years of Rice Genetic Improvement in Venezuela. What Has Been Achieved?'), *Interciencia* 36(12): 943–948.

Pleyers, G. (2017) 'The Local Food Movement in Belgium: From Prefigurative Activism to Social Innovations', *Interface: A Journal on Social Movements* 9(1): 123-139.

Primicia (2017) 'Queman Más de 50 Unidades de TransBolívar' ('More tan 50 TransBolivar Units are Burned'). Accessed 11 January 2018 <http://www.primicia.com.ve/queman-51-unidades-de-transbolivar-fotos/>

Purcell, T.F. (2017) 'The Political Economy of Rentier Capitalism and the Limits to Agrarian Transformation in Venezuela', *Journal of Agrarian Change* 17(2): 296-312.

Quintero Saravia, G. (2017) *Soldado de Tierra y Mar: Pablo Morillo el Pacificador* (*Soldier of Land and Sea: Pablo Morillo the Peacemaker*). Madrid: Editorial EDAF.

529827-L-bw-Schiavoni
Processed on: 15-3-2019 PDF page: 279

Radio del Sur (2017) 'Llegan a 6 Millones las Familias Beneficiadas por los CLAP' ('Approaching 6 Million Families Benefitting from CLAPs'), Accessed 13 February 2018 <https://laradiodelsur.com.ve/2017/03/llegan-a-6-millones-las-familias-beneficiadas-por-los-clap/>.

Ramos Guédez, J.M. (2005) 'Mano de Obra Esclava en el Eje Barlovento Valles del Tuy Durante el Siglo XVIII' ('Slave Labor in the Areas of Barlovento and Valles del Tuy during the XVIII Century'), *Mañongo* 24: 155-167.

Ramos Rodríguez, F. (2010) 'La Inmigración en la Administración de Pérez Jiménez (1952–1958)' ('Immigration in the Pérez Jiménez Administration (1952–1958)'), *CONHISREMI: Revista Universitaria Arbitrada de Investigación y Diálogo Académico* 6(3): 29-43.

Ranum, P., J.P. Peña-Rosas and M.N. Garcia-Casal (2014) 'Global Maize Production, Utilization, and Consumption', *Annals of the New York Academy of Sciences* 1312(1): 105-112.

Reynolds, K., D. Block and K. Bradley (2018) 'Food Justice Scholar-Activism and Activist-Scholarship: Working Beyond Dichotomies to Deepen Social Justice Praxis', *ACME: An International E-Journal for Critical Geographies* 17(4): 988-998.

Rios de Hernandez, J. and N. Prato (1990) *Las Transformaciones de la Agricultura Venezolana: De la Agroexportación a la Agroindustria* (*Transformations in Venezuelan Agriculture: From Agroexportation to Agroindustry*) Caracas: Fondo Editorial Tropykos.

Rivas, D. (2002) *Missionary Capitalist: Nelson Rockefeller in Venezuela*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press.

Robbins, M.J. (2015) 'Exploring the 'Localisation' Dimension of Food Sovereignty', *Third World Quarterly* 36(3): 449-468.

Roberts, D. (1994) *The Myth of Aunt Jemima: Representations of Race and Region*. New York: Routledge.

Rodríguez, L.C. (2001) *Rebeliones, Alzamientos y Movimientos Preindependentistas en Venezuela* (*Rebellions, Uprisings and Pre-independence Movements in Venezuela*) Caracas: Ediciones de la Presidencia de la República.

Rodríguez Rojas, J. (2009) *Lecciones de Economía Agraria Venezolana: Factores de Producción y Desarrollo Tecnológico de la Agricultura Venezolana 1945-2000* (*Lessons from the Venezuelan Agrarian Economy: Factors of Production and Technological Development of Venezuelan Agriculture 1945-2000*). Caracas: Consejo de Desarrollo Científico y Humanístico de la Universidad Central de Venezuela.

Rojas, A. (2009) *Insumisión Popular (1830-1848)* (*Popular Insubordination (1830-1848)*). Caracas: Centro Nacional de Historia.

Rojas, R. (2017) 'El Plan de Siembra Comunal 2017 Cuenta con 21.184 Hectáreas Sembradas' ('The 2017 Communal Planting Plan has 21,184 Hectares Planted'). Accessed 20 January 2018 <http://www.safonapp.gob.ve/?p=6850>

Rojas-López, J. (2012) 'La Producción de Cacao en la Venezuela de la Segunda Mitad del Siglo XVIII: ¿Grandes o Modestas Plantaciones?' ('Cocoa Production in Venezuela of the Second Half of the 18th Century: Large or Modest Plantations?'), *Derecho y Reforma Agraria: Ambiente y Sociedad* 38: 89-109

Roman-Alcalá, A. (2018) '(Relative) Autonomism, Policy Currents and the Politics of Mobilisation for Food Sovereignty in the United States: The case of Occupy the Farm', *Local Environment*, 23(6): 619-634.

Roman-Alcalá, A. (2016) 'Conceptualising Components, Conditions and Trajectories of Food Sovereignty's 'Sovereignty', *Third World Quarterly* 37(8): 1388-1407.

Roman-Alcalá, A., M, Montenegro de Wit, A. Liebman and S. Chrisman (2018) 'The Agrarian Origins of Authoritarian Rural Populism in the United States: What Can We Learn from 20th Century Struggles in California and the Midwest?', presented in the Emancipatory Rural Politics Initiative Conference Paper No. 5. The Hague: Institute of Social Studies.

Romero, L. (2012) 'Hand in Hand mit den ProduzentInnen: Über die Lebensmittelkooperative Mano a Mano in Mérida' ('Hand in hand with the producers: About the Food Cooperative Mano a Mano in Mérida'), *ILA* 359: 26-27.

Romero, L., B. Torres, B. Silva, and J. Toro (2016) 'Semillas de Tubérculos Andinos en Mérida. Rescate y Revalorización en la Venezuela Bolivariana' ('Andean Tuber Seeds in Mérida. Rescue and Revaluation in Bolivarian Venezuela'), in M. Pérez, A. Felicien and S. Saturno (eds) *Semillas Del Pueblo: Luchas y Resistencias por la Protección y Reproducción de la Vida (Seeds of the People: Struggles and Resistance for the Protection and Reproduction of Life)*, pp. 153-169. Caracas: Editorial el Perro y la Rana and Editorial La Estrella Roja.

Rosati, A. (2017) 'The Manhattan of Venezuela Parties Against a Backdrop of Crisis', *Bloomberg Businessweek*, Accessed 26 November 2017 <https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2017-07-19/the-manhattan-of-venezuela-parties-against-a-backdrop-of-crisis>.

Roseberry, W. (1991) 'La Falta de Brazos: Land and Labor in the Coffee Economies of Nineteenth-Century Latin America', *Theory & Society* 20(3): 351-381.

Roseberry, W. (1983) *Coffee and Capitalism in the Venezuelan Andes*. Austin: University of Texas Press.

Rosset, P.M. and Altieri, M.A. (2017) *Agroecology: Science and Politics*. Rugby: Practical Action Publishing.

Rossman, G. B. and S. F. Rallis (2003) *Learning in the Field: An Introduction to Qualitative Research, 2nd Edition*. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications.

Salas, M.T. (2015a) *Venezuela: What Everyone Needs to Know®*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Salas, M.T. (2015b) 'Life in a Venezuelan Oil Camp', *Revista* 15(1): 46-50.

Salas Rodríguez, L. (2016) 'El Mito de Chávez y el Petróleo a 100' ('The Myth of Chávez and Petroleum at 100') Accessed 11 March 2017 <http://questiondigital.com/el-mito-de-chavez-y-el-petroleo-a-100/>.

Sanoja, M. and I. V. Vargas Arenas (2004) *Razones para una Revolución* (*Reasons for a Revolution*). Caracas: Editorial El Perro y la Rana.

Sbicca, J. (2014) 'The Need to Feed: Urban Metabolic Struggles of Actually Existing Radical Projects', *Critical Sociology*, 40(6): 817-834.

Scandela, J.C. (n.d.) 'INIA Inspeccionó Avances en Mejoramiento Genético del Cultivo de Arroz en Portuguesa' ('INIA Inspected Advances in Genetic Improvement of Rice Cultivation in Portuguesa'), Accessed 12 February 2018 <http://www.inia.gob.ve/index.php/informacion/noticias/1280-inia-inspecciono-avances-en-mejoramiento-genetico-del-cultivo-de-arroz-en-portuguesa>

Schanbacher, W. (2010) *The Politics of Food: The Global Conflict between Food Security and Food Sovereignty*. Santa Barbara: ABC-CLIO.

Schiavoni, C.M. (2017) 'The Contested Terrain of Food Sovereignty Construction: Toward a Historical, Relational and Interactive Approach', *Journal of Peasant Studies* 44(1): 1–32.

Schiavoni, C.M. (2015) 'Competing Sovereignties, Contested Processes: Insights from the Venezuelan Food Sovereignty Experiment', *Globalizations* 12(4): 466–80.

Schiavoni, C.M. (2014) 'Competing Sovereignties, Contested Processes: The Politics of Food Sovereignty Construction', ISS Working Paper No. 583. The Hague: International Institute of Social Studies.

529827-L-bw-Schiavoni
Processed on: 15-3-2019

Schiavoni, C. (2009) 'The Global Struggle for Food Sovereignty: From Nyéléni to New York. *Journal of Peasant Studies* 36(3): 682-689.

Schiavoni, C. and W. Camacaro (2016) 'Special Report: Hunger in Venezuela? A Look Beyond the Spin', Accessed 23 July 2017 <http://www.foodfirst.org/special-report-hunger-in-venezuela-a-look-beyond-the-spin/>

Schiavoni, C., and W. Camacaro (2009) 'The Venezuelan Effort to Build a New Food and Agriculture System', *Monthly Review* 1(3): 129– 141.

Schiavoni, C.M. and A. Felicien (in press) 'Blurring the Urban-Rural Divide: Urban Peripheries as Sites of Food Sovereignty Construction in Venezuela', in N Reis and M. Lukas (eds) *Beyond the Mega-City: New Dynamics of Peripheral Urbanization in Latin America*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press.

Schipani, A. (2017) 'Empresas Polar: A Symbol of Resistance amid Venezuela Crisis.', *Financial Times*, Accessed 19 April 2017 < https://www.ft.com/content/9f038fae-d368-11e6-b06b-680c49b4b4c0>.

Scoones, I., M. Edelman, S. M. Borras, R. Hall, W. Wolford and B. White (2017) 'Emancipatory Rural Politics: Confronting Authoritarian Populism', *Journal of Peasant Studies* (online publication): 1-20. (doi: 10.1080/03066150.2017.1339693).

Scott, J.C. (1985) *Weapons of the Weak: Everyday Forms of Peasant Resistance*. New Haven: Yale University Press.

Scrinis, G. (2012) 'Nutritionism and Functional Foods', in D. Kaplan (ed.) *The Philosophy of Food*, pp. 269-291. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Selbin, E. (1999) *Modern Latin American Revolutions (2nd edition)*. Oxford: Westview Press.

Shattuck, A., C.M. Schiavoni and Z. VanGelder (2015) 'Translating the Politics of Food Sovereignty: Digging into Contradictions, Uncovering New Dimensions', *Globalizations* 12(4): 421–33.

Skocpol, T. (1979) *States and Social Revolutions: A Comparative Analysis of France, Russia and China*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Slocum, R. (2013) 'Race in the Study of Food' in Slocum, R. and A. Saldanha (eds) *Geographies of Race and Food: Fields, Bodies, Markets*, pp. 25-57. Farnham: Ashgate.

529827-L-bw-Schiavoni
Processed on: 15-3-2019
PDF page: 283

Sluka, J. A. (2007) 'Reflections on Managing Danger in Fieldwork: Dangerous Anthropology in Belfast', in A.C.G.M. Robben and J. A. Sluka (eds) *Ethnographic Fieldwork*, pp. 259-270. Oxford: Blackwell Publishing.

Smilde, D. and D. Hellinger (eds) (2011) *Venezuela's Bolivarian Democracy: Participation, Politics and Culture Under Chávez*. Durham: Duke University Press.

Smucker, J. (2017) *Hegemony How-To: A Roadmap for Radicals*. Chico: AK Press.

Somers, M. (1995) 'What's Political or Cultural about Political Culture and the Public Sphere? Toward an Historical Sociology of Concept Formation', *Sociological Theory* 13(2): 113–44.

Stake, R. E. (2003) 'Qualitative Case Studies', in N. K. Denzin and Y. S. Lincoln (eds) *Strategies of Qualitative Inquiry, 2nd Edition*, pp. 119-150. Thousand Oaks: SAGE Publications.

Stirling, A., A. Ely and F. Marshall (2018) 'How Do We 'Co-produce' Transformative Knowledge'. Accessed 19 February 2018 <https://steps-centre.org/blog/how-do-we-co-produce-transformative-knowledge/>.

Suárez, M. M. and R. Torrealba (1980) 'Las Migraciones Internas en Venezuela, 1926-1971' ('Internal Migrations in Venezuela, 1926-1971'), *Boletín de Estudios Latinoamericanos y del Caribe* 28: 31-57.

Stefanoni, P. (2017) 'Venezuela: ¿Por Qué No «Bajan» de los Cerros? Entrevista a Alejandro Velasco' ('Venezuela: Why Don't the Hills Come Down? Interview with Alejandro Velasco'), *Nueva Sociedad*, Accessed 26 July 2017 <http://nuso.org/articulo/venezuela-por-que-no-bajan-de-los-cerros/>.

Tarrow, S. (2011) *Power in Movement: Social Movements and Contentious Politics (3rd edition)*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Telesur Tv (2017) Venezuela Protesters Set 40 Tons of Subsidized Food on Fire. Accessed on 30 March 2018 <https://www.telesurtv.net/english/news/Venezuela-Protesters-Set-40-Tons-of-Subsidized-Food-on-Fire-20170630-0017.html/>.

The Prisma (2017) 'Crimes of Hate: Venezuelan Opposition Burns People Alive in Their Protests'. Accessed on 25 July 2017 <http://theprisma.co.uk/2017/07/24/crimes-of-hate-venezuelan-opposition-burns-people-alive-in-their-protests/>.

Thelen, K. and S. Steinmo (1992) 'Historical Institutionalism in Comparative Politics', in S. Steinmo, K. Thelen, and F. Longstreth (eds) *Structuring Politics: Historical Institutionalism in Comparative Analysis*, pp. 1–32. New York: Cambridge University Press.

529827-L-bw-Schiavoni
Processed on: 15-3-2019 PDF page: 284

Thompson, E. P. (1971) 'The Moral Economy of the English Crowd in the Eighteenth Century', *Past & Present* 50: 76-136.

Tiapa, F. (2014) *Del Caribe al Orinoco: Alianzas y Redes Indígenas como Respuesta al Capitalismo Colonial.* (*From the Caribbean to the Orinoco: Indigenous Alliances and Networks in Response to Colonial Capitalism*) Caracas: Editorial Estrella Roja.

Tilly, C. (2006) 'Why and How History Matters', in R. Goodin and C. Tilly (eds) *The Oxford Handbook of Contextual Political Analysis*, pp. 417–37. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Tilly, C. (2002) *Stories, Identities, and Political Change*. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers.

Tilly, C. (1978) *From Mobilization to Revolution*. New York: Random House.

Tilly, C. and S. Tarrow (2015) *Contentious Politics (2nd edition)*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Tomaselli, W. (2017) 'The Billionaire Mogul Fighting to Feed Venezuela's Hungry Masses'. Accessed 22 March 2018 <http://www.ozy.com/provocateurs/the-billionaire-mogul-fighting-to-feed-venezuelas-hungry-masses/81614>.

Torelli, C. J. (2013) *Globalization, Culture, and Branding: How to Leverage Cultural Equity for Building Iconic Brands in the Era of Globalization*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

Tramel, S. (2016) 'The Road through Paris: Climate Change, Carbon, and the Political Dynamics of Convergence', *Globalizations* 13(6): 960-969.

Trauger, A. (2014) 'Toward a Political Geography of Food Sovereignty: Transforming Territory, Exchange and Power in the Liberal Sovereign State', *Journal of Peasant Studies*, 41(6): 1131-1152.

Uhlig, M. (1989) 'Lines Form at Caracas Morgue to Identify Kin', *New York Times*, Accessed 26 July 2015 <http://www.nytimes.com/1989/03/05/world/lines-form-at-caracas-morgue-to-identify-kin.html>.

U.S. Department of State (2018) 'Background Briefing on the Secretary's Travel to Austin, Texas; Mexico City, Mexico; San Carlos Bariloche, Argentina; Buenos Aires, Argentina; Lima, Peru; Bogota, Colombia; and Kingston, Jamaica'. Accessed 30 January 2018 <https://www.state.gov/r/pa/prs/ps/2018/01/277739.html>.

U.S. Energy Information Administration (EIA) (2016) 'Petroleum and Other Liquids: Data: Europe Brent Spot Price FOB', Accessed 30 December

2015 <http://www.eia.gov/dnav/pet/hist/LeafHandler.ashx?n= PET&s = RBRTE&f = D>

Valente, F.L.S. (2014) 'Towards the Full Realization of the Human Right to Adequate Food and Nutrition', *Development* 57(2): 155–70.

Vallenilla, R. (2009) 'Marcas Genéricas, Vulgarizadas y «Genericidio» ¿Cómo se Resuelve el Acertijo?' ('Generic, Vulgarized Brands and "Genericide" How to Solve the Riddle?'), *Debates IESA* 14(2): 62-65.

van Manen, M. (2006) 'Writing Qualitatively, or the Demands of Writing', *Qualitative Health Research* 16(5): 713-722.

Vanhaute, E. (2011) 'From Famine to Food Crisis: What History Can Teach Us About Local and Global Subsistence Crises', *Journal of Peasant Studies* 38(1): 47-65.

Vargas Arenas, I. and M. Sanoja (2014) *La Larga Marcha hacia la Sociedad Comunal: Tesis sobre el Socialismo Bolivariano*. Caracas: Editorial El Perro y la Rana.

Vaz, R. (2018a) 'Venezuelan Campesinos Mobilize as Rural Violence Continues', *Venezuelananalysis*. Accessed 25 November 2018 <https://venezuelanalysis.com/news/14158/>.

Vaz, R. (2018b) 'Postcards from Popular Power in Venezuela', *Venezuelanalysis*. Accessed 25 November 2018 <https://venezuelanalysis.com/analysis/14152?fbclid=IwAR1I_iV7sV-hKNQBmDuqOrNwlydPM1lwWBZuXYaCbgUanAIC-MPtd413Yk6Y>.

Venezuela Libre de Transgénicos/Semillas del Pueblo (2019) 'Three Years After Being Passed, Venezuela's Seed Law Is Being Implemented from Below', *Venezuelananalysis*. Accessed 5 January 2019 <https://venezuelanalysis.com/analysis/14201 >

Venezuelanalysis (2017) 'In Detail: The Deaths so Far'. Accessed 7 August 2017 <https://venezuelanalysis.com/analysis/13081>

Vielma, M. (1998) 'Caracterización de la Agroindustria de Harina Precocida de Maíz en Venezuela' ('Characterization of the Precooked Corn Flour Agroindustry in Venezuela'), *Revista de la Facultad de Agronomía* 15(5): 472-485.

Vielma, M., M. Cerovich, F. Miranda and C. Marín (2005) 'Influencia de la Semilla Certificada de Maíz en la Productividad de los Sistemas de Producción de Maíz en Grano de los Estados Portuguesa y Guárico' ('In-

529827-L-bw-Schiavoni
Processed on: 15-3-2019 PDF page: 286

fluence of Certified Corn Seed on the Productivity of Grain Corn Production Systems of the States of Portuguesa and Guárico'), *Agronomía Tropical* 55(3): 343-361.

Visser, O., Mamonova, N., Spoor, M. and Nikulin, A. (2015) 'Quiet Food Sovereignty' as Food Sovereignty without a Movement? Insights from post-socialist Russia', *Globalizations* 12(4): 513-528.

Vitale, L. (2002) 'Contribución al Bicentenario de la Revolución por la Independencia de Venezuela. Universidad de Chile'. Accessed 14 May 2015 <https://www.archivochile.com/Ideas_Autores/vitalel/2lvc/02lvchistsocal0028.pdf>

Wald, N. (2015b) 'Towards Utopias of Prefigurative Politics and Food Sovereignty: Experiences of Politicised Peasant Food Production', in P. Stock, C. Rosin and M. Carolan (eds) *Food Utopias: Reimagining Citizenship, Ethics and Community*, pp. 107–125. New York, NY: Routledge.

Wald, N. and Hill, D.P. (2016) "Rescaling' Alternative Food Systems: From Food Security to Food Sovereignty', *Agriculture and Human Values*, 33(1): 203-213.

Wattnem, T. (2016) 'Seed Laws, Certification and Standardization: Outlawing Informal Seed Systems in the Global South', *Journal of Peasant Studies* 43(4): 850–867.

Warman, A. (2003) *Corn and Capitalism: How a Botanical Bastard Grew to Global Dominance*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press.

Weisbrot, M. (2017) 'Trump's Tough New Sanctions Will Harm the People of Venezuela', *The Hill,* 28 August. Accessed 10 December 2018 <http://thehill.com/blogs/pundits-blog/foreign-policy/348276-trumps-tough-venezuela-sanctions-do-more-harm-than-good>.

Weisbrot, M. (2016) 'Venezuela's Economic Crisis: Does It Mean That the Left Has Failed?', *Truthout,* 23 October. Accessed 10 December 2018 <http://www.truth-out.org/news/item/38094-venezuela-s-economic-crisis-does-it-mean-that-the-left-has-failed>.

Weisbrot, M. (2008) 'Poverty Reduction in Venezuela: A Reality Based View', *ReVista: Harvard Review of Latin America* 8(1): 1–8.

White, M. M. (2018) *Freedom Farmers: Agricultural Resistance and the Black Freedom Movement*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press

White, M. M. (2017) 'A Pig and a Garden": Fannie Lou Hamer and the Freedom Farms Cooperative', *Food and Foodways* 25(1): 20-39.

529827-L-bw-Schiavoni
Processed on: 15-3-2019 PDF page: 287

White, M. M. (2011) 'Sisters of the Soil: Urban Gardening as Resistance in Detroit', *Race/Ethnicity: Multidisciplinary Global Contexts* 5(1): 13-28.

Wilpert, G. (2006) 'Land for People Not for Profit in Venezuela', in P. Rosset, R. Patel, and M. Courville (eds) *Promised Land: Competing Visions of Agrarian Reform*, pp. 249–64. New York, NY: Food First Books.

Wittman, H. (2015) 'From Protest to Policy: The Challenges of Institutionalizing Food Sovereignty', *Canadian Food Studies/La Revue Canadienne des études sur l'Alimentation* 2(2): 174–82.

Wittman, H., A.A. Desmarais, and N. Wiebe (2010) *Food Sovereignty: Reconecting Food, Nature and Community*. Halifax and Oakland: Fernwood Publishing and Food First Books.

Wolford, W. (2016) 'State-society Dynamics in Contemporary Brazilian Land Reform', *Latin American Perspectives* 43(2): 77–95.

Wolford, W. and J. D. French (2016) 'Deconstructing the Post-Neoliberal State: Intimate Perspectives on Contemporary Brazil', *Latin American Perspectives* 43(2): 4–21.

World Bank (n.d.) 'Rural population (% of total population)', Accessed 9 September 2016 <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SP.RUR.TOTL.ZS>

World Health Organization (2018) 'Noncommunicable Diseases Country Profiles 2018: Venezuela', Accessed 19 July 2018 <http://www.who.int/nmh/countries/ven_en.pdf?ua=1/>.

Wright, E.O. (2017) 'How to be an Anti-capitalist for the 21st Century', *Theomai*, (35): 8-21

Wright, E.O. (2015) 'How to Be an Anticapitalist Today', *Jacobin*. Accessed 10 December 2018 <https://www.jacobinmag.com/2015/12/erik-olin-wright-real-utopias-anticapitalism-democracy/>.

YVKE Mundial/AVN (2018) 'Minpesca Distribuyó Más de 117.000 Kilos de Pescado' ('Minpesca Distributed Over 117,000 Kilos of Fish'), Accessed 10 December 2018 <http://radiomundial.com.ve/article/minpesca-distribuy%C3%B3-m%C3%A1s-de-117000-kilos-de-pescado>.

Zahedi, D. (2000) *The Iranian Revolution Then and Now: Indicators of Regime Instability*. Oxford: Westview Press.