

CONTROL AND CONTINUITY: SUSTAINABILITY, LAND RIGHTS, AND THE  
POLITICS OF FOOD IN GUATEMALA

by

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## THESIS ABSTRACT

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Title: Control and Continuity: Sustainability, Land Rights and the Politics of Food in Guatemala

This thesis seeks to understand the intersection of cultural identity and food security in a country that has had a difficult time feeding its people. The discussion of food in Guatemala is usually focused on the lack thereof. Moreover, the author examines the food traditions and beliefs people in Guatemala feel are important as well as the obstacles they face in realizing food self-sufficiency. Many Guatemalans have an intimate connection with their land, and unequal land distribution hinders farmers' abilities to access the foods they most value. In addition to this, the unfolding sustainable development agenda has resulted in biofuel projects that threaten the livelihoods of many rural farmers. Through interviews with chefs, agricultural workers, and agricultural commodity traders, the author pieces together the differing perspectives of various stakeholders to present a complex mosaic of Guatemalan foodways.

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To the guatemaltecos striving to give continuity to their stories and traditions

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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

*We are a blessed country, and we have been able to grow all the ingredients that we use in our gastronomy-* Doña Mela

In the bustling central market of Guatemala’s capital, I spoke to a shopkeeper about Guatemalan gastronomy and the importance of access to cultural foods. A local celebrity, Doña Mela is the owner of one of the most popular eateries in the city. She is also the star of a well-known music video for a song titled “chicharron con pelos”, translated as “pork rinds with hairs”, an ode to a popular snack that is a nuanced double entendre. In a narrow corridor of one of the busiest markets in the country lies the Doña’s food stall, a place where many *guatemaltecos* indulge in their preferred dish of *comida tipica*<sup>1</sup>. The eatery was humble, but rather busy, with nearby shopkeepers stopping by periodically to greet the Doña.

Guatemala is a place of contradictions. Many communities are tight-knit and willing to help one another despite not possessing a whole lot; a land of bountiful resources with so many hungry people. For my exit MA project, I wanted to investigate how a country with such an enormous potential for food production could have such high rates of starvation (see figures 1 and 2). How is the current sustainability paradigm, as exemplified by the quest for alternative fuel sources amidst climate change and dwindling petroleum supplies, overlooking the importance of access to culturally important foods? Incorporating a food studies approach was important to me. The attitudes people have towards the food

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<sup>1</sup> Comida tipica, translated as “typical food” are traditional, homemade Guatemalan food, much like comfort foods in the US.

they consume says a lot about who they are, and what they believe. My research proved this to be very true.

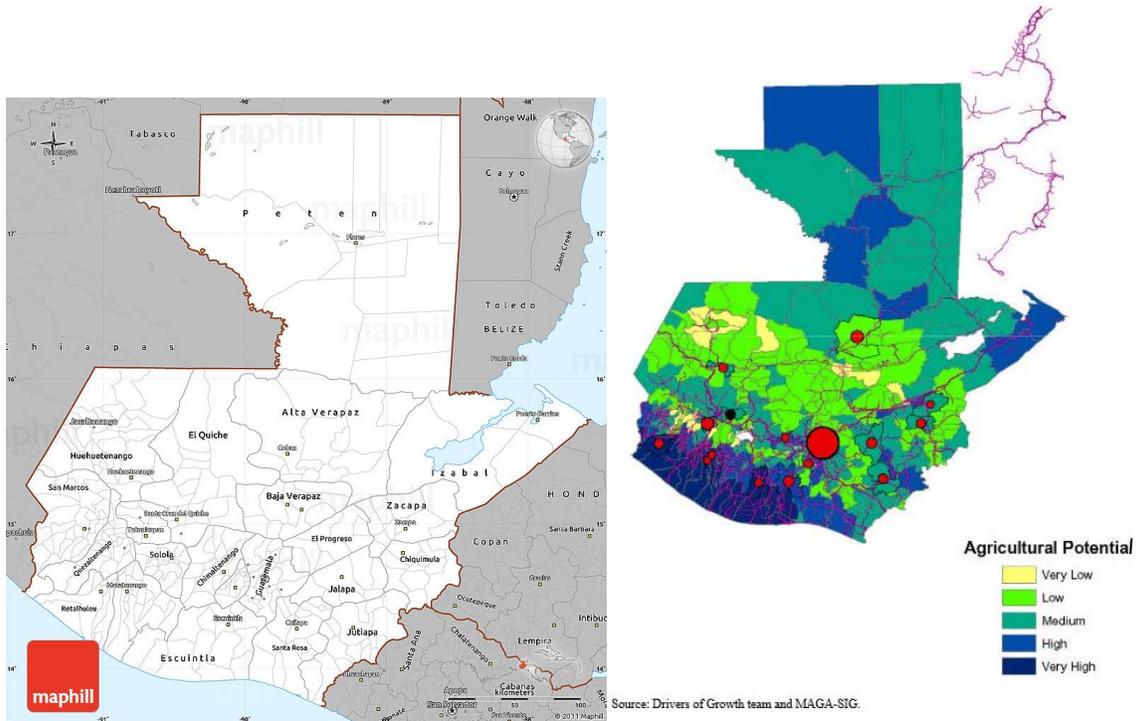


Figure 1 (left)- Map of of Guatemala (source: maphill)

Figure 2 (right)- Map of Agricultural Potential in Guatemala (source: World Bank)

In Guatemala, many important cultural ceremonies and gatherings in Guatemala revolve around food, and this is true for many cultures. Moreover, I wanted to understand the intersection of cultural identity and food in a country that has had a difficult time feeding its people. The discussion of food in Guatemala is usually focused on the lack thereof. While Guatemalan gastronomy may not have the global popularity as say, Mexico, many food practices culture are rooted in pre-Columbian customs and local people hold traditional foods in high regard. Furthermore, there are a few distinctive dishes that distinguish Guatemala from other countries in Latin America and beyond. My attempt to find the root of hunger is by no means novel. . My thesis examines the ways in which key issues- local and international, current and historical, contribute to Guatemala’s inability

to realize autonomy over food production. What I would hope to contribute to this discussion is a focus on the food traditions Guatemalans have and are fighting to hold onto despite rampant inequality and the pressures of globalization. I tried my best to weave in the stories and thoughts of those I spoke with. Furthermore, Guatemala is a critical case study in demonstrating the tragic consequences of human greed, war, and the historical oppression of the country's agricultural producers who historically have made up the majority of the population. My thesis is messy and complex, as is the issue of food security and food culture in Guatemala. Despite this, I strive to piece together various critical issues without losing sight of the importance of culinary tradition in Guatemala.

Lauded as the “land of eternal spring”, Guatemala is home to various ecosystems, mountain ranges, and beaches along the Pacific coast. Guatemala possesses the biggest economy in all of Central America. Moreover, the country is the number one producer of sugar cane and second largest of palm oil in the region<sup>2</sup>. Despite neoliberal claims that increased economic integration in Guatemala through urbanization, economic reform, and large-scale agriculture would improve the living conditions of some of the poorest groups in Latin America, poverty remains a major issue. According to the latest World Bank estimates, over half of the population lives in poverty. The trickle down-economics that once justified the overhaul of neoliberal doctrine fall short in bettering the lives of many peasant and indigenous peoples.

Within the past few years, the Ministry of Energy and Mines in Guatemala has reviewed various measures towards the creation of incentives for increase in production of

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<sup>2</sup> UNCTAD. “State of the Biofuels Market: Regulatory, Trade and Development Perspectives. (2014)

biofuels in effort to decrease reliance on imported fuel and improve economic growth<sup>3</sup>. Furthermore, various countries (including the US,) and corporations have expressed support for the expansion of biofuel production. Guatemala is believed to have great potential to become a major producer of biofuels in Latin America given the success of the palm oil and sugar cane sectors<sup>4</sup>. This however, is a subject of controversy. Many rural communities may face displacement and food insecurity with the increase of industrial agriculture that biofuel production demands.

Rural communities, which make up almost 50% of the entire population in Guatemala, face a poverty rate upwards of 80%<sup>5</sup>. In all of Latin America, Guatemala is the second most unequal with regard to land distribution<sup>6</sup>. According to a USAID Report, 90% of farms in Guatemala control 1/6<sup>th</sup> of all agricultural land<sup>7</sup>. 70% of households depend on agriculture to make a living<sup>8</sup>. Food insecurity is a major issue in Guatemala. On average, poor households spend 2/3rds of their income on food, making them more vulnerable to shocks in food prices<sup>9</sup>. Moreover, indigenous children fare poorly, with a dismal malnutrition rate of 70%<sup>10</sup>.

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<sup>3</sup> Tay, Karla. "Update on Ethanol and Biodiesel Issues". USDA Foreign Agricultural Service: Global Agricultural Information Network.

<sup>4</sup> UNCTAD

<sup>5</sup> Michele Gragnolati and Alessandra Marini. "Health and Poverty in Guatemala". The World Bank

<sup>6</sup> World Food Programme. "Country Profile: Guatemala". (2010)

<sup>7</sup> United States Agency for International Development, "Guatemala- Property Rights and Resource Governance Profile".

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

<sup>10</sup> World Food Programme

Guatemala is undergoing a ‘culinary renaissance’ where Mayan recipes are being seemingly unearthed and plated on the tables of gourmet bistros and hip cafes throughout tourist hotspots. At the same time, many programs aimed at combatting malnutrition within indigenous and rural communities have little discussion about the importance of culturally appropriate foods. This thesis weaves together several major themes: sustainability, hunger, and political mobility within rural and indigenous peoples without losing sight of the central theme of access to important cultural foods. Guatemala has had an extensive history of foreign intervention and this has greatly altered and influenced Guatemalan foodways. While in the course of human civilization fusing and merging of different cultures is quite common, the widespread lack of access to food in Guatemala is inextricably tied to foreign disruption and invasion.

With my study on the significance of culturally appropriate foods in Guatemala’s rural communities, I wish to depict the contention of biofuels not merely as a debate of food versus fuel but rather as entrenched in a complexity of cultural, historical, and ethical factors. Discourse over food security, especially in the realm of international development, tends to overlook the notion of cultural specificity. There are various nutrition and fortification schemes in place that target malnutrition. While these efforts are important in the immediate alleviation of hunger, they do not always adequately address the theme of cultural survival. For this reason, the discussion of the ‘food versus fuel’ debate needs to delve deeper into the importance of traditional and culturally significant food and food practices. Incorporating the voices and beliefs of affected indigenous and rural peoples and their stories, through the approachable theme of food culture, adds an essential component in the discourse on the ethics of biofuels.

## Research Methods and Research Questions

For my investigation, I conducted semi-structured interviews with 8 agricultural workers, 4 culinary experts, and 2 commodity traders. My interviews contained both open-ended and structured questions. I spent the month of September 2015 in Guatemala City and surrounding areas of Fraijanes, Antigua, and Santa Rosa speaking to various people at different levels of the chain of the food production chain. Although my time and number of participants were limited, I wanted to make sure to speak to stakeholders at various points of the food chain. All interviews were conducted in Spanish without a translator, since I am a native speaker.

The agricultural producers interviewed for this project were both plantation workers and small-scale producers. The criteria I used for choosing participants to represent the agricultural producers in this project consisted of the following:

1. Must identify as indigenous or *campesino*
2. Agriculture must a significant part of their monthly income

My main purpose for interviewing agricultural producers was to assess their attitudes towards the importance of maintaining culinary traditions. Furthermore, I wanted to assess these farmers' degree of access to the foods they associate with their cultural identity<sup>11</sup>. The agricultural producers comprised of 3 females and 5 males. Five participants worked at a plantation and claimed to consume from what they grew on the property. Two were subsistence farmers who sold maize and beans within the community through a middleman, although one participant had experience in serving as an agricultural commodity broker within the local community. Finally, one of the agricultural producers

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<sup>11</sup> See Appendix A

partially subsided from the food she grew in her home on the outskirts of Guatemala City, working part-time in City as a way to supplement her income.

The culinary experts interviewed for the project were chefs and restaurant owners who specialized in *comida típica* and indigenous food. Furthermore, I wanted to assess the meaning of ‘traditional’ and ‘authentic’ food in the tourism industry. My interviews centered on 5 central questions that clued me into their perceptions of Guatemalan food culture<sup>12</sup>. All of the culinary experts interviewed for this project were women. Three of these participants were restaurant owners. Two allowed for their names to be disclosed. One of these women was Rosa Pu, a well-known Mayan gastronomical figure in Guatemala whose restaurant “La cocina de la Señora Pu”, aims to remediate cuisine from her Mayan ancestors. The other was Doña Mela, a woman with a famous eatery serving *comida típica* in Guatemala’s Central Market. The third woman was another well-known gastronomical figure in Antigua whose restaurant specialized in an ever-changing menu of *comida típica*. The final participant was a woman working in a traveler’s hostel who cooked *comida típica* for guests. I must acknowledge that the chefs I interviewed were extraordinary individuals that may not be representative of all culinary experts in Guatemala. These women were all very interested in the preservation of Guatemalan gastronomy. One woman, Pu, is very much aligned with a larger discussion and movement focusing on indigenous rights.

For the commodity trader portion of the thesis, I interviewed an international trader in the exotic fruit industry and a manager at a plantation of one of the most popular export crops in Guatemala. They were both males in their early thirties. The criteria utilized for recruiting these participants was that their occupation must have some relevance to the

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<sup>12</sup> See Appendix B

exporting and selling of a food commodity at the national or international level. The specifics of their occupations will remain vague to protect the identity of the two individuals who agreed to be interviewed. Anonymity was important to them, and I will respect their wishes. My interviews with these two commodity traders focused on their perceptions of the state of Guatemala's agricultural industry and its effects on small-scale farmers<sup>13</sup>.

Save for two of the culinary experts who asked to have their names revealed, individuals interviewed for the project will remain anonymous. My investigation adhered to the guidelines set forth by the Institutional Review Board (IRB) and the Human Subjects Protocol. All participants consented to being interviewed and were informed of the nature of the research and associated risks. Upon my return, I used open coding for my data analysis. I coded transcriptions for key words and major themes. Furthermore, I also did content analysis of restaurant menus and food publications and coded for key words and major themes.

### **Limitations of Study**

Due to the limited time I was in Guatemala, my sample size is quite small. Despite this limitation, I believe my interviews uncovered some major realities of everyday life in rural Guatemala. Furthermore, I had the privilege of interviewing two of the most recognized figures in Guatemalan gastronomy and they provided some important insight into the significance of cultural survival. These interviews were significant in helping me understand how Guatemalan food was promoted to international audiences as well as

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<sup>13</sup> See Appendix C

provide key insight into the place that food has in Guatemalan culture. It was important for me to gather multiple perspectives from various points of access within Guatemala's foodways. My findings by no means intend to generalize a country that is as diverse as Guatemala.

Despite the ethnic and cultural diversity that exists in Guatemala, ethnicity remains a taboo subject. Many people consider themselves *ladin*, which is a mixture of indigenous, creole, and European blood. Furthermore, due to history of systemic and physical violence against people of indigenous descent, many people are reluctant to identify with the indigenous identity. For this reason, only a few of my participants actively identified as indigenous despite many claiming to be of indigenous descent.

Many Guatemalans are also very wary of surveys, interviews etc. A lot of this has to do with distrust for public officials. In one occasion, I approached a vendor on a corner of a busy intersection who seemed reluctant to be interviewed and asked me if I was working for the Baldizon administration, a political candidate vying for the presidential seat. For this reason, I did not want to require a signed consent form and asked to have that obligation waived by the IRB. Furthermore, I mitigated this shortcoming by being transparent about my research and intentions. Even with transparency, some subjects may have felt uncomfortable or ashamed when speaking on their lack of access to food supplies, especially when speaking to parents who many not always be able to provide their children with food.

Another difficulty I encountered involved the phrasing and short of several questions in my questionnaire. A few of the people I interviewed received very little formal education and many times I had to rephrase and re-explain some of my questions. To add

to this, some people did not speak Spanish as a first language. Furthermore, certain words used by me in my surveys and interviews did not translate to Guatemalan Spanish and this at times created some confusion.

### **Scope and Organization of Study**

In Chapter II, I review important literature that serves as the theoretical foundation for this thesis. First, I review literature on rights and duties regarding nutrition in the international realm. Next, I review the notion of ‘epistemic privilege’ and its place in academic endeavors concerning the Third World as well as within the context of my own research. Finally, I examine the phenomenon of “green grabbing” and the paradigm of sustainability within a capitalist economy that prioritizes growth over human rights.

In Chapter III, I provide historical context in relation to land rights spanning from the advent of the Spanish invasion to current day. This review is not meant to be comprehensive in any way, just important in understanding the disruption of resource management and food systems in Guatemala by foreign entities and how food insecurity is largely due to historical factors.

In Chapter IV, I examine effects of both ‘development’ and globalization, as exemplified through structural adjustment policies, food aid, and the diversification of agriculture on food security. Moreover, I also analyze the effects of the 2008 Food Price Crisis and Guatemala’s ability to respond from shocks in food prices and the barriers to political mobilization that many in Guatemala face.

In Chapter V, via my interviews and conversations with participants, I look into the importance of food in relation to cultural identity in Guatemala. Moreover, I examine the

attitudes individuals have on their current access to culturally-significant foods and the prospects for future generations to enjoy from these foods. I also spoke to culinary experts on the role of traditional Guatemalan foods in the tourism industry, I present my findings at the end of the chapter.

In Chapter VI, I examine current efforts in Guatemala to expand the export of sugarcane for ethanol production (I also look at palm oil, but to a lesser degree) and their implications for water and land tenure. I also look into the legislative framework on land and resource rights in the national and international context. The concluding chapter, Chapter VII, will provide discussion on the study and suggest solutions.

## CHAPTER II

### REVIEW OF LITERATURE AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

#### **Duty and the Right to Food**

Despite great social and technological achievements of humankind, hunger is an issue that persists. In a world where a disturbing amount of food goes to waste, why do people continue to die of starvation? The answer is far from simple.

What exactly do we mean when we talk about a right to food? Brockett brings to light that glaring differences in the conceptualization of rights, specifically regarding agency and action in the execution of said rights. Civil rights denote individual freedom and protection against an intrusion into that freedom where social and economic rights, at least in the Western liberal tradition, require institutional action. In “The Right to Food and United States Policy in Guatemala”, Brockett states, “The duty correlative to the right to food, then, is not... to give food to others. Instead, it is a duty not to restrict unduly the right of others to obtain an adequate diet”<sup>14</sup>. Brockett’s analysis of the meaning of duty, in relation to food security, provides a vital theoretical framework for my thesis. Rural and indigenous groups have traditionally survived from subsistence agriculture. Many of the barriers they face are largely as a result of failings in the international food system.

This thesis follows the assumption that individuals are inclined to carry out an inalienable and intrinsic right to food but face barriers in doing so. Furthermore, I believe my findings reinforce this idea. This sentiment has already been explored by others and

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<sup>14</sup> Charles D. Brockett, "The Right to Food and United States Policy in Guatemala." *Human Rights Quarterly* 6.3 (1984): 367. Web.

this is a common theme in the realm of food assistance and development practices. Referring to the work of Henry Shue, Brockett discuss the notion of forbearance duties as being carried out directly or indirectly. Forbearance duties, as defined by Brockett, denote the “avoidance of actions which contribute to the erosion of the right to food”<sup>15</sup>. In the case of the United States, Brockett argues that the foreign policy actions taken by the United States in Guatemala breach a duty to avoid deprivation from food.

In *Global Obligations for the Right to Food*, Kent examines the discourse over the external responsibilities of states to safeguard the wellbeing of the global community. In the first chapter, he argues that international governmental organizations have the responsibility to protect *all* people<sup>16</sup>. Employing a ‘levels of obligation’ approach, Kent and the authors stress that “assistance does not have to be guilt driven”<sup>17</sup>. Furthermore, the book focuses on the “right-doings”, in other words, the things that ought to be done that go beyond the prevention of wrong-doings that lead to hunger. Kent argues that when states fail, the global community should be ready to step in. Furthermore, states are better able to carry out their obligation to protect if there is a favorable international environment that will supports the exercise of these duties. In essence, he supports a top-down approach to resolving the world’s hunger woes.

This perspective seems to coincide with the efforts of development practitioners throughout the world. Although Kent acknowledges that past mistakes must be taken into consideration, and corporate entities must be held accountable for their violations on the

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<sup>15</sup> Brockett 368

<sup>16</sup> George Kent. *Global Obligations for the Right to Food*. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2008. Print.

<sup>17</sup> Kent 9

human right to food, his approach fits neatly into a globalized food production system. I find this a bit problematic because the globalization of our food production system is largely based on a division of labor that is unequal leaving the underdeveloped world to feed the consumption habits of the North. Nevertheless, the author makes valid points. For instance, a global community willing to spring into action once governments fail to meet their duties to protect the rights of citizens is critical to the safeguarding of wellbeing across all borders. In Guatemala, there is little denying that the United States has played an antagonistic role to fostering food security. Kent's perspective would then put the onus on the US to take action to actively foster, not impede, food security.

There is countless literature on why it is important to study food, and what food can tell us about cultures different from our own. The term 'gastropolitics' is associated with the analysis of food and food practices that can key us into the "particular logics of a culture"<sup>18</sup>. Nonetheless in *El hambre en los espacios de la culture* (Hunger in Cultural Spaces), Juarez calls for a culturalist view of hunger. He argues that the anthropological view of hunger has been weighted by the Western tradition that merely encapsulates hunger into a technical problem with a technical solution that is taken care of within the confines of laboratories and nutrition tables. Moreover, this reinforces a paternalistic approach to hunger that denies agency to those experiencing starvation. How then, is it possible to address the widespread subject of hunger in a way that acknowledges cultural specificity without denying the pressing need to end deprivation?

Let me state that there are serious ethical considerations for the project of a new analysis of hunger. Among many, Juarez acknowledges the ethical murkiness of "a

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<sup>18</sup> Lorenzo Mariano Juárez. "El Hambre En Los Espacios De La Cultura. Visiones Indígenas Maya Ch'orti" AIBR, Revista De Antropología Iberoamericana AIBR 8.2 (2013): 209-32. Web. Translated by me.

culturalist representation of suffering”<sup>19</sup> and this is especially true in cases where suffering is perpetuated by social and political inequalities. For this reason, he reminds the reader that placing an approach to hunger within cultural specificity is without “denying an epistemology of power”<sup>20</sup>. Hunger, as well as other forms of deprivation and suffering, carry devastating consequences that should not be subject to dissection and scrutiny for the sake of academic exercise. Nonetheless, understanding how people deal with and perceive hunger is crucial to grasping their worldview. One of my participants, an older man working long days at a plantation, revealed to me that ‘los frijoles nunca fallan’ or, “beans never fail’. To him, beans were at the heart of nutrition and substance for daily life. So long there were beans in the household, all was good and his family were well-fed. Furthermore, many of us who are part of the Spanish-speaking world grew up hearing the popular idiom “...pero hay frijoles en la casa”, translated as “...but there are beans in the house” as a way to object eating outside the home despite seemingly empty cupboards.

In his research with the Cho’orti peoples of Mesoamerica, Juarez’s findings are very similar to my own. For the Cho’orti peoples, a lack of food is associated with a lack of tortillas and a lack of beans. He notes “the time of hunger is a time without real food”<sup>21</sup>. I remember my own grandmother asserting that potato chips and pizza were not real food despite their rather high caloric content. A lack of food is more directly associated with cultural loss, a theme that will be explored throughout my thesis.

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<sup>19</sup> Juarez 217

<sup>20</sup> Juarez 215

<sup>21</sup> Juarez 221

## On Epistemic Privilege

The weight of the Western epistemic tradition that largely defines the process and execution of academic research. In the words of Mignolo in *Epistemic Disobedience*, institutional academic tradition indicates that “the first world has knowledge, the third world has culture”<sup>22</sup>. The ‘wisdom’ of indigenous cultures is up for grabs by the West where science and technology reign supreme. The culture and life systems of the Third is analyzed and reasoned through the eyes of the First. Knowledges and worldviews are often subject to tests and modifications in order to be legitimized in the academic realm. Furthermore, Mignolo references Hountonji in describing the colonial character of the relationship between the Third and First world in knowledge production and legitimization. Countries in the Third World are providing natural resources as well as data that is then processed by laboratories, both “literal” and “metaphorical” in the First World. Under this dominant paradigm, knowledge flows one way. In *Decolonizing Methodologies*, Smith describes the process of research on indigenous peoples as possessing a “profoundly exploitative nature”<sup>23</sup>. Moreover, in “Democratizing What?”, Handy describes that in the case of Guatemala, both intellectuals and political figures have undertaken a project to ‘restore’ linkages between the ancient Mayan civilizations and current indigenous peoples<sup>24</sup>.

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<sup>22</sup> Mignolo, W.D. “Geopolitics of Sensing and Knowing: on (de)Coloniality, Border Thinking and Epistemic Disobedience.” *Postcolonial Studies*. 14.3 (2011): 273-283.

<sup>23</sup>Linda Tuhiwai Smith, "Research Through Imperial Eyes." *Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples*. London: Zed, 1999. 42. Print.

<sup>24</sup> Jim Handy, "Democratizing What? Some Reflections on Nation, State, Ethnicity, Modernity, Community and Democracy in Guatemala." *Canadian Journal of Latin American and Caribbean Studies* 27.53 (2002): 35-71. Web.

Mignolo asks why Eurocentric knowledge and epistemology “conceal its own geo-historical and bio-graphical locations” and in do so, universalize and de-politicize their knowledges creating the illusion of a “zero-point epistemology” in which everything can be assessed in a way that is seemingly objective<sup>25</sup>. Furthermore, there exist many First World ‘experts’ of the Third World, whose outsider status affords them the privilege of creating validated knowledge. Mignolo reviews the case of Linda T. Smith, A Maori anthropologist who “practices anthropology as Maori rather than studying the Maori as an anthropologist”<sup>26</sup>. Her choice to do so is borne out of a desire to further the cause of the Maori peoples as opposed to using Maori lived-experiences and knowledge as a way to advance the discipline in which she is a part of.

Even as an outsider, I have been considering a similar ethical dilemma when conducting my own research for this project. I will never claim to be an expert in Guatemala, nor do I ever want to be. Despite the amount of research that went into my master’s thesis, I will never understand the lived experience of a Guatemalan. Moreover, a few of those interviewed shared their stories and admitted uncertainty in an ability to feed their families. These are sensitive topics for many people and as an outsider, the people I spoke with had no real reason to trust me. Furthermore, at times I have felt that I am taking from participants and giving almost nothing back.

Furthermore, there is also the danger of essentializing indigenous knowledges, which results in the commodification and appropriation of indigenous knowledges and ways of life. It is important to understand the struggle of many indigenous and rural peoples

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<sup>25</sup> Mignolo 160

<sup>26</sup> Mignolo 171

in the face of pressure to assimilate and abandon their customs. This pressure, currently reinforced by the trends of globalization, has been around for 500 or so years at the advent of the Spanish invasion. While many efforts to incorporate indigenous knowledge into current discourse are noble, they can further disenfranchise these groups. In the article “Democratic encounters? Epistemic privilege, power, and community-based participatory action research”, Janes examines epistemic privilege in community based and participatory research methods<sup>27</sup>. The notion of “giving voice” can be problematic because it emphasizes uneven power dynamics between academic institutions and certain groups.

On a similar note, the search for ‘authenticity’ can be self-serving and futile. In many situations, people are perceived as ‘experts’ in categories of difference ascribed to them by the Western epistemological tradition. For example, a descendant of a particular indigenous tribe can be called upon to testify their experiences and be the ‘voice’ of indigenous culture. Their difference is a marked one in relation to the transparent academic voice. Smith notes that research theories are informed by “a cultural system of classification and representation” that serves to “help determine what counts as real”<sup>28</sup>. Smith elaborates, “What makes ideas ‘real’ is the system of knowledge, the formations of culture, and the relations of power in which these concepts are located”<sup>29</sup>. Janes urges for collaborations between researchers and communities to become more “implicated, embodied, reflexive and responsible”<sup>30</sup>.

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<sup>27</sup> Julia E. Janes, "Democratic Encounters? Epistemic Privilege, Power, and Community-based Participatory Action Research." *Action Research* (2015): n. pag. Web.

<sup>28</sup> Smith, 44

<sup>29</sup> Smith, 48

<sup>30</sup> Janes, 4

## **On Hunger, Biofuels, and Sustainability**

The persistence of hunger involves various factors that are both structural and individual. Roberts brilliantly highlights the following truth: although hunger may stem from a multitude of factors that such as inequality, solving the issue requires various measures at various points of access. For example, hunger can result from the inefficient distribution of food, whether it occurs as a result of faulty policy or perhaps even inadequate roads and other infrastructure. On the other hand, rampant disease in many parts of the world go hand in hand with lack of productivity, such is the case in parts of Sub-Saharan Africa with HIV/AIDS<sup>31</sup>.

Ethical dilemmas involving the increased production of biofuels such as ethanol, derived from widely grown crops such as sugar and corn, are complex and involve a number of actors on an international scale. Furthermore, at the heart of this are conflicting notions of sustainability and opposing worldviews on the relationship between humans and the environment. Much has been written on the ethical issues surrounding biofuels, particularly on its effect to food security. This literature review focuses on the theoretical discourse and situating the conversation on land ownership and ‘green’ grabbing in Latin America.

Within the next forty years, agricultural production will experience a 60% increase<sup>32</sup>. As a result, developing countries are expected to increase arable land by at least 120 ha.<sup>33</sup>. As prices for oil skyrocket, and international tension over diminishing supplies

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<sup>31</sup> Paul Roberts. *The End of Food*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 2008. Print.

<sup>32</sup> J. Popp, et al. “The Effect of Bioenergy Expansion: Food Energy, and Environment.” *Renewable and Sustainable Energy Reviews* 32 (2014): 559-78.

<sup>33</sup> Popp, J. et al.

increases, there is a growing need to re-assess our dependence on fossil fuels. To many, biofuels are a viable solution. Although biofuels are renewable and produce lower GHGs, there are concerns regarding land degradation, depletion of water sources, and rising food prices that compromise food security. According to the United Nations, around one billion people worldwide were undernourished in 2009, a number that grew substantially from the previous years<sup>34</sup>. World hunger will continue to get worse as climate change results in decreased land arability as well as the compromising of water sources; farming will become more difficult.

Relating to my personal research interest, I am primarily focusing on biofuel crops grown in tropical region of Guatemala in Latin America. Borras et al. note that Latin America remains an “under-explored” region in the study of land grabbing<sup>35</sup>. The authors largely attribute this to a narrow definition used when studying land grabbing in Latin America by the UN Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO). Land grabs are characterized by the following qualities:

1. Land grabs are mostly large-scale, meeting a minimum requirement.
2. Land grabs involve foreign governments or entities.
3. The acquisition and control over land must have negative impacts on food security.

The authors note how under these strict conditions, land grabbing occurs only in Argentina and Brazil. Land grabbing, according to them, must be interpreted as “the power to control land and other associated resources such as water in order to derive benefit from such

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<sup>34</sup> M.C. Tirado et al. “Addressing the Challenges of Climate Change and Biofuel Production for Food and Nutrition Security”. *Food Research International*. 43. 2010.

<sup>35</sup> Borras Jr. et al., 403

control”<sup>36</sup>. This process involves the politicization and commodification of the natural world, and this is nothing new for Latin America.

The flaw in “food-crisis” centered approaches is the loss of focus on other dynamics in resource and land conflicts in Latin America<sup>37</sup>. Borras Jr. et al. advocate that instead, land grabbing be emerged as a phenomena at the heel of multiple crises. Along the same lines, I believe it is important to emphasize how the emergence of a multitude of crises, whether they be related to climate change, fuel prices, or food availability, has to be resolved through a world with finite resources and physical limitations. The key element in this is power. It is not hard to see how resource governance is essentially a power play. In many parts of the world, land grabs involve the forceful eviction of peasants from their lands by military and police personnel.

Harvey’s concept of “accumulation by dispossession” refers to the control and ownership of natural resources and other public assets for the generation of profit, perpetuating inequality<sup>38</sup>. One of the drivers for the accumulation of wealth by dispossession (ABD) is crisis. These crises are inherently global in their nature. For example, the 2008 food price crisis was believed to have been the result of a variety of factors, such as rise in fuel prices<sup>39</sup>. Consequentially, many parts of the world were affected.

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<sup>36</sup> Borras Jr et al., 404

<sup>37</sup> Borras

<sup>38</sup> James Fairhead, Melissa Leach, and Ian Scoones. 2013. Green Grabbing: A New Appropriation of Nature. Green Grabbing: A New Appropriation of Nature.

<sup>39</sup> Naylor and Francis

The onset of crises legitimizes dispossession of land and resources for what is justified as striving for greater good. In the case of biofuels, the removal of peasants and rural farmers from lands they claim ancestral ties to is rationalized by the need to go green and seek alternatives to the fossil fuels that pollute the air we breathe. Nonetheless, as Hall points out, the problem with ABD is that resources that once were seen as public or communal are transformed into places of exclusivity<sup>40</sup>. Although this is mainly seen in the case of wildlife conservation sites or resorts, land reserved for the growth of biofuel feedstock is intertwined with privilege. Many of the people who occupy these spaces will never reap the benefit of driving a car powered by biofuel.

Hall draws from Harvey's in asserting a need to create "financial and credit systems" that are supported by governments<sup>41</sup>. This way, the green agenda is easily implemented into the hegemonic sphere. Moreover, ABD seems to contradict the very notion of the free-market because it requires state intervention to facilitate the allocation of natural resources to private hands. In other words, accumulation depends on political power and the use of force as opposed to mere economic forces. Hall and Borras Jr. et al. also bring to light the complicated role of the state. Many governments hold a position of support for and the facilitation of foreign investment as it is seen as a means of ensuring economic growth.

Hall analyzes the semantics of "grabbing" land. To 'grab' implies forceful appropriation. Nonetheless, what about cases in which market forces are to blame for the displacement of people? In many cases, farmers see little profit in growing food and must

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<sup>40</sup> Derek Hall, "Primitive Accumulation, Accumulation by Dispossession and the Global Land Grab." *Third World Quarterly* 34.9 (2013): 1582-604. Web.

<sup>41</sup> Hall, 1586

sell their land. To imply a ‘voluntary’ surrender of land would be simplifying a larger issue of market exclusion and marginalization of local food producers that occurs worldwide.

What about cases where land grabbers are the land grabbed? For example, throughout Africa, many companies from South Africa are buying out large tracts of land<sup>42</sup>. Borras Jr. et al. examine the complex nature of land grabs in Latin America as interplay between various players that cannot be merely defined as the struggle between indigenous peoples and the global elite. Moreover, there are a growing number of Trans-Latina companies (TLCs) buying land and resource rights throughout Latin America. Thus the typical conception of “foreignization”, or ‘de-nationalization’ simplify the complexity behind land-grabbing and large-scale resource acquisitions. Similarly, nationalist rhetoric can be used to justify the privatization of resources and subjugation of indigenous peoples and their resource and cultural rights. In some parts of Latin America, pluralism and inclusion have become prevalent in dominant political discourse over indigenous rights. Moreover, implicating rhetoric centered on the illusions of equality is a way of legitimizing the seizure of formerly indigenous-owned resources. For example, in Peru, the reformed constitution of 1993 revoked the “inalienable” status of communal indigenous lands by transforming them to nationally owned territory<sup>43</sup>. In Guatemala, words like “common destiny” are used when addressing the country’s multiethnic composition<sup>44</sup>.

Another vital component is the notion of a “green” economy and the possibility to pursue profit from natural systems. Corson et al. describe the green economy as the

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<sup>42</sup> Borras et al.

<sup>43</sup> Greene, Shane. "Getting over the Andes: The Geo-Eco-Politics of Indigenous Movements in Peru's Twenty-First Century Inca Empire." *Journal of Latin American Studies* J. Lat. Am. Stud. 38.02 (2006): 335. Web.

<sup>44</sup> Handy

dominant discursive tool in the realm of international resource governance<sup>45</sup>. Underlining this is a sense of optimism about technological advancement, especially when it comes to the production of biofuels. Although this is not unfounded given the rapid improvement of technologies within the last century. Undeniably, the emphasis on technology tied with a desire of finding new and innovative ways to exploit the natural world aligns with the capitalist system. Corson et al. mention the reconfiguring of nature as a force capable of reproduction and thus profit generation. I have to wonder: does the commodification of nature represent the ‘final frontier’ for capitalism? Unlike the extensive web that is the world economy, held together by regulation and policy favoring some over others, nature is unforgiving. The problem of capitalism is the treatment of the ‘natural’ environment as a vehicle for unlimited growth when in reality natural resources carry finite capacities. Roberts brilliantly presents a foreseeable climate crisis (which will undeniably affect food availability and production,) as reckoning with a force that we cannot engineer ourselves out of.

Corson et al. highlight the importance of framing. They refer to “market logics” as a driver in the discourse over resource governance. In other words, the topic of sustainability is too often discussed within the economic sphere. As a result, economic growth is seen as a solution as opposed to the issue. This is most obvious in *Our Common Future*, a report published by the Brundtland Commission and the assertion that in order to make the future more ecologically sound, poverty must be addressed. As observed by Rist

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<sup>45</sup> Catherine Corson, Kenneth MacDonald, and Benjamin Neimark. "Grabbing 'green': Markets, Environmental Governance and the Materialization of Natural Capital." *Human Geography* 6.1 (2013): 1-20. Web.

in *History of Development*, poverty is demonized and seen not only as an obstacle to development but to sustainability as well<sup>46</sup>.

The problem with the assertion of poverty as an evil is the isolation of poverty from larger historical processes situation in inequality between rich and poor countries. Both Roberts and McMichael bring this issue to light in explaining the debt crises, followed by austerity measures and structural adjustment policies that were meant to incorporate debt-riddled countries into a larger neoliberal economic web. These idea behind these policies was to “restore a number of equilibria that were thought necessary... for the harmony of the international system”<sup>47</sup>. In the current food production system, the shift from subsistence farming to large-scale mono cropping and cash crops fail to provide economic benefit for rural peasants and farmers. It makes little sense to place blame on individual persons as opposed to structural deficiencies and discrimination that have affected the lives of many across the world for centuries. Even before the advent of neoliberal doctrine, McMichael explores what he refers to the “colonial division of labor” in which resources were exploited from former colonies and cultures subsequently destroyed<sup>48</sup>. In addition, Corson et al. note how failure of the market becomes the culprit of environmental destruction.

Rist critiques the vagueness behind the ubiquitous definition of sustainable development as: “...development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs”. It is unclear

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<sup>46</sup> Gilbert Rist, “The Environment, of the New Nature of 'Development'”. *History of Development From Western Origins to Global Faith*. 3rd ed. London ; New York: Zed, 2009. Web.

<sup>47</sup> Rist, 171

<sup>48</sup> McMichael, Philip. *Development and Social Change: A Global Perspective*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Pine Forge, 2012. Print.

whose needs are to be met, he argues. Moreover, how can we be sure that our future generations will have the same needs and desires as the current one? One of the key issues in the rhetoric of biofuel proponents is the lack of addressing the unsustainable production and consumption habits that have caused an environmental predicament in the first place. Rather, biofuels are touted as providing a greener future. In response, Shiva, an avid environmental activist, argues that biofuels will not solve the real cause of environmental crisis: consumption<sup>49</sup>. In other words, are biofuels merely the perfect excuse to secure careless consumption for generations to come?

Food security, at the crux of the food versus fuel debate, presents a multitude of crises converging on a global scale. Our current food system, which has been referred to as the current global ‘food regime’, is integral to the discussion of the consequences of biofuels. Although several authors linked land grabbing and subsequent food insecurity with growing demand for biofuels, there is a need to emphasize how biofuels fit within a larger and problematic food production system that in its nature, results in inequitable distribution of food and resources. In his analysis of the dangers of our current global food system, Roberts does an excellent job of situating biofuels in the sphere of international politics. Further, Naylor and Falcon highlight how there exist incentives to grow flex crops given their versatility and ability to better fare fluctuating grain and agricultural market prices. In the US, a series of subsidies coupled with a coddled food system have allowed for the takeover of corn as a staple grain in many parts of the world, including Guatemala.

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<sup>49</sup> Vandana Shiva. *Soil Not Oil : Environmental Justice in a Time of Climate Crisis*. Cambridge, Mass.: South End, 2008. Print.

By resorting to alternative fuel, the issue of irresponsible consumption is masked under a thin veil of eco-friendliness. Furthermore, the biofuel agenda pushed by many developed nations as well as international organizations does not represent a fundamental shift in consumptive habits. Arguably, the agenda is in line with rampant, irresponsible capitalism that props itself on the backs of the oppressed. In a larger sense, a responsible green agenda should take into considerations all populations and their wellbeing. The reviewed literature all agreed on one thing: re-thinking notions of sustainability. While many mouths go without being fed, the US- and many other developed nations- wage a campaign on offsetting current ecological damages.

The subject of Guatemala's foodways, a concept embodying the social, economic, political and environmental aspects of food production and consumption is further complicated by a lack of discourse on food culture within the country. Moreover, given that my topic weaves the theme of food culture, sustainability and resource management, three themes that are incredibly complex on their own, I feel it is best to employ a disciplinary theoretical foundation for my research. Moving back a little, the following chapter will provide the historical context that shaped the nature of land conflict in Guatemala today.

## CHAPTER III

### HISTORY OF FOREIGN CONTROL IN GUATEMALAN FOODWAYS

#### **The Ancient Mayas**

Before the Spanish inquisition, Guatemala lay in the heart of the powerful empire of the Mayas. Archeologists have uncovered the evidence of a fully developed writing system, complex architecture, political systems, as well as astronomical and mathematical systems that date back to the time of the Mayans<sup>50</sup>. Moreover, the existence of agriculture has been traced back to the Mayan Archaic period (8000-2000 BCE), when groups along the Caribbean and Pacific shifted from foraging to agriculture<sup>51</sup>. The cultivation of what are commonly considered “Mayan foods” developed as people settled and formed communities and eventually city-states. These crops included maize, squash, beans and peppers<sup>52</sup>. The environmental diversity of mesoamerica allowed for crop variety, which resulted in increased trade between settlements. Teosinte, a wild ancestor of maize, dates back to the Balsas River region in Guerrero, Mexico and spread via trade throughout Mesoamerica by 3000 BCE<sup>53</sup>. The development of productive strains of maize was a process that spanned thousands of years. Nonetheless, it is important to note that the cultivation of maize was an important driver of the rise of the Mayan civilization.

During the height of the Mayan empire (700-800 A.D.), the Mayans were believed to have had fairly sophisticated forms of agricultural production. The ancient lowland

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<sup>50</sup> Robert Sharer and Loa P. Traxler. *The Ancient Maya*. Stanford, CA: Stanford UP, 2006. Print.

<sup>51</sup> Sharer and Traxler

<sup>52</sup> Ibid.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid.

Mayans, a largely swidden agricultural society, practiced early forms of intensive multi-cropping<sup>54</sup>. The shift from swidden to intensive forms of agriculture was a direct result of the pressures of a growing population<sup>55</sup>. Moreover, many scholars believe that forms of cultivation changed and regressed as populations diminished following the decline of the Mayan empire. There are several theories as to why the Mayan empire collapsed including internal struggle, adverse environmental conditions, as well as the inability for Mayans to keep up with the food demands of rising populations<sup>56</sup>.

The collapse of the Classic Mayan civilization is believed to have happened around the 9<sup>th</sup> century CE. Some proponents of the latter believe that earlier practices swidden agriculture became too widespread too fast and lowland forests eventually transformed into grasslands, which made cultivation very difficult<sup>57</sup>. Environmental disasters may have been the consequence of large-scale mono-cropping and unsustainable deforestation that resulted in an empire unable to feed itself.

### **The Era of Colonization in Guatemala**

*Thus with the first voyage of Columbus began 'encounter, or meeting, of the two worlds', the 'old' and the 'new' worlds of Europe and America*<sup>58</sup> – Oakah Jones, *Guatemala in the Spanish Colonial Period*

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<sup>54</sup> B. L. Turner, "Prehistoric Intensive Agriculture in the Mayan Lowlands." *Science* 185.4146 (1974): 118-24. Web.

<sup>55</sup> Ibid.

<sup>56</sup> Sharer and Traxler

<sup>57</sup> Turner

<sup>58</sup> Jones, Oakah L. *Guatemala in the Spanish Colonial Period*. Norman: U of Oklahoma, 1994. p. 17 Print.

The colonization of Guatemala by the Spanish was characterized by periods of uprisings and pacification. It is important to note that Mayan during the Classical period was a class society; elites in Mayan kingdoms enjoyed political and religious power<sup>59</sup>. Nevertheless, Spanish colonizers created new divisions that were not present, including disparities in access to land<sup>60</sup>. Spanish administration of Guatemala lasted 300 years. Because of this, the legacy of the Spanish remains and had very deep effects on the social fabric as well as the environment of Guatemala.

When they first arrived in the early 16<sup>th</sup> century, the Spanish described a robust system of trading and relations between various Mayan kingdoms<sup>61</sup>. Pedro de Alvarado had been dispatched by Hernan Cortes to assess the situation in Guatemala, primarily the growing hostility between the K'iche's and Kakchikels, and eventually establish Spanish settlements by subduing the K'iche.<sup>62</sup> The Spanish had many advantages over the Mayans that aided in their conquest. Spears and arrows were no match against the Spanish sword, crossbow, and mounting horse. Conquistadors, under the guidance of Alvarado, were merciless. To further complicate the matter, the Spanish maintained a system of temporary allies within the Mayan kingdom, which helped further their cause. Over time, the invasion of the Spanish resulted in the obliteration of two-thirds of the indigenous population<sup>63</sup>.

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<sup>59</sup> Action Against Hunger, "Guatemala: Inequality and Food Security". *The Geopolitics of Hunger, 2000-2001: Hunger and Power*. Boulder: L. Rienner, 2001. Print.

<sup>60</sup> Action Against Hunger

<sup>61</sup> Sharer

<sup>62</sup> Jones

<sup>63</sup> Action Against Hunger

Natives were regarded as property and there were strict policies regarding the bodies of indigenous peoples. Mistreatment of natives was outlawed, with unsurprisingly little enforcement. Furthermore, Spanish settlers believed they had an obligation to acculturate natives and “lead them from their native state to civilization”<sup>64</sup>. Native culture and practices were strongly discouraged in effort to erase all things indigenous and grow the empire of Spain. Nonetheless, in some aspects, natives received better treatment than African slaves, who were seen as sub-human, thus not needing nor deserving of religious or cultural education.

Spanish settlers divided land amongst themselves. Acreage received was directly related to position served during the time of conquest. For example, horsemen received an approximate 105 acres, aptly deemed a *caballeria* of land<sup>65</sup>. Soldiers on foot received half of that. Furthermore, those deemed as deserving, as a result of their devotion and servitude to the Kingdom of Spain, were awarded *encomiendas*. In the *encomienda* system, the *encomenderos* enjoyed the servitude of natives who would trade their labor for shelter, food, and religious education. Land ownership was restricted to wealthy Spanish settlers and natives were expected to be an annual tribute to the *ecomenderos*, making them completely dependent on their *ecomenderos* for wages to pay that fee thus forging a system that was essentially slavery.<sup>66</sup>

Settlers in Guatemala favored economic benefit that came from exploiting the land and its people over the desires of the Spanish crown. Furthermore, indigenous chiefs were

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<sup>64</sup> Jones, 87

<sup>65</sup> Jones

<sup>66</sup> Ibid.

often given incentives and special privileges from exploiting their own peoples. At times, chiefs were also required to supply slaves as tribute to Spanish lords<sup>67</sup>. Women had a great disadvantage under the slave system. Oftentimes, tribal chiefs would surrender females in exchange for commodities and special favors to Spanish conquistadores.<sup>68</sup>

It is an understatement to say that the Spanish destroyed Mayan ways of life. The labor and livelihood of natives under Spanish rule were subject to the growth of Spanish wealth and power. For instance, those who worked in mines were forbidden from doing so in the rainy season in order to tend the crops<sup>69</sup>. As commercial agriculture and cash-cropping fueled a growing export economy, the demand for native labor grew despite dwindling populations. Furthermore, the *economienda* system eventually declined in colonial Guatemala and a new system of the “reparimiento” was established. Native men aged 16-60 were assigned particular tasks on rotation in order to fulfill a quota under the Spanish monarchy<sup>70</sup>. Men would gather at the main plaza of the nearest Spanish town and assigned a duty, often at the request of agriculturalists and wealthy Spanish land owners, by a Spanish official known as the *juez del repartidor*<sup>71</sup>.

To no surprise, there were many abuses under the *repartimiento* system. Many times, employers would charge workers for consumed goods while on the job, causing them to lose a significant amount of their wages<sup>72</sup>. Hacendados incentivized workers with

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<sup>67</sup> Ibid.

<sup>68</sup> Ibid.

<sup>69</sup> Ibid.

<sup>70</sup> Ibid.

<sup>71</sup> Ibid.

<sup>72</sup> Ibid.

advanced pay in exchange for labor under a contractual period. Furthermore, these employers agreed to provide protection, shelter, clothing, food and the tributes owed by natives<sup>73</sup>. In some haciendas, natives were sharecroppers who were allotted a plot of land for their personal cultivation and living quarters and were expected to work a certain number of days each week as payment<sup>74</sup>. Overall, this new relationship between hacendados and native workers was often one of debt. Community ties within native villages also deteriorated as a result of this resurgence of the hacienda system, making it harder for indigenous people to organize for social change.<sup>75</sup>

The invasion of the Spanish had devastating consequences for pre-Columbian societies throughout the Americas. Before contact with the Spanish, Guatemalan's indigenous population was an estimated 2 million. By 1650, the number had dwindled to a mere 120,000<sup>76</sup>. Throughout Latin America, the Spanish domination created a segregated society when they "installed an alienated and privileged ruling class (urban) and the massive and deprived indigenous people (rural)"<sup>77</sup>. The division between urban and rural under Spanish rule was a strategic one and is still evident in the disparities between indigenous and urban population that exist today. Many resource governance decisions are taken in the major metropolitan center of Guatemala City, where politicians are eager to please foreign investors. The Spanish instituted a system of land-ownership that

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<sup>73</sup> Ibid.

<sup>74</sup> Ibid.

<sup>75</sup> Ibid.

<sup>76</sup> Handy

<sup>77</sup> Julio F. Alegría, M. Sc. *The Challenges of Water Resource Management in Peru*. Publication. Rural Water Supply and Sanitation Project for Southern Andes of Peru, n.d. Web

concentrated land and resource ownership to the very wealthy. Spanish conquistadors not only dismissed native culture but also ignored the land's environmental needs by imposing an economy of surplus facilitated by mass extraction. Given their loyalty to the Spanish crown, the vast extraction of resources driven by slave labor fueled the development of European society.

Guatemala gained independence from Spain in 1821, eventually becoming a part of the Central American Federation<sup>78</sup>. The years that followed independence were tumultuous and characterized by constant conflict between different political and ethnic groups. Furthermore, beginning in the 1870s, Guatemala's agriculture became further intensified, with vast land seizures from the church and indigenous people giving way to coffee production<sup>79</sup>. Moreover, through the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the government of Guatemala adopted a national project of 'civilizing' indigenous peoples in order to modernize the country<sup>80</sup>. Despite independence from the tyrant rule of Spain, Guatemala's political and social instability was far from over.

### **Guatemala in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century and Beyond**

Along with many of its neighboring countries, the 20<sup>th</sup> century saw a lot of turmoil in Guatemala. Under the presidency of Jorge Ubico, a conservative man who was backed by Guatemala's wealthy elites, vagrancy was criminalized<sup>81</sup>. This launched a war against

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<sup>78</sup> Jones

<sup>79</sup> Action Against Hunger

<sup>80</sup> Handy, 2002

<sup>81</sup> Stephen C. Schlesinger, and Stephen Kinzer. *Bitter Fruit: The Untold Story of the American Coup in Guatemala*. Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1982. Print.

the poor that will characterize that would characterize much of the conflict that has placed Guatemala on the map for political instability.

One of the biggest adversaries to Guatemala's food security and political stability, from the start of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, has been the United States. Military presence in the Guatemala has been strong, and the interception of US interests in Guatemalan beginning an era characterized by the clash of democracy and communism has left an imprint on Guatemalan society today. In the words of Harrison Salisbury in introduction for the renowned book *Bitter Fruit*, "the use of American force in Central American and the Caribbean has become a way of life."<sup>82</sup>

The United States poured over \$13 million on rural development efforts in Guatemala between the years of 1955 and 1959<sup>83</sup>. As argued by Brockett, an important aspect of the US's duty to respect the right to food in Guatemala is the duty to not support governments who infringe on those rights. Nonetheless, the infamous CIA overthrow of the democratically-elected leader, Jacobo Arbenz, was a direct violation of this duty. The administration of Jacobo Arbenz in Guatemala sought land reform and the empowering of the peasant class. The Agrarian Reform Law was passed in 1952, which appropriated uncultivated land to over 100,000 families<sup>84</sup>. The reserve holdings of the United Fruit Company were subject to expropriation, the Company had invested around \$60 million in

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<sup>82</sup> Schlesinger and Kinzer, xi

<sup>83</sup> Brockett

<sup>84</sup> Action against hunger

Guatemala<sup>85</sup>. This prompted a CIA-backed infiltration and destabilization of Arbenz's administration under the Eisenhower administration<sup>86</sup>.

The civil unrest that ensued spanned over three decades and through several presidencies. The conflict in Guatemala remains one of the bloodiest wars in Latin America. Indigenous people became the subject of opposition, with death squads dedicated to silencing revolts and would-be uprisings. Interestingly, the US supported the wide redistribution of land in China during the 1960's as a way to thwart peasant uprisings that would give way to communism<sup>87</sup>. Nonetheless, in Guatemala, land reforms and social welfare programs (resulting from socialist ideology,) presented a perceived threat to democratic freedom and US business interests<sup>88</sup>. The US government provided military assistance to Guatemala that included war supplies, training, and advice<sup>89</sup>. The US supported efforts to tame insurgent groups and uprisings, essentially sanctioning the massacres of many peasants throughout Guatemala. Their aim was to combat perceived threats of terrorism. As highlighted by Brockett, the United States provided Guatemala over \$60 million in military assistance from 1950 to 1979. Furthermore, over 3,300 Guatemalan military officers received military training from the US<sup>90</sup>.

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<sup>85</sup> Schlessinger and Kinzer

<sup>86</sup> Schlessinger and Kinzer

<sup>87</sup> Joe Studwell, "Land: The Triumph of Gardening." *How Asia Works: Success and Failure in the World's Most Dynamic Region*. N.p.: n.p., n.d. N. pag. Print.

<sup>88</sup> Schlessinger and Kinzer

<sup>89</sup> Ibid.

<sup>90</sup> Brockett

The conflict played out on international headlines, making the state of Guatemala one of the most notorious abusers of human rights. The numeric toll of the conflict is unnerving. Approximately one million people were internally displaced, over 200,000 killed, 120,000 fled the country as refugees, and thousands disappeared<sup>91</sup>. During the armed conflict beginning in 1960 and extending until the late 90's, indigenous peoples made up an alarming percentage of casualties. Out of the estimated 200,000 deaths, 83% of these were of indigenous descent<sup>92</sup>. Military and para-military rule also destroyed traditional community governance structures and disrupted the livelihoods of many people.

With Arbenz's administration off the map, the new US-supported administration of Carlos Castillo Armas sought to quell the public's desire for comprehensive land reform by instituting the Guatemalan Rural Development Program<sup>93</sup>. Almost 5 thousand families were settled by 1963. Nonetheless, a study by USAID determined that during the land distribution schemes between the years of 1955 to 1982 have largely benefited the elite and done little to address the glaring needs of landless peasants<sup>94</sup>. The United States became involved in yet another land resettlement scheme in the 1970s. The United States AID provided over \$5 million to resettle 4,000 families along Guatemala's Franja Transversal del Norte, a strip of land that encompasses the widest point of Guatemala<sup>95</sup>. One of the most devastating events in Guatemala's history was the Panzos massacre of 1978.

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<sup>91</sup> Action Against Hunger

<sup>92</sup> Jorise Van de Sandt, "Mining Conflicts and Indigenous Peoples in Guatemala". Cordaid. (2009)

<sup>93</sup> Brockett

<sup>94</sup> Brockett references a USAID report done in during a mission to Guatemala in 1983

<sup>95</sup> Ibid.

Hundreds of peasants gathered to protest against corruption and advocate for land reform<sup>96</sup>. As a result of military interference and the indiscriminant opening of fire, the former being summoned by the mayor to pacify the crowds, 50 lives perished<sup>97</sup>. Nonetheless, given that the concentration of land in Guatemala has always been unequal, lands left to be redistributed were marginal and unproductive.

Peace accords were signed in 1996 between the UNRG and Guatemalan Government. Among many things, the peace accords called for lessened military action and power, the restoration of civilian rule, increased spending on social welfare programs, and increased rights for indigenous peoples<sup>98</sup>. The success of these accords has been mixed.

I arrived in Guatemala City the day after the elections that would eventually elect Jimmy Morales into office had taken place. While I was there, Guatemala was in the midst of social upheaval as the former President and army general, Otto Perez Molina, had been ousted from the presidency and placed in prison. The former president, who had previously enjoyed a degree of immunity, had been accused of promoting customs fraud<sup>99</sup>. His administration had been engaging in rent-seeking behavior that lowered taxes for importers. The implications of accepting bribes in exchange for less revenue that could potentially benefit society as whole are quite devastating. Many people feel that politicians care little about the needs of the people and work only for their own benefit. These feelings

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<sup>96</sup> Charles D. Brockett *Political Movements and Violence in Central America*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2005. Print.

<sup>97</sup> Ibid.

<sup>98</sup> Jack Spence and George Vickers. *Promise and Reality: Implementation of the Guatemalan Peace Accords*. Cambridge, MA: Hemisphere Initiatives, 1998. Print.

<sup>99</sup> Elisabeth Malkin, "Trial Ordered for Ex-Leader of Guatemala." *The New York Times*. The New York Times, 08 Sept. 2015.

are by no means unfounded. In light of recent efforts to raise the minimum wage of Q2,644.50 (US \$345), the former vice president of Guatemala, Roxanna Baldetti is quoted as saying that Guatemalans should feel “blessed” to even have jobs because, “It’s better to have 1,200 quetzales in your pocket nothing and have to eat, [or only] tortilla with salt”<sup>100</sup>.

Corruption in Guatemala is a facet of everyday life. Guatemala is a place where calling the police can sometimes make things worse. Bribery at the state level is an open secret in Guatemala. Driving through the city, my friends pointed to several buildings and attractions that had been built but never completed. In one particular instance, a friend pointed to an observatory providing a breathtaking view of the city laid unfinished, “the administration claimed to have run out of money, but we all know they stole from us”. In fact, the slogan of the incumbent president in Guatemala reads “Ni corrupto, ni lardon”, translated as “neither corrupt, nor a thief”, as a means to set himself apart from former leaders who have shamelessly stolen from the people.

Guatemalan’s are skeptical of government efforts to better their situation. Although some participants did receive some sort of food or welfare assistance, many were incredibly critical of the Guatemalan government. Handy notes that throughout Guatemala, a “clear and palpable sense of fatigue” is emerging<sup>101</sup>. Several of my participants held little to no reservations in expressing disdain for the political administrations in the country.

Now there is no [government] help, before there was help in schools. Even in hospitals there is no food for patients.

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<sup>100</sup> Nic Wirtz. "Protests Highlight Guatemalan Minimum Wage Concerns." *Quarterly Americas*. N.p., 27 Feb. 2015. Web.

<sup>101</sup> Handy, 41

I spoke to an elderly farmer on his front porch one late evening. His house lay along a dirt road past the fringes of Guatemala City, edging towards the Salvadorian border. He works long hours to grow corn and beans, a craft he is proud of. Nonetheless, the struggles he faces are not at all uncommon within Guatemalan farmers. “Us, we have been abandoned”, he said this as his voice began to crack. The sadness in his statement was palpable. His land had been an inheritance from his mother, yet he had a family to feed, and when a bad season struck or pests ruined his harvest, times became very dark.

Sometimes when it rains, it floods everywhere, and nothing is done. We hear once in a while that development projects are going to happen, but we never see results and the process is slow. Politicians seem to come and go and we have never seen any real change even in basic infrastructure within the community. Government officials seem to visit the area once in a while but I think it is better that they just leave... they [the government] say that they help us...we have never received any help, sometimes there will be private meeting between officials where they decide that we do not need any help. They only fill the requirements for the process of providing help by asking for our paperwork and such, but they never give us anything. Here we stay, and they never give us anything

This older subsistence farmer was not the only one who felt negatively towards the state. In the words of Pu,

The State is not working to give continuity to our cultures. The government gives priorities to other types of things. They serve other interests... Many times there are politics are work to invisibilize the development of our culture.

Even the agricultural commodity traders believed that Guatemala’s political system was deeply flawed and as a result, many environmental and human rights violations had become the norm in the agricultural export sector. Moreover, this also resulted in Guatemala being subservient and at a disadvantage to stronger economies when it came to trade. Here are their words,

In Guatemala, the major problem in trade laws there is little enforcing laws and contracts. There is little security in this. This is due to the time consuming nature

of enforcement...The cost of exports and bureaucracy make the benefits and our competitive advantage be reduced.

[Transnational corporations] should be charged a tax for soil damage, and there should be more regulation. [transnationals] had the doors open for so many years that countries are not going after Dole or Del Monte. There has to be a way to control this. There a lot of food and too much hunger out there.

Guatemalans have never experienced true democracy, save for the years between 1945 and 1954. One of the most unsettling truths in Guatemala is the stronghold of military presence in politics. Many of the individuals who hold public office were former generals and military men who carried out systematic and ruthless violence against the people they have sworn to protect. Furthermore, these are the same figures that often cater to the interests of US private corporations and government officials, both historically and currently. In the 2014 Human Development Indicator (HDI) report by the United Nations, Guatemala scored 125 out of 189, within the range of medium human development. To make matters worse, Guatemala's tax base is only 10.5%, which leads to "chronically underfunded" state institutions<sup>102</sup>.

Guatemala has a breadth of political parties. On the surface, the multitude of political actors that make up the elective landscape point to a healthy and thriving democracy. Nonetheless, the reality is much different. The notion of pluralism is difficult to navigate in current and historical politics since military presence is very strong in the political sphere. The majority of Guatemala's political parties have historically situated themselves on the right side of the political spectrum<sup>103</sup>. Most notably, the National

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<sup>102</sup> Julia Tomei, and Rocio Diaz-Chavez. "Guatemala." *Sustainable Development of Biofuels in Latin America and the Caribbean*. By Barry D. Solomon and Robert Bailis. New York: Springer, 2014. N. pag. Print.

<sup>103</sup> Tom Barry. *Inside Guatemala*. Inter-Hemispheric Education Resource Center. Albuquerque, New Mexico, 1992. Print

Liberation Movement (MLN) was responsible for disposing the Arbenz administration and the instituting of death squads that generated anti- indigenous sentiments<sup>104</sup>. Weak ties between local actors and the federal government are widespread. Many activist and grassroots groups are overlooked and even ignored by political parties<sup>105</sup>. Furthermore, local municipal and departmental actors have little control over what goes on at the national level. Corruption and bribery are rampant in Guatemalan politics and society. As one of the most unequal societies, the poorest in urban and rural areas sometimes turn to petty crime and extortion for cash.

Another barrier to political citizenship is a lack of access to education. Despite drastically improving literacy rates within the last 15 years, illiteracy remains a major problem among older generations. The youth literacy rate (ages 15-24) in Guatemala, is fairly high at 92 percent<sup>106</sup>. The literacy rate for adults 15 and over is around 81.5 percent<sup>107</sup>. Indigenous populations in Guatemala tend to have lower rates of literacy than the national average. Lack of access to quality education carries vast repercussions. First, those who have very limited education are more likely to be unemployed<sup>108</sup>. Even those with very limited education who are employed face limited mobility in their employment.

In Guatemala, pluralism and inclusion have become prevalent in dominant political discourse over indigenous rights<sup>109</sup>. Moreover, implicating rhetoric centered on the

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<sup>104</sup> Barry

<sup>105</sup> Ibid.

<sup>106</sup> The World Bank, 2013 Guatemala Statistics

<sup>107</sup> CIA factbook, Country Profile: Guatemala

<sup>108</sup> Action Against Hunger

<sup>109</sup> Handy, 2002

illusions of equality is a way of legitimizing the seizure of formerly indigenous-owned resources in many parts of Latin America. This arguably caused a convolution of notions of citizenship regarding indigenous people and the rest of Guatemalan society. Ironically, indigenous inclusion into the national fabric can be interpreted as another way to exclude them from claiming the rights to the resources they felt entitled to. In other words, the *campesino* status is a vehicle for oppression thinly veiled as progress towards equality and prosperity.

Ethnicity in Guatemala is a complicated issue. In my own interviews, many participants seemed uncomfortable when questioned about their ethnicity. For many people who remember the horrors of the armed conflict, the subject of ethnicity, more specifically indigeneity, remains taboo. In the words of one of my participants who is an older man earning his livelihood through subsistence farming and the occasional selling of produce, “here we are all Indians dressed as ladinos”.

I discussed the state of large-scale agriculture in Guatemala and whether or not it truly benefited local people with , particularly those who identify as indigenous and live in rural areas with a commodity trader. He said,

I hate going to see the farms, it makes me sad, it is not as much the working conditions because farming is difficult work regardless of the circumstance, it is just that they make very little money... I've had meetings where the major heads of farming operations here in Guatemala are all present and it will be a room of White ladinos... Ethnic divide in Guatemala runs deep. While many of the heads of these companies are White, the workers are indigenous.

Historically, indigenous peoples have been one of the most disadvantaged groups in Guatemala. During the armed conflict beginning in 1960 and extending until the late 90's, indigenous peoples made up an alarming percentage of casualties. Out of the

estimated 200,000 deaths, 83% of these were of indigenous descent<sup>110</sup>. Military and paramilitary rule also destroyed traditional community governance structures.

In 1995, both the Guatemalan government and the Unidad Revolucionaria Nacional Gualtamalteca, a guerilla group, ratified The Agreement on the Identity and Rights of Indigenous Peoples. The agreement was meant to serve as a catalyst for implementing constitutional reforms that formally recognized indigenous' collective rights.<sup>111</sup> Additionally, the agreement recognized customary law and the right to bilingual education as well as the protection of communal lands. In 1999, several drafted reforms were presented to the government electorate.<sup>112</sup> Nonetheless, private entities successfully lobbied against the implementation of these drafts. At the foundation of their argument lay the 'indigenous peril'; a belief and fear that indigenous groups would rise to power and discriminate against the non-indigenous<sup>113</sup>. Handy refers to Guatemala as "caught between hope and despair"<sup>114</sup>. Guatemala has a multiculturalist stance towards addressing indigenous rights. This has allowed for silencing of voices representing alternative histories and forms of governance under the guise of national solidarity. When compared to other Latin American countries with a large indigenous population, there are little legal measures to ensure the rights of indigenous peoples and their autonomies<sup>115</sup>.

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<sup>110</sup> Van de Sandt

<sup>111</sup> Seider

<sup>112</sup> Ibid.

<sup>113</sup> Ibid.

<sup>114</sup> Handy

<sup>115</sup> Handy

The presence of the Spanish created a division of labor that gave rise to inequality. Furthermore, the Spanish created a new society comprised of Spaniards, Blacks, natives, creoles, ladinos, mulattos and other ethnic groups. Guatemalan since has been a multicultural nation facing deep ethnic divide and constant confrontation between cultures. Although indigenous people did face a sharp decline during and in the aftermath of the Spanish conquest, their descendants are alive and present in Guatemala today. In the words of Smith in *Decolonizing Methodologies*, Smith notes that “imperialism and colonialism are the specific formations through which the West came to ‘see’ and ‘name’ and to ‘know’ indigenous communities”<sup>116</sup>. Many of the inequalities that plague Guatemalan society today are a result of the colonial disruption that altered systems of classification, giving rise to hierarchies based on ethnicity and class. In this next section, I will examine how despite gaining independence from Spain in 1821, Guatemala’s food security is tied to a global system where Northern powers have unequal advantage.

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<sup>116</sup> Smith, 60

## CHAPTER IV

### INVOLVEMENT IN THE INTERNATIONAL FOOD SYSTEM

After gaining their independence, Bretton Woods institutions poured money into “emerging markets” as part of a large-scale global “development project”<sup>117</sup>. Eventually, debtor nations in the Global South defaulted on their loans. As a result, a number of economic policy prescriptions, known as the Washington Consensus, promoted the liberalization of food trade. As mentioned before, nations in debt were required to restructure their economies to fit the free-trade agenda promoted by both the Global North and these international development institutions<sup>118</sup>. Underlining this is a belief in the free-market as a means to deliver food security. Riding the curtails of a food trade regime were agro-business and food transnational corporations who owe almost no loyalty to any nation and thus have little incentive to provide any sort of sustainable food security. Ironically, the US food system is held in place by a series of subsidies and regulations. Proponents of this structure argue that food, an essential and inalienable human right, is far too much of a risk to leave unsheltered from and at the mercy of the free market<sup>119</sup>

Economic development is equated to the prosperity of a nation. As the world becomes increasingly economically interconnected and interdependent, countries are expected have a presence in the global market. When countries like Guatemala accumulate debt, they are subject to IMF and World Bank regulations, which favor pro-market,

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<sup>117</sup> McMichael

<sup>118</sup> Roberts

<sup>119</sup> Roberts

neoliberal reforms. Within the last decades, many of monetary policies targeted inflation and foreign debt. Government spending on public welfare has significantly dropped.

Since the green revolution, the United States has remained the largest producer and exporter of corn in the world. Consequentially, Guatemala imports an alarmingly high amount of staple grains from the United States<sup>120</sup>. The US Public Law 480, also called the “Agricultural Trade and Assistance Act”, was enacted in 1954 with the intention to provide “friendly” developing countries with US agricultural produce<sup>121</sup>. A 1988 USAID report evaluating PL-480 programs in Guatemala, deem food aid as “essential for maintenance of food consumption by low-income families”<sup>122</sup>. The same report reads:

The political context, in which a new, more democratic government must increase taxes and reduce spending to restore economic growth and financial stability justifies us of Title II to alleviate consequences of structural adjustment for the poor”<sup>123</sup>

Food aid was a perceived mains to fill the gaps left by reduced spending on social welfare programs as a way to promote economic growth. As noted by McMichael, one of the programs major objectives is to ease the transition from receiving aid to participating in global commercial trade, laying the foundation for a US food regime<sup>124</sup>. A food regime, refers to the restructuring of agricultural production systems facilitated by structural adjustment programs as well as WTO policy resulting in many countries of the Global

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<sup>120</sup> Center For Economic Complexity “Guatemala” data

<sup>121</sup> When enacted, the third goal (out of five) of the PL-480 program was to “expand international trade between the USA and Friendly countries”

<sup>122</sup> United States. AID. *Evaluation of Guatemalan PL-480 Programs*. By Pines M. James, Joyce King, and Janet Lowenthal. i, 1988. Print.

<sup>123</sup> USAID, ii

<sup>124</sup> McMichael



Lower availability of necessary food items also translates to higher prices. With the initiation of an export-oriented development plan, labor tends to be displaced. For instance, in the case of cattle production, the raising of farm animals requires far less labor than farming. Furthermore, the investment in machinery and agricultural technologies that allow for increased productivity with less labor intensity generates less employment.

Efforts to increase crop diversification in Guatemala have been focused on promoting the production of export commodities such as exotic fruits and flowers. According to one commodity trader I interviewed, farmers are usually reluctant to grow exotic fruits and in some occasions, demand to be prepaid some amount of their yield. ALCOSA, a subsidiary of Hanover brands, started a development program targeting very poor rural and small farms that promoted the production of non-traditional export crops<sup>126</sup>. ALCOSA was developed with assistance from the Latin American Agribusiness Development Corporation (LAAD) and support from USAID<sup>127</sup>. The Latin American Agribusiness Development Corporation provides financial support for the ‘underserved’ sector of small to medium-sized export-oriented agribusiness operations. The organization provides support for family-owned agribusiness<sup>128</sup>. The LAAD believes that developing agribusiness in the rural sector is the best way to help people out of poverty<sup>129</sup>.

Guatemala has been increasingly devoting land to export production since the latter half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. For instance, between the years 1948 to 1981, the amount of land

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<sup>126</sup> Brockett

<sup>127</sup> Ibid.

<sup>128</sup> International Finance Corporation. “The Latin American Agribusiness Development Corporation: Case Study of the Development Impact on Rural Enterprises in Latin America”. 2009

<sup>129</sup> Brockett

for local food crop production increased a mere 37%, while that of export crops increased a whopping 160%. Agricultural surveys between the years 1964 to 1979 illustrate an increase of 20% in property size, and this increase was fueled by the deforestation of 700,000 hectares<sup>130</sup>. Food aid programs, more often than not, lead to dependence on imports and only exacerbate the poor's vulnerability to the volatility of the international food market, setting them back from ever becoming self-sufficient in food production. Nonetheless, many proponents of neoliberal reform claim that comparative advantage leads to a more efficient and effective market system. This mentality results in Guatemala devoting a rather large share of its resources to the production of export commodities, many of which are non-food crops. The creation of the Central American Free Trade Agreement under the Bush Jr. Administration brought an onslaught of protests throughout the country. Guatemalan's had witnessed the ways in which NAFTA destroyed the livelihoods of Mexican Farmers. Furthermore, the implementation of the Agreement prompted land seizures<sup>131</sup>.

According to Action against Hunger, farming activities for small-scale farmers are moving towards areas which offer low productivity, thus increasing the unsustainability and land degradation. If the more productive lands in Guatemala are being devoted to export agriculture, as opposed to growing food crops for local demand. The production of export agriculture is a process which often pays very little and cannot offer employment to everyone in need, rising levels of poverty lead to rising levels of unsustainable land usage. This has vast environmental repercussions which can be economically quantified.

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<sup>130</sup> Action Against Hunger

<sup>131</sup> Karen Hansen-Kuhn, "Central Americans Speak Out Against DR-CAFTA: Major Issues and Mobilizations," Alliance for Responsible Trade, Mar. 2005, at 10.

## The Effects of SAPs in Guatemala

Structural adjustment policies, which characterized many economic reforms in the developing world throughout the 1980s, aimed to reduce debt by increasing revenue and gutting public spending<sup>132</sup>. Enforcing and imposing these measures were international financial institutions who aimed to both stabilize the world economy and allow for developing nations to ‘catch up’ to the rest of the developed world. Structural adjustment programs are key to the onset of and integration into neoliberalism. It is not uncommon for countries undergoing structural adjustment to privatize formerly public enterprises. The deregulation of economic activity and the onslaught of pro-market policy allow for sectors to be more productive and incentivize foreign investment. Pfeiffer and Chapman highlight that the advent of SAPs represented a shift in the relationship between colonizers and their former colonies<sup>133</sup>. Nonetheless, this relationship was grounded by the process of labor and resource extraction that flowed from the developing to the developed world.

One of the underlying beliefs behind structural adjustment, and largely the IMF, is that increased economic interdependence and cooperation would lead to a healthier, and more robust economy that would be felt throughout the world<sup>134</sup>. Structural adjustment programs resulted from the debt and economic crisis of the 1970’s that rippled throughout the 1980’s. A culmination of rising oil prices, decrease in the price of export commodities, and country’s inability to pay back debts resulted in a world-wide recession. On

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<sup>132</sup> McMichael

<sup>133</sup> James Pfeiffer, and Rachel Chapman. "Anthropological Perspectives on Structural Adjustment and Public Health." *Annu. Rev. Anthropol. Annual Review of Anthropology* 39.1 (2010): 149-65. Web.

<sup>134</sup> Doris A. Oberdabernig, "Revisiting the Effects of IMF Programs on Poverty and Inequality." *World Development* 46 (2013): 113-42. Web.

Guatemala's relationship with international finance institutions, a report by the *Guardian* explains

Until 1974, Guatemala had only \$120m (£75m) of debt. Thereafter, debt increased rapidly, by \$100m a year or more in 1978, 1979 and 1980, and then more than \$250m a year in 1981 and 1982, at the height of the terror. By 1985 the country's debt had reached \$2.2bn – an increase of more than \$2bn in 10 years....By the time the peace agreement was signed in 1997, Guatemala was repaying these institutions nearly \$130m a year, rising to nearly \$400m today.<sup>135</sup>

As the Guatemalan state carried out systemic violence against its own people, international lenders shelled out millions of dollars to the Guatemalan government in order to promote 'development'. Notably, structural adjustment programs represented the terms and conditions a country must meet in order to receive loans from the IMF. These terms, were a means to make a country better able to integrate themselves into the global economic market. Furthermore, one of the primary responsibilities of the IMF, through the deployment of its technical and financial assistance, is poverty alleviation. This last point is a subject of controversy however, in both academic circles and the realm of development. Many argue that there is a direct correlation between IMF programs and spikes in poverty levels in aid receiving countries<sup>136</sup>.

One of the points of contention in many IMF negotiations is the devaluing of currency. One of the leading arguments for currency devaluation is that lower export prices put the country in a better standing in the international commodity market<sup>137</sup>. Past cases have indicated a persistent trend between devaluation and inflation, that results in an

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<sup>135</sup> Nick Dearden, "Guatemala's Chixoy dam: where development and terror intersect". *The Guardian*. 10 Dec. 2012.

<sup>136</sup> Oberdabernig

<sup>137</sup> Ibid.

economic downward spiral that is difficult to escape. However, as highlighted by Oberdabernig, the outcomes of currency devaluation vary greatly between urban and rural residents. In the case of rural agricultural producers of export crops, for instance, currency devaluation can yield the benefits of increased wages. Another area of concern is the intersection between structural adjustment, increase of poverty, and the fragility of social life in post-conflict countries. Paris argues that SAPs can increase the risk of regenerating conflict in several Central American nations, including Guatemala<sup>138</sup>. Neo-liberal economic policies increase inequality, thus giving rise to conflict. Nonetheless, due to the incomplete nature of Guatemala's post-conflict SAP implementation, it is difficult to deduce a causation between poverty, conflict and successful SAP implementation<sup>139</sup>.

The effects of many austerity measures and trade liberalization, which are at the heart of many structural adjustment programs, have been profound across various facets of Guatemalan life. One of the major effects of these measures has been the intensification of agriculture, which has both positive and negative effects. Guatemala is a major exporter of coffee, sugar cane, and palm oil (see figure 3). Following the decade of structural adjustment policies that characterized many of the economic reforms in the 1980s, Guatemala cut technical assistance programs that once aided small-scale farmers. Furthermore, grain, a staple which Guatemala had previously been able to sufficiently produce, saw an increase in exportation<sup>140</sup>.

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<sup>138</sup> Roland Paris, "Peacebuilding and the limits of liberal internationalism". *International Security* 22.2 (1997).

<sup>139</sup> Marie-France Guimond. *Structural Adjustment and Peacebuilding Road to Conflict or Peace?* Working paper. N.p.: International Development Research Centre, 2007. Print.

<sup>140</sup> Rosenthal, Elisabeth. "As Biofuel Demand Grows, So Do Guatemala's Hunger Pangs". *The New York Times*. Published January 5, 2013.

The commodity traders I spoke to have a different outlook on Guatemala's decreasing production of staple grains and the effects of the volatility of the international food commodity market on living conditions among rural agricultural producers. When it comes to fairer policies that safeguard traditionally produced foods one participant expressed,

We must remember that in a country with general malnutrition, we can't give ourselves the luxury of being demanding

Another consequence of reduced spending on social welfare programs is increased pressure for NGOs to fill the voids in society. NGOs often are regarded as a means to fulfill duties that are being neglected by the state by fostering locally-based knowledge and working on the ground<sup>141</sup>. In countries where corruption is rampant, NGOs may provide a more effective use of technical and financial resources that are better able to reach those in need. Nonetheless, others believe that the rise in prevalence of NGOs are a product of the takeover of the neo-liberalist project<sup>142</sup>. For example, in Guatemala's healthcare sector, NGOs who are assigned administrative tasks in conjunction with the ministry of health may have inadvertently weakened public participation in health and social reform<sup>143</sup>. One of the primary issues regarding NGOs in the field of international development, as noted by Lister, is that of legitimacy. Although legitimacy is not simple to define, it can encompass multiple layers such as an organization's ability to enact social change, how it

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<sup>141</sup> Erin Beck. "Countering Convergence: Agency and Diversity Among Guatemalan NGOs." *Latin American Politics and Society* 56.2 (2014): 141-62. Web.

<sup>142</sup> Ibid.

<sup>143</sup> Pfeiffer and Chapman

is perceived by the wider public, and its engagement with local peoples. Nonetheless, there is wide debate within the field of development *for whom* the ‘legitimacy’ should matter.

It also is important to consider the historical context of NGO presence in Guatemala. During the armed conflict, the state saw NGOs as a threat and was constantly undermining them<sup>144</sup>. NGOs were viewed as a threat to state power and many international NGOs abandoned their Guatemalan offices. Organizations reacted by operating underground, disbanding, or simply moving to neighboring countries<sup>145</sup>. After the conflict, they were seen as key actors in restoring democracy and facilitating the healing process<sup>146</sup>. The new constitution of 1985 created a provision for funding private NGOs who addressed issues of development in Guatemala.<sup>147</sup>

Beck notes that there is a clash between apolitical organizations that have high technical capacity and have been professionalized and more grassroots organizations whose practices are rooted in political ideology. According to the author, early NGOs in Guatemala were funded by religious groups and bilateral donors, such as USAID. These organizations were largely apolitical. Nonetheless, during the 1970s, as leftist ideas began to grow in popularity, many NGOs broke their relationships with USAID and religious donors and opted to engage with community-level activism and political mobilization in alliance with European donors.

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<sup>144</sup> Beck

<sup>145</sup> Ibid.

<sup>146</sup> Beck

<sup>147</sup> Ibid.

In the context of Guatemala, Lister observes that NGO's hold in high esteem 'local' knowledges despite sometimes not specifically noting what is considered as 'local'<sup>148</sup>. There is a larger trend to romanticize and essentialize what 'local' culture means. There are imaginary boundaries drawn over what constitutes 'authentic' versus 'non authentic' culture and these boundaries speak to a larger history of the colonization and subjugation over indigenous and peasant peoples.

In Guatemala, I observed that several local indigenous movements are working within a network of international humanitarian and nonprofit agencies. Moreover, I chatted with a few guests at my hostel who had some experiences volunteering with organic, fair trade, agricultural organizations and their respective operations. One young woman visited a farm with her Spanish-language program where they indulged in fair-trade coffee while touring the facilities and watched indigenous people farm their land 'the traditional way'. Moreover, looking at a few of the website I was referred me to by several guests, I noticed that many of these farms and operations depend, to some degree, on the goodwill of expats and foreigners who volunteer their labor or offer donations. Some of these farms offered tours and lessons for those curious about non-conventional forms of governance and indigenous folklore. While projects like these generate opportunity for discussion on responsible food practices, at times their success largely hinges on the perpetuation of stereotypes that harm that same groups they claim to serve. Moreover, indigenous knowledges become commodified and promulgated on terms that are not their own.

Trade liberalization and an influx of imported (and often subsidized,) goods can lead to export dependency. This has detrimental effects on a country's ability to achieve

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<sup>148</sup> Lister, Sarah. "NGO Legitimacy: Technical Issue or Social Construct?" *Critique of Anthropology* 23.2 (2003): 175-92. Web.

long-term and sustainable food security (or rather, food sovereignty as many critics of the current food system would advocate). Furthermore, there is also the component of securing land and resources for future production of export food and commodities to supply growing international demand. According to Naylor and Falcon, spikes in commodity prices occur an average of about 30 years. The authors note these spikes are “precipitated by multiple events of crises, and they are often amplified by food- and trade- policy interventions designed to stabilize domestic markets”<sup>149</sup>. The authors also note that external factors were mainly to blame for volatility in good prices. A report by the World Bank notes however that internal factors such as lack of adequate infrastructure and “weak institutions” that trouble many developing countries increase vulnerability and susceptibility to volatile<sup>150</sup>.

### **On Food Regimes and Food Access**

Perhaps the most tragic example of the dark side of a global food regime is corn production in places like Guatemala. Corn, perhaps the major crop of Guatemalans, has become increasingly undermined with the influx of foreign subsidized corn that outcompetes local producers. In Guatemala, corn supply fell 30% per capita within 1995 to 2005<sup>151</sup>. This is especially tragic for a cultural identity strongly tied to the cultivation and consumption of corn. If imported, genetically modified corn becomes the norm in Guatemala, what sort of repercussions does this have on a social level for the self-proclaimed ‘men of corn’?

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<sup>149</sup> Naylor and Falcon, 697

<sup>150</sup> Ibid. , 698

<sup>151</sup> Rosenthal

Trade relations between Guatemala and the United States illustrate an unequal relationship. More than half of imported corn in Guatemala comes from the United States. The notion that Guatemala imports more than half of its staple food source from the United States is very telling of the dependency that characterizes the relationship between the two. An astounding 92% of all imported wheat comes from the United States<sup>152</sup>. To no surprise, Guatemala's two biggest exports to the US are bananas and coffee. A lot of food also goes to waste, both in the process of exportation and in the harvest, in the words of an agricultural commodity exporter,

It's not a fair business...the idea is that the world is so big and the consumption is monstrous and everything put out sells [but that is not the case], so a lot of agronomists are trying to help locals increase the yields and be careful.

I met a farmer on the outskirts of Guatemala. It was late night, and he lived in a small concrete house that was at the end of a winding dirt path. Like many corn farmers in Guatemala, he was very particular about the corn he planted. He detailed the process of planting corn, watching it grow, and selecting the best pods to be replanted. He told me his family only uses seeds from a corn breed passed down from his ancestors, they rotate crops between beans and corn in a small plot of land, *a milpa*, not far from his house. From the biggest cob, they select the seeds from the middle. His particular breed of choice is his own hybrid of Oaxacan corn. He told me,

It is the best for us, the corn from the seed- salesman does not work for us because his corn rots easily and we cannot store it for more than 3 months. The corn we plant is resistant, and we know it well. We do not just trust any sort of corn, [this corn] is what our father taught us.

This farmer, along with another man I interviewed at the side of the road, seemed to be

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<sup>152</sup> Observatory for Economic Complexicity: Guatemala data

quite possessive with their seeds. The perfecting of their crops had taken years, perhaps decades, and they were wary of seeds from the North that were finding their ways into the community. Interestingly, they were just as wary of darker corn hybrids, whose spores would contaminate their fields and tint the corn.

Almost all participants claimed to feel the effects of rising international demand for someone of their favorite foods. One of the most common desires was affordable quality meat.

Meat is too expensive in Guatemala. Here in Guatemala there are problems with cattle ranching. Those who have cattle have agreed to increase prices on meat, and all the good meat goes abroad.

Indigenous people do not have much have a lot of opportunity to eat meat therefore, their diet is consists mainly of greens

One participant expressed that similarities in diets between farm animals and people is an important aspect in nourishment from animal products and meat. Furthermore, the animals that roam freely in the fog covered sierras and lush valley alike, consuming a diet of corn and scraps, are considered to be those that are *del pais* or “of the country”. These chickens were highly desirable, but also more expensive than supermarket chicken whose origin is likely an industrial farm far from the community. Moreover, two participants expressed disdain for the ‘chemicals’ and anti-biotics used in industrially farmed chickens.

A chicken that you buy now, is not pure like before... we have chickens of the country and they are just fed pure corn and don't have as many chemicals.

Participants blamed growing foreign demand for quality meat as the reason for the decline in availability of meat for domestic consumption. Increasing meat production is one of the main drivers of deforestation in Guatemala<sup>153</sup>. From 1950 to 2010, Guatemalan

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<sup>153</sup> Tomei and Diaz-Chavez

forest cover has fallen from 64% to 34%<sup>154</sup>. Moreover, as demand for meat products goes up in many parts of the world, the demand for grains and feedstock to support the production of meat will further strain environmental resources. It is projected that meat consumption will rise over 70% by 2050<sup>155</sup>.

While none of the participants refused to consume industrial farm-raised, it was not of their preference. Furthermore, one participant, a farmhand who had worked in agriculture for most of his life, expressed that his family would save up for a quality, “of the country” chicken for celebrations and stretch the meat by making chicken stew. For daily life, they mainly lived off beans and corn.

### **Guatemala and the 2008 Food Price Crisis**

There is no shortage in literature concerned with both the causes and consequences of the 2008 food price crisis. The crisis is undoubtedly an indication of a bigger problem: the unsustainability of our current global food system. In a broader sense, the processes associated with globalization are incompatible with and destructive to indigenous and rural ways of life. This is a common theme in both the literature and my interviews conducted with rural agricultural workers. Furthermore, as developing countries of the Global South are further integrated into the global food system, inequality between the rich and poor grows. Shocks in food prices are especially devastating in countries like Guatemala, where a great number of indigenous and rural communities, who have traditionally survived from subsistence agriculture, face disenfranchisement as a result of rampant globalization.

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<sup>154</sup> Tomei and Diaz-Chavez

<sup>155</sup> Popp et al.

Although food security is an underlying theme, the advent of a global food regime (starting with colonialism,) restructures the relationship between humans and the environment rendering land and natural systems as commodities. Furthermore, I also wish to examine the limitations that indigenous and rural populations face when attempting to politically mobilize.

The burden of the 2008 global food price crisis, characterized by spikes in food prices, fell greatest on developing nations. As food prices soared, rising as high as 130% for wheat and 31% for corn, obstacles and limits to the accessibility of staple grain crops threatened the wellbeing of vulnerable and marginalized populations in the Global South<sup>156</sup>. By some estimates, the first half of 2008 saw the tripling of the following four commodities: wheat, rice, maize and petroleum<sup>157</sup>. In Latin America, where resource conflicts are deeply imbedded in a history of colonialism and commodity production, rising food prices and the acquisition of land (a process known as ‘land grabbing’, which will be discussed in a later chapter,) as a result of the food price fluctuation bears devastating effects for many poor rural households.

In Guatemala, a number of indigenous and rural communities who depend on subsistence agriculture are increasingly finding themselves landless as a result of privatization of natural resources for mining and agriculture. Nonetheless, the long and short-term effects of the 2008 food crisis on Guatemala are difficult to assess. de Janvry and Sadoulet examine the importance of price transmission from international to domestic food. In their analysis of wholesale food commodity prices measured in Guatemala’s

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<sup>156</sup> Conceição, Pedro, and Ronald U Mendoza. "Anatomy of the Global Food Crisis." *Third World Quarterly* 30.6 (2009): 1159-182. Web.

<sup>157</sup> Naylor and Falcon

central market, there was a “nominal producer price increase” of 29% in the case of rice, 14% for maize and 11% for beans<sup>158</sup>.

The government of Guatemala has done little to protect any sort of safety net for those affected to shocks in food prices. According to the Rural Studies Collective (Cer-Ixim), a collective of scholars and researchers studying vital rural and agrarian issues in Guatemala, the Guatemalan government has no “emergency supply plan, let alone a reserve plan to help regulate the prices of food”<sup>159</sup>. The government has also notoriously under-invested in local agriculture favoring large-scale plantations and foreign control over land and natural resources.

As a response to the 2008 crisis, the government of Guatemala issued various social programs to disperse food to those in need. These efforts were administered by the Ministry of Livestock, Agriculture and Food (MAGA), Ministry of Education, and the Ministry of Public Health and Social Welfare, among others<sup>160</sup>. One of these responses were the programs of the *Comedor Solidario*<sup>161</sup> and the *Bolsa Solidaria* (Solidarity Bag). The government of Perez-Molina instituted the Solidarity Bag program, a form of food assistance provided to families in poverty. In its inauguration, there were upwards of 3,200 recipients, most of whom were women<sup>162</sup>. Six of the agricultural producers I interviewed

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<sup>158</sup> De Janvry

<sup>159</sup> Oxfam. *Food Crises Doomed to Repeat until Leaders Find Courage to Fix Problems*. Oxfam International, Aug. 2012. Web.

<sup>160</sup> Ricardo Zepeda ed, *The Right to Food and the Situation of Human Rights Defenders in Guatemala*. APRODEV, CIDSE, CIFCA, FIAN, and Vía Campesina International. Aug. 2011. Web

<sup>161</sup> The solidarity diner program is much like a soup kitchen where those in need can purchase meals for little to no cost

<sup>162</sup> Oxfam, Food Price Crisis

received a solidarity bag or some other form of direct food assistance. The majority of the agricultural workers had a positive response to the Solidarity Diner and Bag programs. Furthermore, these participants expressed gratitude for being provided food assistance and consumed all of the items they received. Nonetheless, not all attitudes towards direct food assistance were positive. One participant had a more critical view of the program:

The vice president of Guatemala incentivized people to not cultivate their lands... It was a negative thing for many people because it spoiled them and [they did not want] to work the land. She did this because she got international aid and was stealing money. This was a way for her to appear that she was doing something for the people. What happened? People misused this help. People are going to get used to not working and only receiving. Now when they don't have help, what are they to do, since they did not work the land? Before we had a worry that if we did not work the lands, we could not produce the alimentation necessary for survival.

Policy-makers and development practitioners have long taken the availability of cheap foods for granted. Naylor and Frances note that “For decades preceding [the 2008 Food Price Crisis], agriculture had received waning attention from the global development community as real food prices declined on trend”. Lower food prices, as a result of an international food web held together by subsidies, intensive agriculture and other inequities, was seen as sufficient in providing hungry people with food. The 2008 food price financial crisis had devastating and complex effects on the ability for those living in poverty to access foods. Economic volatility is not the only foreseeable threat to food security; the increasing effects of climate change are too large to be ignored. For instance, during the summer of 2015 Guatemala experienced a significant delay in its rainy season, causing farmers to hold out on planting their crops. Even more unsettling was the uncertainty of how much rain would be coming in the near future. The harvest season

started late, and farmers were worried that their crops would have difficulty growing in such unpredictable circumstances.

## CHAPTER V

### FOOD AND THE GUATEMALAN IDENTITY

#### Findings

When it came to naming dishes that they feel are tied to their identity, almost all participants named the same few dishes. Among the most popular were *hilachas*, *tamales*, *caldo de pollo*, and *pepian*. The dish of *Hilachas* (a personal favorite, see figure 4,) is composed of shredded beef drowned in a tomato and tomatillo sauce served with rice and potatoes. Guatemalan tamales are quite similar to their Mexican counterparts except they usually wrapped in *maxan* or plantain leaves. There are a dozen varieties of tamales in Guatemala including *chuchitos*, which are smaller tamales stuffed with meats and wrapped



Figure 4- *Hilachas* (photo by author)

in corn leaves. *Caldo de Pollo* is essentially chicken soup seasoned with local herbs and spices that vary between households. Several participants, who worked as day laborers on a plantation, expressed to me that *caldo de pollo* was their dish of choice for special occasions. One participant told me that for baptisms and birthdays, he and his neighbors

would pitch in to buy a chicken and make *caldo de pollo*. Unfortunately, his family was unable to afford pastries but *caldo de pollo* was enough to keep them happy and warm during the colder nights. *Pepian* is a meat stew made from red chilies, fruits, and vegetables often served with a side of rice and tortillas. *Pepian* is categorized in Guatemala as a *recado*, which would translate as curry or sauce in English. In Mayan dialects, *recado* is referred to as *jocon*.

Commonly mentioned celebratory foods include tamales, *caldo de res*, *caldo de pollo*, and chocolate, among other things. Many participants expressed that pork and cow meat consumption was fairly common during celebrations and festivities. Moreover, several participants told me that meat preparation for celebrations and other special occasions was all-day feat entrenched in specific cultural procedures.

Guatemalan's feel the pressure of the globalizing food system. There are many important foods that Guatemalan's feel they can no longer afford. As people are moving into cities, and agriculture becomes more expensive as a result of climate change and external demand, the ability to access important cultural foods is perceived as being under threat. This was the sentiment of most of the agricultural producers I interviewed.

Comida típica is the most delicious of all Guatemala, but too expensive to provide and it is more expensive to make yourself

With money, one can enjoy [traditional] foods, without money even if one desires, it is impossible.

In this area, we have changed our habits but are returning to simple eating of our ancestors... because of a lack of money

For our wellbeing, it is important to consume customary foods, it is the custom of our Guatemala

Those are foods that our ancestors made, the mayans. They are the mole, pepian, caciue, everything that is Maya.

To many, food is at the heart of the Guatemalan identity. Moreover, I noticed that many of the dishes participants expressed they could eat more, such as *pepian* and *hilachas*, consisted of meat. I sat across the table from a friend in one of the many *comida tipica* eateries throughout the city. This place was a favorite of his and he took his time explaining to me the differences between each dishes on the menu.

Families who are really poor often share a large bowl of *hilachas* and dip *tamalitos* into the soup to be full.

The *tamalito* he referred to was a solid mass of *masa* or corn dough that had been steamed. Drawing from my interviews and conversations here in Guatemala, corn is a vital part of countering hunger and sustaining human beings. Corn is not only filling, but incredibly versatile and presents itself in everything from porridge to desserts. The widely circulated magazine, *Revista D*, writes that *atol blanco* (white porridge) is a drink that transcends social classes because it is very easy to make, nutritious and healing.

The availability of *comida tipica* outside of the domestic sphere is just as important for maintaining cultural cohesion. A chef at a well-known place that serves *comida tipica* in Antigua revealed that she takes pride in providing typical food to guests because “they eat with *gusto* and they know what is going into their food” in reference to the familiarity of the ingredients that go into typical dishes. This particular chef liked to go over ingredients and their origins whenever guests asked questions over what they were eating.

I walked along the 6<sup>th</sup> street of Zone 1 in Guatemala’s capital city, one of the busier parts of the city. Vendors approached me selling trinkets, phone chargers, and local snacks as I hurried among the sea of pedestrians. I could not locate the famous kitchen of Pu, which engaged in a unique effort to plate Mayan foods and make indigenous foods

appealing to wider audiences, within the bustling streets and endless shopping centers. I finally arrived, five minutes before the scheduled interview and about an hour until the lunch rush would fill the place. The restaurant was small, but decorated with bright colors and seating was arranged in such a way to emphasize the bar and food preparation area. Most seating was at the bar, where I was later told that guests enjoyed the privilege of watching their food be prepared. I nervously introduced myself before I located the Doña in the corner of the restaurant, dressed in beautiful traditional Mayan dress made out of woven huipil thread. We sat in a table by the bar and as the daily rainfall passed us by.

This is the first time I have ever heard the term ‘indigenous cuisine’. I think what is more applicable is Mayan food or cuisine because the term “indigenous cuisine” might exist but it is a concept of colonialism. It is not wrong to use it because it has its place in the *lucha campesina* and other such movements. But for those of us who study the origins of culture, we see that this is a concept that is born in the colonial era. When we talk about Mayan cuisine, we are trying to encapsulate forms of cooking, histories and culture of the Mayans.

I travelled to Guatemala intending to uncover ‘indigenous’ and ‘campesino’ gastronomy. Nonetheless, I was greeted with a rude awakening when I discovered that no such thing exists. My epistemic privilege had gone unchecked. As I conducted by interviews, it became more apparent that land ownership, or at least the equitable distribution of land, is critical to food security. For the agricultural producers, their identity was largely tied to their occupation. Consequentially, their food habits, attitudes, and practices were largely tied to agricultural activity. One agricultural worker desired for her children to continue the tradition of the farming. She maintained a belief that, in her own words,

Working the land is how you attain knowledge about the world

In Pu's restaurant, which specializes in Mayan gastronomy, she has noted the increase of tourists introduced to the locale from their Guatemalan relatives. She finds it interesting that despite the variety of choice in dining, families would make reservations in advance for tables at her eatery.

Deep down, [the patrons] identify the food with their own story. Why don't they take [their families] to Burger King? They bring them here because for them, it has importance. I like to see these gestures... how they value this space.

She believes that many people desire to feel reconnected with their ancestry. Furthermore, while many may view her restaurant as a novelty, she is serious about her desire to re-claim the story of her ancestors through the power of gastronomy. Participants related typical and ancestral foods to notions of 'knowledge' and 'sophistication' especially when it came to food preparation and sourcing ingredients. Almost all of the agricultural workers had gardens with herbs used for seasoning their favorite dishes. The use of herbs and leaves was brought up in many of the interviews with agricultural producers. Each person seemed to have their herb of choice that they grew in their gardens to season their foods. In addition, Pu has her family from the interior parts of the country send her herbs which she cannot find in the city market.

Furthermore, there was a clear distinction between Guatemalan cooking and indigenous cooking. When constructing my interview materials, I felt it would be important to differentiate between *comida tipica*, which can be seen as the traditional food of Guatemalan with various influences including Spanish and Mexican, and culturally significant foods of those who identify as indigenous and/or *campesino*. Many participants agreed that for indigenous cooking (as well as those who identify as *campesino*), dishes were based on what was immediately available to them in their home and gardens,

indigenous or *campesino* gastronomy, at least in the context of Guatemala, can be at times a bit farcical. A chef at a popular and rather colorful backpacker's hostel explained:

The ingredients that indigenous use are those that they cultivate. [non-indigenous Guatemalan's] have to find ingredients from supermarkets and recipes in order to make our food. Indigenous and rural people create dishes using what they have on their land.

Doña Pu highlighted a few important distinction between food that was specifically *mayan* and *comida típica*.

Something that is specific to Mayan cuisine, that it is understood by, are the forms of preparation. We have for example jurumimul. Why the name? Because it is referred to as its form of being prepared. It is not like international cooking where the name is defined by its ingredients. The technique and method is emphasized...Guatemalan food I believe does have Mayan roots, but with some evolutions. What Guatemalan cuisine does is retake ingredients from international cuisines. It became formalized in the colonial era. I think that this is the major differences between Mayan and Guatemalan cuisine. When you observe [an indigenous] dish, it does have a way of preparing that has a Mayan base... and this cannot be found in other parts of the world. I would say that the difference is that the Mayan food has the base in the millennium and in Guatemalan food, there is a strong representation of colonial times. And so there are temporal differences

Nonetheless, the central distinction I drew from *comida típica* and indigenous and/or *campesino* food was the significance of land ownership. Recipes for dishes that were *típico* are widely available, yet many of the foods that people in rural areas eat, whether they are daily dishes or for special occasions, are passed intergenerationally. Moreover, the knowledge of the *siembra* and food preparation is important for many families. Mothers teach their daughters how to prepare *tortillas* and fathers show their son how to plant and harvest essential grains. In the words of one farmer,

My father taught us how to work and plant many things...here we make everything that we consume

Many agricultural producers I interviewed are proud of their labor and desire for their children to follow their footsteps and learn how to work the land. The following is an

interaction I observed between a farmer and his son, when speaking to that subsistence farmer over the fate of future generations and their ability to secure traditional foods for themselves:

Just because you have two or three ties does not mean I will not take you to the milpa, you must help me. You must work.

He says this looking to his son who seated next to him and smiling. His son, a young man with a city bank job now dressed in a sports t-shirt, replies.

I have to wake up at four in the morning!

Yes son, and none of that going in a car, son, we must walk.

Moreover, there is worry that future generations will abandon the tradition of eating typical and ancestral foods. People are already noticing changes in the eating habits of younger generations. These are the words of several participants,

Now the majority of youth only like fast food like pizza, McDonalds, Pollo Campero, everything that is fast but not sophisticated.

I feel that the tradition is ending because now youth are not interested in what our customs are, they want to eat other things...what we did not used to have, they wish to now eat.

[Younger generations] are forgetting about the best types of food that are rooted in tradition because food practices now do not want to use ancestral knowledge

One of the participants admitted that sometimes, especially in times of celebration, he and his family would splurge on Pollo Campero, a wildly popular Guatemalan chain of fried chicken. While for some the rise in popularity of fried chicken represented the inevitable demise of globalizations, for others fried chicken is a way into a culinary experience that breaks the monotony of a diet consisting of staple grains. Doña Pu however, expressed disdain for such practices.

Sometimes for example, children will celebrate their birthdays in fast food places, according to them this is part of being educated but it is not.

She believed that children should associate celebration with heritage, thus the employment of traditional dishes in festivities was vital to cultural survival. The worry that young generations will not continue food customs is not limited to the participants I spoke with. While drinking coffee one morning, I flipped through a few issues of the popular *Revista D*, a news magazine. Featured in this issue was an article highlighting the traditional candies of Amatitlan and how newer generations do not have the same appreciation for the candies as their parents and ancestors did<sup>163</sup>. Moreover, making these fruit and sugar based candies is a very time-consuming and labor-intensive task.

According to the author, the candies were first introduced by the Spaniards in 1524, who had been consumers of them since the Moorish invasion of the Iberian Peninsula. The candies co-evolved with the rise of the sugar-cane industry in Guatemala when Natives mixed the flavors of tropical fruit with the sweetness of sugar. Newer generations are disinterested in the engaging with the production of these candies, instead opting for university education and higher-paying factory jobs as means to achieve a higher social and economic status. Furthermore, there has also been little investment in generating a market for traditional artisanal candies. Although supermarkets carry mass-produced versions of the candies, quality has been sacrificed in pursuit of higher profit margins.

Obesity is also becoming an issue in Guatemalan society, especially in metropolitan areas where people live in small houses or apartments with little space for cultivation and work long hours in sedentary jobs. Moreover, Guatemala experiences a

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<sup>163</sup> Julieta Sandoval. "Delicia Atractiva." *Revista D* 29 Apr. 2012: 20-21. Print.

“double burden”, where undernutrition remains inadequately treated while obesity is on the rise as a result of changing eating habits<sup>164</sup>. Moreover, children who are malnourished during infancy are more likely to be obese later in life<sup>165</sup>.

While almost participants expressed disdain for effects of globalization on the landscape of food choice, some were aware of the worsening economic conditions that many people faced. One participant expressed that while tastes might be changing, there are also other factors at play when it comes to determining access and consumption to cultural foods.

It is also an economic issue, if people cannot afford traditional foods, they might turn to cheap, processed foods that are faster to make.

Our children must work a lot to make sure we all have enough food

Nonetheless, others were more hopeful about current and future access to food. According to Doña Pu,

In the communities, sometimes people are very poor, and cannot afford traditional foods. A lot of people live in poverty and despite their poverty, give a lot of importance to keep culture alive. They live their culture. We should also not deny the influence of fast and transnational food. We are not going to deny this. Fast food has no significance at a societal level. But in celebrations, and marriages and ceremonies as well as quotidian festivals, these food practices with cultural significance do exist. Many of us do continue with that structure of the community. Ancestral powers are felt and lived throughout food. In many cultures, food is also central to power. For example, when a women is to get married, there will always be food, and this food is not just any food but it is special... It has to have significance for all the individuals involved.

Another, an older man practicing subsistence agriculture, is grateful that his children are given more choices than he was.

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<sup>164</sup> The World Bank, *Nutrition at a Glance: Guatemala*. Washington D.C. (2011). Web

<sup>165</sup> The World Bank

My children eat different because they have more access, they can eat more now...I am generally happy so long they have the resources.

All of the agricultural producers felt that access to culturally-significant foods, which denote ancestral and typical foods that individuals identified as important to their cultural identity, was limited to celebrations and special occasions. The diet of the majority of producers I spoke to consisted of corn and beans, and sometimes eggs or other dairy products. Many expressed gratitude for their diet of staple grains that the earth had provided to them through their labor. Here are some thoughts:

We have never left the frijol

The frijol is grateful, it grows

We are a blessed country, and we have been allowed to have all the ingredients that we use in our gastronomy. For example, tomato, onions, chiles, all of that grows here in Guatemala... even if they bring seeds from other parts, it will grow here.

### **Gastronomy and the Tourism Sector**

The picture below (figure 5,) was taken in San Marcos, a small village on the edge of the sacred Lake Atitlan. I went on a weekend trip and was puzzled by what I encountered. The small villages surrounding the lake, consisting of concrete buildings perched on the side of a hill, were occupied by foreigners (like me). Despite the small size of San Marcos, there seemed to be an endless array of massage parlors and yoga retreats to serve the whims of even the most seasoned expert in new-age spirituality. It was as if the sacredness of the lake had been snatched from the hands of the local people and rebranded as a place where party meets paradise. Local people did remain in the village however, often working as cooks and servers in the several gourmet restaurants where hungry tourists

retreated from their festivities and indulged in organic coffee to pair with their grass-fed steak dinner.



Figure 5- Restaurant sign in San Marcos, Guatemala (photo by author)

I saw no places that served traditional Guatemalan food. Most places, like the one pictured above, sold some combination of Asian, Italian, and American cuisines. The restaurant where I had dinner one evening was a place where the Australian owner boasted about the fried camembert, and women dressed in their indigenous *traje*, flipped pizza dough while joking to each other in their native tongues. In Antigua, the restaurant sector seems to be partially occupied by high-end Italian and European eateries. Even in the City, the newest gated shopping center *Cayala*, the first place one of my Guatemalan friends took me to upon arriving, was modeled after colonial Guatemala. *Cayala* is home to many

high-restaurants and luxury clothing stores. When I expressed that I wanted to try Guatemalan food, I was told we would have to head to the other part of town.

Nevertheless, the culinary experts interviewed believed that promoting Guatemalan gastronomy in the tourism industry was important, for several reasons.

Through food, we allow ourselves to be known. People know Guatemala by their gastronomy. These [other] cultures, like ours, have their dishes very marked in their culture. We have a very different seasoning.

I noticed many diners where for Q10 (USD \$1.50), one could buy a meal that consisted of an entrée, side salad, tortillas, rice, and a bagged drink. These places are especially popular during the lunch hour, where waiting lines pass through the front door and finding a place to sit is an impossible feat. There are also many eateries both in the market and beyond that serve *comida típica*. Nonetheless, when speaking to travelers at my hostel, food was rarely on their list of things to explore in Guatemala. Many were too worried about sanitation to feast on food carts and diners around town, opting instead for more upscale eateries (a lot of which served Mexican food,) or chain restaurants. In Antigua, however, there are a few culinary schools where guests enjoy cooking lessons and tours on ‘traditional’ Mayan foods that align the Mayan ‘tradition’ with the great civilization and impressive pyramids. For the most part, these culinary schools tend to cater to tourists by providing classes in English and/or translators. This nonetheless, can be problematic as Antigua’s charm lies in its colonial aesthetics. Colonial aesthetics also bleed into some aspects of Guatemalan culinary practices today, particularly within the tourist sector. Moreover, Doña Pu had a strong opinion when it came to the use of indigenous symbols in the tourist industry. She said,

If you go to Antigua, you can find [foods like] beans that are cooked with a variety of ingredients that are more integrated with international cuisine. Nonetheless, the appropriation and presentation has to do a little with Mayan culture and its context has to do with the era of colonialism... There are some people who only want to look at Mayan culture for tourism, or only for promoting tourism. I would say that if we look at it this way, it can benefit economic development, but it is not of integrity. Our culture is just a tourist object, but something that is alive. It is not just folklorico, it is something real that has a story and something that can be given continuity. The function of the state want to make the culture serve as a tourist object to make money. When I look at tourist publications a lot of time, our culture is reduced to an object. I would like to emphasize that things are not like this because authentic culture does exist... In Guatemala, culture exists and it is very alive.

According to Britton, the tourism industry maintains a relentless search for “novelty and alternative experiences”<sup>166</sup>. When visiting exotic locales, there are expectations and many tourists have pre-conceived ideas of what is ‘authentic’ versus non authentic. Nonetheless, these narratives of authenticity tend to exclude local peoples. It is especially problematic in developing countries, such as Guatemala, where the portrayal mimics colonial imaginings of indigenous culture.

## **Conclusion**

There is no denying that food holds an important place in Guatemalan daily life and in times of celebration. Despite this, Guatemalan cuisine remains largely understudied and underappreciated on an international level. Moreover, lack of access to culturally-significant foods was a common theme for most participants, including those involved in the culinary sector. Factors contributing to decreased access include the influx of processed

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<sup>166</sup> S. Britton. "Tourism, Capital, and Place: Towards a Critical Geography of Tourism." *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space Environ. Plann. D* 9.4 (1991): 451-78. Pg. 454 Web.

foods, shifting interests within young generations, and as will be explored in the next section, restricted land ownership.

## CHAPTER VI

### FUELING HUNGER: RESOURCE RIGHTS, FOOD SECURITY, AND THE IMPACT OF BIOFUELS IN RURAL GUATEMALA

#### **The State of Resource Rights in Guatemala**

This Chapter aims to evaluate the food versus fuel debate and the effects of biofuel demand on indigenous and rural communities in Guatemala and their land and resource rights. The debate centered on the effects of the increased production of sugarcane and palm oil to meet rising demand for biofuels is illustrative of the shortsightedness of the current sustainability paradigm. Guatemala is place rich in natural resources (figure 6).



Figure 6- Worker in plantation (photo by author)

Nonetheless, economic elites have long controlled the use of these resources and unequal access has resulted in great socioeconomic disparity. It is important to explore the current state of land and resource ownership in Guatemala in order to understand the hazards of pursuing green capitalist endeavors. Green capitalism, also known as eco-capitalism, is in essence the capitalist response to environmental degradation that has largely resulted from unsustainable consumption practices. As mentioned before, green capitalism is negotiating with the flaws of a broken system within the parameters set by that same system. The last part of this section will examine community-based development schemes, primarily the Community-Based Forest Management scheme recommended by the UN Food and Agriculture Association (FAO).

The term ‘biofuels’, or agrofuels, refers to energy produced from biomass, mainly plant materials. For the sake of clarity, I choose to mainly focus on bioethanol derived from crops like sugarcane as well as biodiesel derived from vegetable oils. I wish to make this distinction due to the environmental and political implications associated with the processes of growing feedstock. I believe this distinction is crucial because of the politicization of our food production system. Along the same lines, failure to make clear distinction results in the simplification of discourse that goes beyond ‘food versus fuel’. For example, there exist different power and social dynamics at play in a situation where wood used for wooden stoves in rural areas versus corn-derived ethanol involving subsidies.

I also acknowledge the availability of a wide variety of literature focusing on the technical limitations of biofuels, such as energy yield in relation to required inputs as well as environmental degradation that results from conventional agricultural practices.

Nonetheless, my thesis focuses on the social impacts of increased agricultural operations. For this reason, I wish to restrain from delving too deep into these technical limitations. On a similar note, jatropha has been seen a promising crops for biodiesel given its ability to grow on marginal lands<sup>167</sup>. Nonetheless, these efforts have been quite limited.

As the planet’s population continues to grow, hitting an estimated 9 billion by 2050, there will be a need to keep up with global demand for food and other commodities<sup>168</sup>. Within the next forty years, agricultural production will experience a 60% increase<sup>169</sup>. As a result, developing countries are expected to increase arable land by at least 120 ha.<sup>170</sup>. As prices for oil skyrocket, and international tension over diminishing supplies increases, there is a growing need to re-assess our dependence on fossil fuels. To many, biofuels are a viable solution.

Although biofuels are renewable and produce lower GHGs, there are concerns regarding land degradation, depletion of water sources, and rising food prices that compromise food security. Despite this, the Ministry for Energy and Mining insists that in the case of Guatemala, ethanol production does not “conflict with nutritional security”<sup>171</sup>. In Guatemala, land displacement has resulted in violence and the forceful eviction of people from their lands<sup>172</sup>. In a few instances, houses have been burned and several have

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<sup>167</sup> Tomei and Diaz-Chavez

<sup>168</sup> Popp, J., et al.

<sup>169</sup> Popp, J., et al.

<sup>170</sup> Popp, J. et al.

<sup>171</sup> Ministerio de Energia y Minas de la Republica de Guatemala. “Acciones realizadas para el desarrollo de biocombustibles en Guatemala”. Powerpoint.

<sup>172</sup> Rosenthal

been killed<sup>173</sup>. For this reason, I believe that a successful transition to biofuels is one that embraces true sustainability. In order to ensure that full sustainability is met, there must be regard for not only nature but for people as well.

Guatemala is one of the most desired locations for the production of biofuel. Aside from being the highest sugarcane producer in Central America, Guatemala's palm oil industry is second largest in the region<sup>174</sup>. Out of fourteen sugar mills currently in Guatemala, only 5 are ethanol producers<sup>175</sup>. Moreover, Over 80% of ethanol produced (derived from sugarcane,) is exported<sup>176</sup>. In a report by the US Department of Agriculture, Guatemala's inclusion into the US-Brazil Biofuel Initiative and funding from the Inter-American Bank are expected to push Guatemala into creating legislature that favors biofuel. Not only will this make them a producer, but a consumer as well.<sup>177</sup> According to estimates from the Guatemala's Association for Renewable Fuels (ACR), Guatemala could lower its greenhouse gas emissions by at least 150 thousand metric tons with the introduction of a 10% blend mandate<sup>178</sup>. These mandate could also translate to a reduction of over \$300 million US on petroleum import expenditures, according to the Ministry of Energy and Mines<sup>179</sup>. With some investment in distillation and dehydration technology,

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<sup>173</sup> Rosenthal

<sup>174</sup> Karla Tay, "Update on Ethanol and Biodiesel Issues". USDA Foreign Agricultural Service: Global Agricultural Information Network. 2013.

<sup>175</sup> Tay

<sup>176</sup> Aida Lorenzo de Juarez, "Biocombustibles y Oportunidades en Guatemala". Asociación de Combustibles Renovables de Guatemala. 12 Feb. 2013.

<sup>177</sup> Tay

<sup>178</sup> Lorenzo de Juarez

<sup>179</sup> Tay

Guatemala's sugarcane industry could meet a 10% blend mandate<sup>180</sup>. Moreover, Guatemala signed Strategy 2020 agreement. The agreement called for a 15% reduction of fossil fuel consumption in transportation, which could be achieved through increased biofuel consumption<sup>181</sup>. It is important to note that Guatemala experienced liberalization in 1998 in order to keep fuel prices low.

Currently, the Decree Law 17-85 dictates that all gasoline must have a minimum ethanol blend of 5%<sup>182</sup>. This law, instituted in 1985, serves many purposes. The mandate is meant to generate employment, foster energy independence and diversify the sugarcane sector. The law was implemented as a response to rising oil prices and falling sugar prices that forced major sugarcane exporters to consider diversification<sup>183</sup>. There have been several attempts at the legislative level to develop the biofuels sector since the passing of 17-85 but they have all been met with opposition from importers of petroleum and other private sector actors<sup>184</sup>. Moreover, the development of the biofuels sector has been largely led by private actors. Since then, Guatemala has created a National Commission for Biofuels in 1997 whose primary goal is to oversee the development, production, and use of biofuels in the country<sup>185</sup>. Furthermore, investment in biofuel production is expected to

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<sup>180</sup> Tomei and Diaz-Chavez

<sup>181</sup> Tomei and Diaz-Chavez

<sup>182</sup> Decreta 17-85 de Guatemala

<sup>183</sup> Tay

<sup>184</sup> Tomei and Diaz- Chavez

<sup>185</sup> Bureau of International Labor Affairs, "Guatemala: 2014 Findings on the Worst Forms of Child Labor". United States Department of Labor. 2014

generate jobs and development in poor rural areas. Currently, the sugar and oil palm industries directly employ around 80,000 people<sup>186</sup>.

Nonetheless, plantation work is difficult and often pays below the federal mandated minimum wage of Q2,644.50 and child laborers have been found in sugarcane plantations<sup>187</sup>. Still, many believe that expanding the sugarcane and palm oil sectors could be key for fostering much needed economic growth in Guatemala. Another important issue is investment in developing a domestic demand especially given the lack of infrastructure in some parts of Guatemala. With support from the OAS and IDB, The US-Brazil Biofuels initiative seeks to promote the use of biofuels domestically.

There are also several environmental concerns. For example, the intensive and unaccounted use of land and water resources as well as inadequate farming techniques are incredibly unsustainable practices, despite being part of the process of biofuel production. Several reports, including the United Nations and European Union's reports on biofuel production, have highlighted these potential harms.<sup>188</sup> Intensive large-scale crop production leads to the harming of land and water resources.

Expanded biofuel production requires productive agricultural lands, major agrochemical inputs, such as fertilizers and pesticides, extensive usage of water, monoculture cropping system, and the clearance of forest to use the new land for biofuel

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<sup>186</sup> Rosenthal

<sup>187</sup> Tomei and Diaz-Chavez

<sup>188</sup> European Commission, "Assessing the impact of biofuels production on developing countries from the point of view of Policy Coherence for Development – Final Report", Feb 2013. United Nations Environment Program, "Assessing Biofuels- Full Report", 2009.

production<sup>189</sup>. Furthermore, inappropriate cultivation practices can diminish soil organic matter and increase soil erosion by removing permanent soil cover. Any form of mechanical manipulation to land can lead to the loss soil structure and soil organic matter and soil compaction, decrease in infiltration and drainage, and loss of soil biodiversity, compromising soil health<sup>190</sup>. Intensive use of agrochemicals can also result in the depletion and pollution of water supplies. Other impacts include land degradation, increased greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions and a loss of biodiversity.

Guatemala is one of the poorest and politically unstable countries in Latin America. One of the biggest obstacles to equality in Guatemala, both current and historically, is land distribution. In all of Latin America, Guatemala is second most unequal in regards to land distribution<sup>191</sup>. According to Oxfam, an estimated 80% of the land is owned by the by Guatemala's elite 8%<sup>192</sup>. An estimated 87% of agricultural producers worked only 12% of arable land in Guatemala<sup>193</sup>. Moreover, the UN dictates that 1.4 ha of land is sufficient for subsistence farming<sup>194</sup>. The average Guatemalan farm is closer to .2 ha. According to Fradejas and Guaster, almost the majority of farms in Guatemala fall into the following 2 categories: "infra-subsistence" (which implies that production levels are not enough for survival,) and subsistence<sup>195</sup>. What is unsettling about this number is the fact that these

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<sup>189</sup> European Commission

<sup>190</sup> European Commission, 73.

<sup>191</sup> FAO, 'VI Censo Nacional Agropecuario, Características Generales de las Fincas Censales y de Productoras y Productores Agropecuarios, Resultados Definitivos, Vol. I. Guatemala'. Rome, United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization. (2004). 78–79,

<sup>192</sup> Oxfam, Food Price crisis Report

<sup>193</sup> Tomei and Diaz-Chavez

<sup>194</sup> Tomei and Diaz- Chavez

<sup>195</sup> Fradejas and Gauster, 2006 look it up

groups only control a meager 22% of the land<sup>196</sup>. Moreover, 45% of all farms can be categorized as “infra-subsistence” yet they control only 3% of the land. In stark contrast, the average size of a pam operation is around 630 ha and around 13 ha for sugar<sup>197</sup>. Little space exists in the legal realm to address lack of access to land resources since Guatemala lacks any sort of comprehensive land law guaranteeing equitable access to land.

The concentration of land ownership to the wealthy as well as corporate entities is only getting worse<sup>198</sup>. Segeour et al., in their study of how Guatemala was affected by the 2008 Food Price Crisis, classify households “based on sector of residence and access to land” in attempt to “contrast their net positions on food markets”<sup>199</sup>. The emphasis the authors place on access to land is key. Land ownership is an important security net for many rural dwellers, not only in Guatemala but in other parts of the world. Furthermore, the food price crisis was felt harder by medium and large agricultural producers since their livelihood greatly depends on selling what they produce on the market<sup>200</sup>.

Around 70% of households depend on agriculture to make a living<sup>201</sup>. Rural populations make up roughly 52% of the total population. Furthermore, more than half (56%) of those in poverty engaged in agriculture<sup>202</sup>. Despite being in the majority, rural dwellers are at a great disadvantage in Guatemalan society. As Janvry and Sadoulet argue

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<sup>196</sup> Berdegue and Fuentealba

<sup>197</sup> Tomei and Diaz-Chavez

<sup>198</sup> Ibid.

<sup>199</sup> Segeour 3

<sup>200</sup> Segeour

<sup>201</sup> World Bank (2008)

<sup>202</sup> Ibid.

in their analysis of the impacts of the Global Food Crisis in Guatemala, more attention and resources need to be diverted to the rural poor. The 1996 peace accords established the FRONTIERRAS program in Guatemala that established a fund to provide technical and financial assistance for farmers to buy land, mainly unproductive lands. Nonetheless, the program has been inefficient and mismanaged<sup>203</sup>.

Land ownership is a contentious subject in Guatemala. In one of my interview sites, I was asked to refrain from asking questions over land ownership because they were deemed not relevant to the reality of the workers. This particular site, a plantation, housed workers in cabins. Those who did speak on land ownership felt very strongly about the benefits of owning land. One farmer expressed to me,

...it is important that agriculturalists have representation because we are in constant contact with the elements.

Another believed that “union makes the force” and that that community efforts matter when it comes to having equal say in agricultural matters. Nonetheless, he is aware of the global processes that undermine community autonomy, especially when comes to land ownership. On this matter, he said,

The lands have been grabbed those who have money. We are limited now and I do not know what our children are going to do

Like many parts of the world, land ownership in Guatemala is intrinsically tied to food (in) security. Tomei and Diaz-Chavez note

...as subsistence farmers lose their ability to feed themselves and their families, they become increasingly dependent on monetary income with consequences for their diets and for food and economic security<sup>204</sup>.

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<sup>203</sup> Coordinación de ONG y Cooperativas (CONGCOOP). *FRONTIERRAS: Structural Adjustment and access to land in Guatemala. An analysis and future perspectives*. (2002)

<sup>204</sup> Tomei and Diaz-Chavez, 194

The agricultural commodity traders I interviewed refused to comment on current land conflicts involving biofuels. Nonetheless, one trader did reveal that the production of sugarcane and palm oil in Guatemala was “highly political”. Furthermore, he believed that given the rapid deforestation in Southeast Asia, palm oil production will increase substantially in Guatemala and this will lead to many social, environmental, and political issues for the country. Still, he stated his belief that Guatemala is greatly underpopulated and the lands allocated to the production of bio-feedstock will be mostly unoccupied. In contrast, one of the agricultural producers revealed that 30km from his home there had been recent disputes between big companies and land owners over a planned sugarcane operation.

The violent dispossession and eviction of peoples from their lands is not unheard of in Guatemala. In 1982, the Chixoy dam in the highlands of Guatemala claimed the lives of 400 people<sup>205</sup>. Military forces also tortured, disappeared and raped thousands more. The dam’s reservoir, located in the Rio Negro region, meant that nearby Mayan communities had to be displaced as a result of flooding<sup>206</sup>. Despite the brutality experienced by the people in Chixoy, many were denied reparations. The project had been backed by the World Bank and Inter-American Development Bank.<sup>207</sup> In 2011, families living in the Polochic Valley where over 750 were violently displaced from their lands after a sugarcane company had received a loan of \$26 million USD from the Central American Bank for Economic Integration. Homes were burned and three people lost their lives<sup>208</sup>.

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<sup>205</sup> Dearden

<sup>206</sup> Ibid.

<sup>207</sup> Ibid.

<sup>208</sup> Oxfam

What are the reasons underlining interest in the viability of biofuels? First, biofuels provide an opportunity for oil security in many parts of the world, particularly developing countries. Countries like Guatemala, who are more susceptible to shocks in oil prices, can engage in the production of biofuels and benefit greatly from a stable and steady source of energy. Political reasons bear as much weight in the biofuels debate as those concerning the environment and sustainability. Undoubtedly, current habits of oil consumptions have reached unsustainable levels. As the world's primary source of energy, fossil fuels are responsible for more than half of global carbon dioxide emissions<sup>209</sup>. Furthermore, demand for energy is expected to increase over 35% by 2035<sup>210</sup>. Currently, fossil fuels meet over 85% of global energy demand<sup>211</sup>. Popp argues that subsidies are to blame for “market distortions” that promote inefficient usage<sup>212</sup>.

Rather than target the throwaway lifestyle of many in the developed world, advocates for biofuels focus on ways to balance current consumption habits with environmentally friendly measures. Biofuels emit less greenhouse gases. By running cars, buses and other modes of transit on biofuels, society can reduce their carbon footprint and lessen the degree of climate change. In the US alone, 2010 emissions were at 17.3 metric tons per capita<sup>213</sup>. It is estimated that one-third of all CO<sub>2</sub> emissions are from transportation alone.<sup>214</sup> Fossil fuels are becoming increasingly sparse, and this scarcity

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<sup>209</sup> World Bank Stat

<sup>210</sup> J. Popp et al.

<sup>211</sup> J. Popp et al., 331

<sup>212</sup> J. Popp et al., 331

<sup>213</sup> Last available World Bank statistic

<sup>214</sup> US Environmental Protection Agency. “Overview of Greenhouse Gases”

will inevitably cause tension within the international community. Along the same lines, biofuels could provide a means to attain fuel security for both producing and consuming countries. Guatemala would greatly benefit from using domestic fuel supply, as it will be less susceptible to shocks in oil prices.

According to the United Nations, around one billion people worldwide were undernourished in 2009, a number that grew substantially from the previous years.<sup>215</sup> World hunger will continue to get worse as climate change results in decreased land arability as well as the compromising of water sources; farming will become more difficult. In Guatemala, rural communities, which make up almost 50% of the entire population, face a poverty rate upwards of 80%<sup>216</sup>. As mentioned in a previous section, in the midst of the global economic crisis in 2008, Guatemala was hit by decreasing foreign investment and steep food prices among other things<sup>217</sup>.

Food insecurity is among the top concerns over human welfare in Guatemala. According to the World Food Programme, Guatemala has the fourth highest rate of chronic malnutrition in the world<sup>218</sup>. Furthermore, rise in biofuel demand is expected to yield higher food prices. In Guatemala, this is already happening. Many believe that corn prices are soaring as demand for ethanol grows<sup>219</sup>. A rise in corn prices also translates to a price incline in beef and poultry. Half of Guatemalan children under the age of five are

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<sup>215</sup> Tirado, M.C. et al. "Addressing the Challenges of Climate Change and Biofuel Production for Food and Nutrition Security". *Food Research International*. 43. 2010.

<sup>216</sup> Gragnolati, Michele and Alessandra Marini. "Health and Poverty in Guatemala". The World Bank

<sup>217</sup> World Food Programme. "Country Programme: Guatemala". 2010

<sup>218</sup> Tomei and Diaz-Chavez

<sup>219</sup> Rosenthal

chronically malnourished.<sup>220</sup> Indigenous children fare a far worse fate with a malnutrition rate of 70%<sup>221</sup>. Chronic malnutrition can lead to stunting, an increased risk of infection and disease and lower IQ scores<sup>222</sup>. Coupled with a lack of a solid education system, this further sets back youth and limits the opportunities they have to raise themselves out of poverty. Moreover, malnutrition can has been linked to lower productivity and lost earnings.<sup>223</sup>

Worldwide, food prices are also rising. The interval of the years 2000 to 2007 saw a 30% increase in global cereal prices and a 40% increase in maize. In addition, Guatemala is dependent food imports, particularly rice and wheat<sup>224</sup>. On average, poor households spend two thirds of their income on food. Aside from rising food prices, access to food might become an issue as well.<sup>225</sup> As more land traditionally dedicated to food crops is being used to grow flex crops, low-income individuals will more likely have to shift their eating habits. Foods high in micronutrients, such as meat and vegetables, will be replaced by cheap and less nutritionally dense staple food.

I asked the agricultural commodity traders how the impacts of industrial agriculture on food security in the country. Here are their responses.

I think for locals, it is gonna be increasingly difficult to find varieties of crops and different food stuffs because every time a big corporation comes in, they take a lot of land to sell the same crop, this is a normal issue. For locals, they'll end up eating the

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<sup>220</sup> International Development Research (IRDC). "Reducing Food Insecurity and Malnutrition in Guatemala". 2012

<sup>221</sup> World Food Programme (2010)

<sup>222</sup> IDRC

<sup>223</sup> Tirado

<sup>224</sup> de Janvry

<sup>225</sup> World Food Programme (2010)

same food all the time...also prices increase. In the history of agro business, this has always happened.

First of all, the positive aspect of industrialization of farming is the increase in production and the relationship between cost and yield in production, more production means more available in the market, this allows for the prices and access to food to be more accessible. In countries like Guatemala, where the economies are fragile and political power is low, this is of great importance.

Their responses are quite contradictory. Nonetheless, when speaking with both these gentlemen, I noticed they maintained a mentality that many of the negative effects of industrial agriculture were necessary evils to ensure more efficient production of goods. This is expected given their occupations. Nonetheless, both were hesitant to acknowledge that land ownership and dispossession was an issue in their country. Often, their responses deflected the shortcomings of current agricultural practices, such as low wages, on the fluctuations of agricultural commodity markets. This is not entirely untrue, there is a major global component to inequality in resource access. Furthermore, as follow up to this question, I asked the agricultural commodity traders to list the advantages and disadvantages of small- scale agricultural production on food security. Below are their responses,

The advantage is that there can be competition between small-scale producers, this competition assures a production that is better for the consumer. Furthermore, the micro-enterprises, because they are closer to the consumer, are better able to adjust to the particular needs of people. Still, they can be less efficient in their use of soil. In other words, less efficient usage of land.

[With small-scale agriculture], families tend to make a better living... but this does not guarantee that they take better care of the land. On the global end, [small-scale agriculture] is a disadvantage because it is very expensive. Bigger crops are easier to control and compete in international market.

The commodity traders had little faith in the ability for rural and indigenous peoples to care for their land, despite many of these communities having occupied rural spaces for generations. Moreover, the UN report titled “Agro-ecology and the right to food”, concludes that small-scale farmers have the capacity to double their yields in a decade with the use of ecologically sound and simple farming techniques<sup>226</sup>. Agro-ecology projects conducted in 20 African countries have been successful. Among many other benefits, agro-ecology reduces reliance on costly and environmentally hazardous inputs. The use of pesticides (and fertilizers but to more limited degree,) was brought up several times in my interviews with both agricultural producers and commodity traders. One particular subsistence farmer had a very complicated relationship with chemicals. To him, pesticides were a godsend because they helped keep plagues and pests at bay, ensuring that his family was fed. Nonetheless, he was going blind as a result of pesticide exposure. He told me about a time where his poisoning was so extreme, he was almost certain he was going to die. He insisted however, that these chemicals were worth the damage they inflicted on his health. In 2013, almost 20% of the pesticides imported by Guatemala come from the United States<sup>227</sup>. Moreover, the commodity traders both insisted that agricultural technology, including pesticides, is improving. They insisted on the following:

It helps that a lot of technology comes in and it makes it safer to have a control crop. Safer for both, new pesticides are much better and improving constantly. The learning curve is hard for the farmers and locals, but it is reaching a point where they are safer for everyone. For one company I work with, they are always concerned for locals because they rely on workers and farmers.

There exists a direct correlation between industrialization and environmental damage.... however this is not an absolute truth that industrialization means the

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<sup>226</sup> “Agroecology and the Right to Food”, Report presented at the 16th Session of the United Nations Human Rights Council [A/HRC/16/49], 8 March 2011

<sup>227</sup> Observatory for Economic Complexity; Guatemala Statistics

destruction of nature... [agricultural technology] tends to become more sustainable and efficient.

Many land conflicts, especially in the context of Guatemala and biofuels, are arguably intertwined with what many scholars refer to as 'land grabbing'. The food versus fuel debate is complex and involves a variety of actors, each with differing intentions. In this scenario (like in many others around the world,) indigenous and marginalized communities are at a disadvantage at the hand of 'experts' who are better able to materialize a natural resource's potential. Moreover, as mentioned by Borgstrom, the wealthy enjoy the privilege of leaving "ghost acreage" throughout the world. Many times, they have no direct connection to the consequences for their consumption.

At the heel of this crisis came what scholars named the "land grab", a phenomenon involving various international players that is characterized by the acquisition of land as a result of speculation. Land grabbing is essentially large-scale land acquisitions either by private enterprises, the state, or individuals. Furthermore, land grabbing is associated with social injustice and abuse of power. The processes of land grabbing involve the alienation of resources from original users. In addition, land grabbing is not only problematic but highly political. The management of natural resources is essentially a power play where various potential "owners" of a given resource have a set of their own expectations from that resource. Furthermore, because the multitude of expected outcomes from a particular resource cannot all exist at once, conflict arises. The process inevitably involves winners and losers

Furthermore, I believe the theoretical framework that defines the notion of land grabbing accounts for the complex intersection of indigenous, foreign, and state entities in determining land use. Biofuel concessions allow for the direct control of land and

available resources. In a broader sense, how these resources are used is determined by the accumulation of capital. As a result, the resources are alienated from the original users and used for “external purposes”<sup>228</sup>. In the case of biofuel production in Guatemala, it is not difficult to imagine how the growing of non-essential food crops reaps no direct benefit to local communities. Additionally, by relying on indirect benefits of that accumulation of capital rather than sustenance from the land, indigenous populations encounter an array of sociocultural issues, many of which also endanger their cultural identity.

David Harvey’s concept of “accumulation by dispossession” gives insight into the ways in which inequity of resource distribution is rationalized under neoliberalism. The premise of accumulation through dispossession asserts that those who already hold capital grow richer by the “enclosure of public assets”<sup>229</sup>. This process only worsens inequality. Part of this is the creation of crisis, which legitimates the processes of dispossession. In the case of the 2008 food price crisis, there were many land conflicts in the developing world, particularly Africa and Latin America, which resulted from large-scale land seizures. Drawing from Harvey, Fairhead et al. note how “decades of easy loans and increasing indebtedness are often quickly followed by a political economy of dispossession.”<sup>230</sup>. The transformation of nature into an asset that must be sold results from the unfolding of global capitalism where rich countries parcel out bits and pieces of the developing world with little to no regard for the consequences that arise from doing so.

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<sup>228</sup> Borras et al., 850

<sup>229</sup> Fairchild et al., 243

<sup>230</sup> Ibid., 245

One of the driving points in land grabbing is the determining of “appropriate” land usage, a notion that is not only problematic but highly political. The concept of “available” land, essentially land that has not “realized” its potential, is a product of globalization<sup>231</sup>. Moreover, the concept of acquiring “available” land, despite its ancestral tie to indigenous populations, undoubtedly enforces an already existing hierarchy. Another facet of land grabbing is the affirmation of “sovereignty and authority over territory”<sup>232</sup>.

### **Water Grabbing**

Like many other parts of the Global South, Latin America has experienced an extensive history of resource extraction at the hands of oppressive powers. A history of the marginalization of indigenous cultures goes back some 500 years with the Spanish quest for gold. Furthermore, Latin America is also one of the most water-rich parts of the world. Land grabs are also water grabs. Moreover, Latin America’s current state of water security is somewhat of a paradox. The region is the most water-rich in the world yet access to the supply is anything but universal. Approximately 30 million Latin Americans lack access to safe drinking water<sup>233</sup>. According to United Nations estimates, the planet’s fresh water supply is expected to decrease by one-third within the next 20 years. Furthermore, irrigated areas worldwide have experienced tremendous growth within the past 50 years<sup>234</sup>. As water resources diminish and demand grows, water is beginning to be valued for its economic

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<sup>231</sup> Borras et al., 850

<sup>232</sup> Ibid.

<sup>233</sup> Stat source

<sup>234</sup> Popp et al.

potential. About 70% of water drawn from streams, lakes and aquifers are used to support agriculture<sup>235</sup>.

Along with food security, water security compromises the wellbeing of marginalized communities. Furthermore, the expansion of agricultural sectors accounts for access disparities and the depletion of renewable water resources. Guatemala remains one of the most water abundant countries of the world, along with Brazil, another large exporter of biofuels. For this reason, it has become a contested site for extraction and unsustainable water usage (figure 7)<sup>236</sup>.

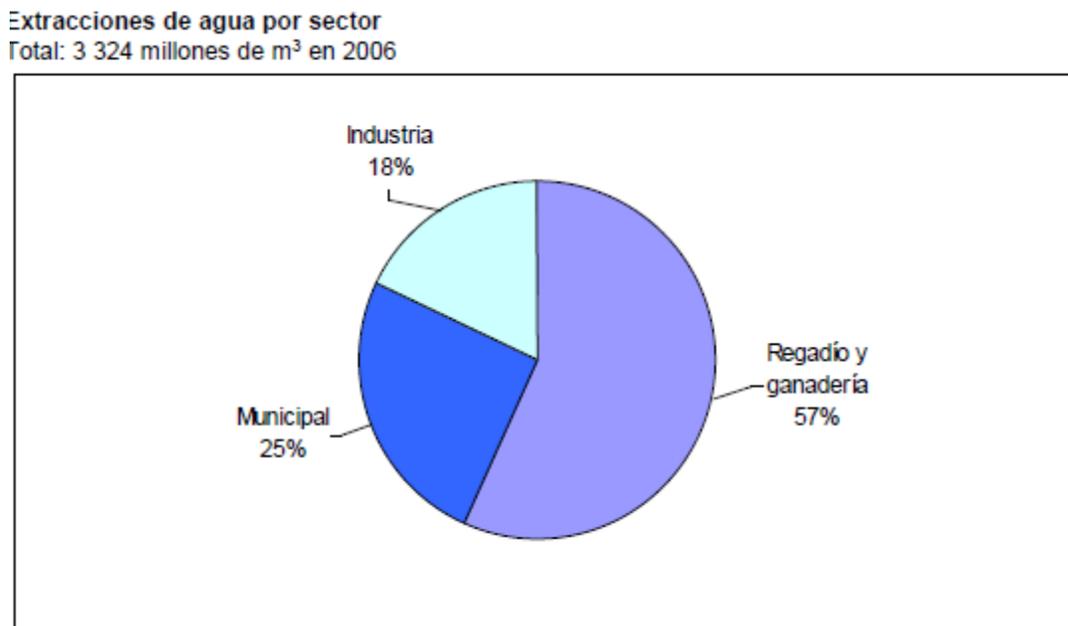


Figure 7- Water Extraction by Sector: Municipal Usage, Irrigation and Livestock (Source: UN FAO)

In the context of biofuel production in Guatemala, water is regarded as a means to wealth accumulation. Water is a means to an end and not an end in itself. And in the

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<sup>235</sup> Popp et al.

<sup>236</sup> Barlow, Maude, and Tony Clarke. "The Struggle for Latin America's Water." *NACLA Report On The Americas* 38.1 (2004): 15-41. Online.

equation of biofuel production, water is the hidden variable. In other words, the ethical dilemma in the usage of water for extraction is that water, essential to life, is a virtual (and vital) component that renders no direct benefit to its proprietors. Water is raw material that is then converted to a “higher value” commodity, such as gold or sugar cane<sup>237</sup>. A notable link between land and water governance in the context of flex crop production is that of “virtual” water, a concept explored by many scholars in the field of water and resource governance. Virtual water refers to amount of water needed to actualize a particular commodity, which may not always be obvious to consumers<sup>238</sup>. The production of sugarcane is water-intensive, and estimated 1782 liters of is needed to materialized a kilo of sugar<sup>239</sup>. Contrary to what its name may suggest, its extraction at the expense of the livelihood of local communities bears serious ramifications that are very real and detrimental.

### **Community-Based Development Models: Can They Work?**

The UN has recommended Community Based Land Management schemes (CBLM) as a way to make the production of bio feedstock more inclusive and less invasive to traditional forms of life. Recognizing local actors as key land-owners and respecting their status as end land and resource users while promoting their inclusion in the management of lands has great benefits. By granting local people an important role in the production of bio feedstock, there will be an improvement in local communities’ well-being and

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<sup>237</sup>Franco, Jennifer, and Sylvia Kay. 2012. “The Global Water Grab: A Primer”. *Water Justice*. 1-24.

<sup>238</sup> Franco and Kay

<sup>239</sup> Tomei and Diaz-Chavez

livelihoods, enhanced social justice, land conservation and the achievement of sustainable management of land resources.

By implementing a community-based land management program in each village, an area of land can set aside and local laws can be enacted to protect this land. The land itself is divided into three zones: a grazing and food producing zone to fulfill the community's needs, an agricultural expansion zone to produce biofuels feedstock, and a fully protected land zone dedicated to biodiversity conservation.

At the national level, the government will need to secure the land tenure and resource rights of vulnerable populations. Government support will facilitate the implementation process. There needs to be a merging of customary and statutory land tenure arrangement practices. Customary law refers to traditional and culturally specific land appropriation practices within a local community. On the contrary, statutory implies state recognition. Customary law needs to be recognized formally by governing entities. Furthermore, by giving customary land tenure statutory backing, local-level corruption can be kept at bay. Secondly, there needs to be a leveling of the 'playing field' for community owned enterprises. This can only be accomplished by the implementation of reformative policy and appropriate regulatory framework as well as the dismantling of state-run enterprises. Finally, the government will need to provide technical, financial, and social (ie. social benefits,) assistance for all CBLM projects.

Approaches like these have worked in the past for other developing countries. In 2002 a CBLD plan was successfully implemented in nine villages surrounding the Suledo forest in Tanzania of East Africa. As a result, the villages were awarded the UN Equator Initiative

and received a prize of US \$30,000 in recognition of their efforts towards sustainable management of their forest resources <sup>240</sup>.

Nonetheless, the unequal distribution of land is deeply embedded in Guatemalan society. Elites in Guatemalan society cater to international investors and transnational corporations, leaving little space for bottom-up, community-led land reform. The state of land distribution in Guatemala is very grim, and will likely remain as leaders prioritize economic gains over human rights and the wellbeing of the people. Furthermore, financial, training, and legal support can be hard to obtain. Education and training are essential for the development of human capital needed for sustainable land management. As mentioned in earlier sections, educational initiatives are at the mercy of NGOs. Navigating the bureaucratic system can be time consuming and at times, difficult. Guatemala is also not unfamiliar with government corruption<sup>241</sup>. Bribery, rent seeking behavior, and misuse of public resources have resulted in various corruption scandals throughout the years. Furthermore, law enforcement can be challenging and officials are quick to turn a blind-eye to the violation of human and legal rights, especially when a large sum of money is at stake. In addition, successful development and implementation of CMLM schemes requires that all parties involved are aware of their role and of the benefits of CBLM.

Management of lands and its resources at community level may require external financial support in the form of loans to purchase the equipment and input needed for the correct management of lands and to give additional income to community members for

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<sup>240</sup> Sjöholm, H & Luono, S. "Traditional pastoral communities securing green pastures through participatory forest management: a case study from Kiteto District, United Republic of Tanzania." 2002 *Proceedings of the Second International Conference on Participatory Forest Management in Africa*. FAO 2002.

<sup>241</sup> Shah, Anwar. "Corruption and decentralized public governance." *Handbook of fiscal federalism* (2006): 478.

land protection and conservation activities. This will require increased access to microloan programs and other financial institutions. Guatemala does not possess a strong network of microloan practices and access, particularly within rural communities, is incredibly limited. Moreover, some farmers may be wary about investing in technology they may not know how to use. In terms of environmental monitoring, it will be incredibly difficult to measure the effectiveness of CBLM since noticeable effects may take many years. Despite the good intentions of the CBLM scheme, it may not adequately work in places like Guatemala where unequal land distribution is deeply imbedded in all aspects of society.

I believe it would be more effective instead to support policy that increases agro-ecology farming practices and shies away from conventional farming. This way, small-scale farmers are better able to increase their yields. Guatemala is in need of stronger support networks, both in communities and at the State level, for rural farmers. A country like Guatemala should retain a responsibility towards farmers by providing them with necessary assistance to better their lives as opposed to the increase of producing non-food and export crops. Moreover, the diversification of food crops, while keeping sight of cultural specificity, is another way to improve nutrition.

By resorting to alternative fuel, the issue of irresponsible consumption is masked under a thin veil of eco-friendliness. Furthermore, the biofuel agenda pushed by the US and EU does not represent a fundamental shift in consumptive habits. Arguably, the agenda is in line with rampant and irresponsible capitalism that props itself on the backs of the oppressed. In a larger sense, a responsible green agenda takes into considerations all populations and their wellbeing. The food versus fuel debate is not uncommon to Guatemala. Guatemala is merely a proxy for a larger problem: the unsustainable growth of

consumption in many other parts of the world. While many mouths go without being fed, the US- and many other developed nations- wage a campaign on offsetting current ecological damages.

### **The Role of Indigenous and Rural Women in Agriculture**

Around the world, women are disproportionately affected by hunger compared to men. 60% of those suffering from undernourishment are girls and women<sup>242</sup>. In developing countries, approximately 50% of expecting mothers lack proper maternal care, resulting in a higher probability for maternal mortality<sup>243</sup>. Women are greatly disadvantaged when food is in short supply. Discriminatory access to food supply favoring men and boys may result in higher death rates for women during times of famine, despite women making up 43% of the labor force in agriculture worldwide<sup>244</sup>.

Much attention must be paid to the ways in which vulnerabilities are socially constructed. Vulnerability, as defined by Wisner et al., is “the characteristics of a person or group and their situation influencing their capacity to anticipate, cope with, resist to, and recover from the impact of a natural hazard”<sup>245</sup>. People are exposed to certain risks and opportunities in ways that are not always equal. For this reason, it is important to address structural causes underpinning the higher rates of undernourishment in girls and women.

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<sup>242</sup> United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization and Asian Development Bank, Gender Equality and Food Security.(Mandaluyong City: Asian Development Bank, 2013)

<sup>243</sup> The Hunger Project. “Know your World: Facts about Hunger and Poverty”. Web. Available from: <http://thp.org/knowledge-center/know-your-world-facts-about-hunger-poverty/>

<sup>244</sup> Alkire, Sabina, Ruth Meinzen-Dick, Amber Peterman, Agnes Quisumbing, Greg Seymour, and Ana Vaz. "The Women's Empowerment in Agriculture Index." *World Development* 52 (2013): 71-91. Web.

<sup>245</sup> Wisner, B, Blaikie, P.T. Cannon, Davis, I. At Risk: Natural hazards, people's vulnerability and disasters. 2nd edition, London, Routledge, 2004. Pg 11.

In many parts of the world, gender disparities are a result of exploitation and civil conflict that are perpetuated by the force that is globalization and the economic integration into a global economy. The premise of this essay is by no means original; gender relations in farming and agricultural sectors, in this case in rural Guatemala, are greatly influenced by larger global economic processes that date back to the Spanish colonization of the Americas.

Examining the intersection of gender, vulnerability, and agrarianism in Guatemalan society, specifically in our current age, is quite difficult. As mentioned, it is impossible to separate Guatemala's current agrarian situation from the effects of foreign intervention that has spanned some 500 odd years. The colonial division of labor resulted in the exploitation of both peoples and resources, destroying many local food and agricultural systems. It is no secret that indigenous women in Guatemala have been subject to systemic violence perpetuated by the 36-year civil conflict. During this time, the Guatemalan State committed acts of violence against many indigenous women, including sexual violence and torture<sup>246</sup>. Many women suffer from post-traumatic stress disorder and have little to no mental health resources available to them<sup>247</sup>. Furthermore, many widowed women were displaced from their homes in the rural countryside, losing access to their livelihoods and with limited rights in claiming land<sup>248</sup>.

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<sup>246</sup> UN Truth Commission

<sup>247</sup> Godoy-Paiz, Paula, Brenda Toner, and Carolina Vidal. "Something in Our Hearts": Challenges to Mental Health among Urban Mayan Women in Post-war Guatemala." *Ethnicity and Inequalities in Health and Social Care Ethnicity and Inequalities HSC* 4.3 (2011): 127-37.

<sup>248</sup> Ibid.

Current gender relations in rural areas are influenced by the introduction of industrial agriculture and European mono-cropping<sup>249</sup>. For this reason, gender and labor histories must be examined in relation to global history. During the Spanish rule in Guatemala, enslaved women often performed household chores such as the preparation of food and spinning of cloth<sup>250</sup>. Sometimes they would be forced into marriages or sexual encounters with their masters<sup>251</sup>.

Although little evidence exists of gender relations in pre-Colombian Mayan society, depictions of a maize deity have left historians puzzled. The deity is illustrated as possessing a male upper body and the lower body of a female. Robin argues that the sexual ambiguity of the Mayan maize deity suggests that farming may not have carried any gendered associations during the Classic Mayan (AD 250-900) period, long before the presence of Spanish conquistadors. Moreover, Robin highlights the dangers of “placing engendered peoples and activities in the archaeological record”<sup>252</sup>. It seems that a large part of the problem, as noted by the author, is the way in which the West largely views farming and agriculture as a male-centered activity. Although I do not wish to make the shaky assumption that pre-Colombian Mayan societies were egalitarian, I wish to engage with the ways in which the Western academic tradition has attempted to categorize and classify the lived experiences of Mayan and other indigenous civilizations.

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<sup>249</sup> Cynthia Robin. "Gender, Farming, and Long-Term Change: Maya Historical and Archaeological Perspectives." *Current Anthropology* 47.3 (2006): 409-33. Web.

<sup>250</sup> Jones

<sup>251</sup> Ibid.

<sup>252</sup> Robin, 409

Robin does argue, however, that the gendered agricultural culture of the Mayans has evolved over time in response to industrial agriculture. In many parts of Central America, farming has become less of a familial affair, but rather one dominated by men who travel far from their communities to reach fields. In return, women are confined to their local communities to care for school-age children. Due to diminishing returns for agricultural productivity (linked to a global food regime), education provides a means of advancing one's socioeconomic standing. Robin also critiques the notion of female farmers as cultural gatekeepers that provide us some insight into 'traditional' ways of life that are believed to have disappeared. To counteract this, she suggests an "archeological" history approach, citing Foucault.

National and international economic policy affects gender relations within the household. Many times, women form a significant part of food production, selling, and preparation. Furthermore, in many rural areas, women are responsible for child rearing, growing food, and gathering water among other things. Although this type of labor is crucial to survival, it sometimes falls into the realm of invisibility. In other words, this form of labor at times remains unaccounted for and under-appreciated due to a lack of direct monetary returns. Nonetheless, this work remains critical in maintaining a household. Elson, Verhart and Pyburn highlight the importance of viewing the economy through a gendered lens. Reproductive labor is also crucial in maintaining a productive economy<sup>253</sup>. More women are subject to informal employment in Guatemala, where they lack many essential rights, securities, and benefits enjoyed by formal employment<sup>254</sup>. In Guatemala,

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<sup>253</sup> Verhart, Noortje, and Rhiannon Pyburn. "The Rough Road to Gender Equitable Growth: The Case of Café De Mujer Guatemala." *Development* 53.3 (2010): 356-61. Web.

<sup>254</sup> Ibid.

under 30% of women are employed in non-agricultural sectors<sup>255</sup>. Furthermore, women occupy a mere 13% of all seats in the national parliaments. Paid employment held by women greatly contributes to national economic growth but does little in providing women with a means out of poverty.

In the case of Guatemala, Katz found that women in rural areas are limited in their engagement in remunerated activities. Women have found some success in artisanal production, particularly within the tourism industry. Nonetheless, Cone argues in her ethnography on two Mayan craftswomen that integration into a global economic system produces what she deems as an “existential dilemma” for Mayan women<sup>256</sup>. The intimate processes associated with handicrafts such as basket weaving and pottery are displaced from the private, domestic realm to a light of spectacle and commodification. Cone also discusses how craftwork allows for women to have access to the market and receive some income. Nonetheless, weaving and other forms of crafts carry sacred meaning.

There is a strong intergenerational component to artisanal crafts. Mothers will often teach their daughters art forms that are entrenched in sacredness, mythology and a preservation of culture that prevails in spite of inequality and hardship. The same is true for many food practices, mothers will often teach their daughters to make *masa*, or tortilla dough, a task that is repetitive and incredibly laborious. Most shops that sold tortillas were worked by women and young girls who would often knead the *masa*, flip tortillas off a hot grill, and chit chat amongst themselves unfazed by customers who would at times order tens of dozens at a time. Pu expressed that many ancient traditions, which she believes

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<sup>255</sup> The World Bank. “Gender Equality Data and Statistics”

<sup>256</sup> Cone, Cynthia Abbott. "Crafting Selves." *Annals of Tourism Research* 22.2 (1995): 314-27. Pg 315

represent an alternative story separate from colonization and globalization, are passed down intergenerational within women.

For families largely dependent on agriculture, the effects of adopting non-traditional agricultural export (NTAE) crops can be observed on the household level. In her ambitious study of the consumption habits in Guatemalan households, Katz found marked differences in the distribution of money between adopters of NTAE crops and non-adopters. In the case of non-adopting households, male providers transfer a larger weekly allowance for food expenditures to their wives, when compared to adopting households<sup>257</sup>. On the contrary, in adopting households, any ‘marginal earnings’ from women are more likely to go directly towards the purchase of food<sup>258</sup>. Katz highlights that this discrepancy is important in noting a perceived correlation between the increase of ‘male’ and ‘joint’ purchases at the expense of “female” expenses (such as clothing and domestic technology,) in NTAE households<sup>259260</sup>. This provides some crucial insight into the correlation between gender inequality in the household and beyond and economic dependence on trade and an international food system that many of these families are subject to.

In international development, measuring ‘progress’ in gender equality does little to engage with the agricultural sector<sup>261</sup>. Alkire et al. note that many indicators of progress in agriculture are “gender-blind” and measures must be taken to ensure that agricultural

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<sup>257</sup> Katz, Elizabeth G. "Gender and Trade within the Household: Observations from Rural Guatemala." *World Development* 23.2 (1995): 327-42. Web.

<sup>258</sup> Katz, 339

<sup>259</sup> Katz,

<sup>260</sup> For the time being, I do not wish to go into the politics of what constitutes “male” and “female” purchases

<sup>261</sup> Alkire et al., 2013

interventions address gender disparities. I have a personal issue with the notion of “empowerment” because its meaning varies and is subject to debate, even within the international development community, making it difficult to place within the regime of quantification that is freely exercised by the industry that is international development. Nonetheless, a pilot test for a Women’s Empowerment in Agriculture Index, proposed by Alkire et al., found that only 28% of women in the highlands of Guatemala felt empowered. Furthermore, these tests revealed correlation between hunger and empowerment in agriculture<sup>262</sup>. Households where women felt empowered in the agricultural sector reported less hunger (as measured by the authors’ own “hunger score”)<sup>263</sup>. A lack of empowerment is characterized by access to physical and social capital such as credit and the feeling of exclusion regarding key decisions in both one’s community and household. Furthermore, the deprivation of the capabilities needed to fully realize one’s human potential (I feel that even my use of ‘potential’ is problematic,) stem from many of factors. Much like gaining food security, attaining empowerment takes a multi-dimensional approach.

These preliminary studies have their drawbacks. The authors failed to mention if any of these women identify as Mayan or indigenous, which would add various degrees of complexity to their plight. Furthermore, their assessment on female “empowerment” had little reference to international factors such as trade, structural adjustment, and discourse over indigenous rights within the global community. There is also obvious epistemic privilege in attempting to assess and provide ‘empowerment’ to a community plagued by centuries of marginalization, which is perpetuated by the same forces that attempt to bring

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<sup>262</sup> Ibid.

<sup>263</sup> Ibid.

new ‘solutions’. Nonetheless, the approach of assessing vulnerability even within the populations that produce much of the world’s food is a step in the right direction in uncovering the uneven power dynamics that exist within the global food production system.

Addressing the issue of gender disparity within the agricultural sector in Guatemala’s Mayan and rural communities is tricky given the glaring inequalities that exist between indigenous communities and urban elites. Despite vast improvements and increased efficiency in food production, many girls and women still experience hunger and are afforded little to no resources to better their socioeconomic standing.

In my research, I found a fascinating dynamic when it came to gender roles within the food production chain. The commodity traders I interviewed were both male. These men were in charge of major export- driven agricultural operations with low-wage workers under their supervision. Moreover, they were more integrated into the global context of Guatemalan foodways. Their loyalty was to shareholders, international consumers, and other the faceless characters that make up our omnipresent and globalized food web. In contrast, the chefs I spoke to were all women. For the most part, these women maintained a sense of obligation to protect the culture they felt was facing oblivion in light of processed foods and children too embarrassed to consume traditional *chapin* foods. When speaking to the agricultural producers, 3 of the men engaged in the agricultural production of household food while their wives processed and prepared their harvest. When studying foodways, a gendered lens proves to be an incredibly helpful tool. This is not only true when examining cultural gender roles, but the ways in which globalization and industrialization affect men and women differently as well.

## **International Paradigm on Human Rights to Food and Resource**

On an international level, little space exists for indigenous rights. In 1989, the International Labor Organization convened and readdressed its convention on indigenous rights. Out of this, the ILO convention 169 was born. This convention differed from any of its predecessors because it acknowledged the right for indigenous people to exercise control of their own culture and development<sup>264</sup>. Furthermore, it placed responsibility on the federal government to “...protect the rights of these peoples and guarantee respect to their integrity”<sup>265</sup>. By placing a lens of cultural preservation on food production, better leverage might be achieved in the realm of international human rights.

About a decade before, Socio-environmental issues began to appear in the agenda of several meetings between influential figures in the realm of international politics<sup>266</sup>. In 1989, the same year that saw the fall of the Berlin wall, the International Labor Organization convened and readdressed its convention on indigenous rights. Out of this, the ILO convention 169 was born. The Guatemalan government ratified ILO 169 in 1995, with an amendment stating that in occasions where the convention was at odds with the constitution, the government would honor the latter<sup>267</sup>. Its implementation has been dismal. Authorities refuse to acknowledge its presence and criminalize communal leaders who use the document as leverage for the claiming of their rights.<sup>268</sup> Furthermore, many private

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<sup>264</sup> Garcia, Maria Elena. *Making Indigenous Citizens : Identities, Education, and Multicultural Development in Peru*. Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 2005. Print.

<sup>265</sup> Article 2, ILO 169, 1989

<sup>266</sup> Garcia

<sup>267</sup> Handy 2002

<sup>268</sup> Seider, Rachel. “The Judiciary and Indigenous Rights in Guatemala”. *International Journal of Constitutional Law*. 5:211. (2007)

sector stakeholders opposed its implementation because they believed it would infringe on private property rights<sup>269</sup>.

In 1992, members of the international community met in Dublin and drafted a statement that outlined several principles on the handling of water resources. The first principle of The Dublin Statement on Water and Sustainable Development deemed water as essential to the sustenance of life. Under this tenet, effective management of water supply, as well as respect for natural ecosystems, is key. The fourth principle, which recognizes water as an economic good, is problematic.

The right to water can also become an issue of cultural preservation as many indigenous people have ancestral ties to land and water sources<sup>270</sup>. This became further complicated when one factor is the amount of land needed to invest in agriculture, an industry that keeps Guatemala's economy on the map. Indigenous communities are at a disadvantage in claiming land. Under the current human rights paradigm, the human right to land has yet to be established<sup>271</sup>. Some scholars have argued that an incorporation of a human right to land that is internationally recognized, not undermined by investment treaties, and able to hold transnational corporations accountable for violations is necessary<sup>272</sup>. This way, violations of an individual's or group's land rights cannot be written off as a means to better land realization.

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<sup>269</sup> Handy, 2002

<sup>270</sup> Barrera-Hernandez, Lila. "Indigenous Peoples, Human Rights and Natural Resource Development: Chile's Mapuche Peoples and The Right to Water." *Fordham Environmental Law Review* 11. (2005): 1-28. Print.

<sup>271</sup> Kunnemann, Rolf and Sofia Mosalve Suarez. "International Human Rights and Governing Land Grabbing: A View from Global Civil Society." *Globalizations* 10.1 (2013):1-24. Print.

<sup>272</sup> Kunnemann and Suarez

Nonetheless, in Guatemala's case, an established human right to land would be tricky given that indigenous populations occupy rural regions where desirable lands are located. Still, if any sort of agreement to recognize indigenous claims to lands were established, it would be a monumental step in politically and economically empowering a historically marginalized population. In the age of land grabs, prospects for the implementation of any sort of land rights legislature are grim, especially in Guatemala.

What about the human right to food? The Universal Declaration of Human Rights recognizes a "right to a standard of living for the health and well-being of himself and of his family", and this includes access to adequate food<sup>273</sup>. Furthermore, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) not only recognizes the rights of pregnant and lactating women the right to adequate food supply in article 12, but access to land and resources as well in article 14. Undoubtedly, issues surrounding food security have a gendered component and can easily be framed as women's issues. The problem is that many of these documents define the right to food as reliable access "either directly or by means of financial purchases"<sup>274</sup>. This allows for the delegation of food security to the market.

La Via Campesina, a movement held together by a network of civil society organizations made up of peasants, farmers, indigenous peoples and agricultural workers operates in opposition to the WTO and the corporatization of food. In Guatemala, the National Indigenous and Campesino Coordination (CONIC), United Campesino Comitee, (CUC), and the National Coordination of Guatemalan Widows (CONAVIGUA) are

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<sup>273</sup> UNDHR article 25

<sup>274</sup> General Comment No. 12 of the United Nations Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights

associated with La Via Campesina. The movement advocates for more localized and sustainable agriculture embedded in social justice and equality<sup>275</sup>. Furthermore, they promote food sovereignty as a means of ensuring the equitable distribution of food. It is important to note the fundamental differences between food sovereignty and food security. Food sovereignty, as explained by the Via Campesina, is an alternative model to conventional agriculture and “the right of each nation to maintain and develop its own capacity to produce its basic foods, respecting cultural and productive diversity”<sup>276</sup>. The concept of food sovereignty allows for each nation to have control and autonomy over the production of food.

Indigenous and rural peasant groups, whose destinies have long been at the hands of oppressive powers, are losing the little they have left through a series of neoliberal policies and an onset of a corporate food regime. In the age of increased efficiency of food production, people still go hungry. In addition, much has been written on the vulnerability of our current global food system especially regarding irreversible environmental damage. The alarming amount of wasted food is another major pitfall of the current system. Currently, experts worry that if rapidly growing populations can be fed given that we are not adequately nor sustainably meeting the demands of today’s 7 billion. Hunger results from a variety of factors that are both structural and individual. For this reason, it is necessary to step outside the confines of the food-aid discourse and examine how indigenous populations can be better mobilized to produce their own food, as they have done for centuries.

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<sup>275</sup> La Via Campesina website

<sup>276</sup> Vía Campesina. “Tlaxcala Declaration of the Vía Campesina (Declaration of the Second International Conference of Vía Campesina, Tlaxcala, Mexico). (1996).

## CHAPTER VII

### ON CONTINUITY: DISCUSSION AND CONCLUDING REMARKS

I asked the chefs and agricultural producers the solutions they proposed to address the lack of interest in traditional foods within younger generations. Most believed that education in schools on important cultural foods was key. This suggestion is especially fitting as more youth today are enrolled in schools and universities than previous generations. Here are some thoughts on the subject.

Families need to show their young children to consume typical foods...for convenience, they give them fast food

There should be more conscience about traditional foods in books, and education

When [our children] are studying, they should be taught how to eat typical food so that youth continue to eat traditional foods

According to Pu,

I would say that people become conscious of their own values and what is theirs. If they begin to educate their kids and help them develop a palate for their national foods, it could be a solution...Communication mediums could also value the space of food as well by rescuing culture...The business sector would also work in conjunction with upholding culture... everyone could do their part. We do not want to conflict with transnationals but it is possible to exist beside them... If we continue with the politics of our State and economic development trends where there is more emphasis on transnational foods then yes, I am worried... Nonetheless, I think people are sensible and value what is theirs. I think that being in this field [or gastronomy], I am more positive. I see that many people value my initiative, even if they cannot afford to eat here. I have been greatly accepted. I think it is a matter of making gastronomical proposals. Yes, I am worried, but it can be developed, there is still time.

On television, there is an ongoing effort to inspire conversation on Guatemalan gastronomy. The popular show, *Sabores de mi Tierra* (Flavors of my Country,) is devoted to highlighting and preserving the diversity of Guatemalan cuisine while bringing to the forefront the importance of food in Guatemalan culture. *Sabores de mi Tierra* seeks to

document vital recipes and learn the food practices of local food ‘experts’ throughout Guatemala. The show was quite popular among the people I interacted with in Guatemala. The need to “rescue” Guatemalan culinary culture is a topic of conversation among intellectuals, chefs, and various other figures involved in the cultural and culinary realm in Guatemala. In the words of Ana Carlos, a renowned Guatemalan documentary filmmaker,

Guatemalan gastronomy is an inexhaustible source of our culture and identity. It is tied to every single activity that describes us as a society: the celebration of life and the reception of death... the cultivation of the earth, the time of harvest; both Mayan and Cristian ceremonies. Happiness and tragedy. The majority of recipes that accompany these events have not been written. They reside in the memory of those who have inherited them from their grandparents as well as the knowledge to transform the fruit of the earth and water in ways that reach their pre-hispanic roots and were fused with Spanish influence and modern life. There have been little efforts to document national gastronomy and less those who have focused on disclosing them.<sup>277</sup>

Pu expressed similar thoughts,

[Our food culture] was not born yesterday, there is a story... the story of colonialism that is still present that tries to cover and invisibilize this story. Nonetheless, when this comes to light, it has a lot of sense at the global and local level. And it has a right to exist...Gastronomy plays an important role in the existence of human beings... We need to give continuity to the great Mayan civilization. Taking into account the presence of colonialism, which is a rupture that we have seen, we need to give a parallel continuity to our story. Gastronomy is something that has to be remediated, but is still there. There is no need to deny other types of cuisines, however, one must try to put forth your own... and why not have [our gastronomy] compete on the market? It is a proposal we can do and develop. However, colonialism does result in, for example, chefs who go study in Spain or San Sebastian and other parts, which is fine, but they learn a recipe and they repeat. Colonialism has resulted that by repetition, we give in to other places instead of remediating what is ours.

Pu’s restaurant is an example of how culinary tradition can be accommodated within a market-society without losing sight of integrity. Pu is an indigenous female

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<sup>277</sup> Presentation titled “La Gastronomía como Expresión Cultural y Motor de Desarrollo” Presened by Ana Carlos at the 2010 EURO EXPO trade show held in Guatemala

entrepreneur whose cooking she credits to her ancestors and seeks to pay tribute to them with every dish. Moreover, she claims that her employees often come from low-income backgrounds and relies on family members who live in rural areas to provide her with particular spices. Although her restaurant is high-end and not accessible to all, she believes that efforts like hers are important and indigenous people should feel empowered to sell their craft on the market on their own terms. All but one of the chefs I spoke to were female restaurant owners. Although this may be at times problematic, the culinary realm presents opportunities for women to succeed since they are often regarded as the keepers of gastronomical knowledge in Guatemala.

It is important to challenge the notion that globalization is inherently destructive. Media spaces tend to be more democratic and inclusive. In addition, these spaces allow for people to reclaim and remediate food and culinary culture. Many participants seemed willing to embrace globalization and the availability of new technologies, just on their own terms and in ways that are compatible with their culture. In the case of Guatemalan gastronomy, fostering wide-spread culinary appreciation can be done while embracing popular technology such as blogging and viral videos. In the right hands, social media and television programming can do wonderful things.

The popular *Revista D*, will occasionally feature customary Guatemalan dishes and provide readers with historical and cultural information on the dish. Even the most seemingly mundane dish such as *caldo de pollo*, has been featured in effort to enlighten readers on the health benefits as well as social meanings attached to the dish. Collaboration and an open-information approach is key. Moreover, the reinterpretation of culinary culture for a younger and more technologically savvy audience, married with an educational

approach that stresses the importance of ancestral customs and food practices, can give rise to a change in perceptions on cultural foods and a subsequent desire to maintain these customs.

A major theme in all of the interviews was the importance of ancestral and indigenous knowledge when it came to agriculture and feeding themselves and their families. For the agriculturalists, ancestral knowledge became important in regards to farming efficiently. A couple of the agricultural producers I spoke with relied on lunar cycles to determine when they should plant their crops and this was a skill passed down to them from their parents. Commodity traders acknowledged the importance of indigenous and ancestral knowledge in their field, even when it conflicted with industry practices.

Even though the farmers do not have a lot of formal education, they tend to give the most simple and effective answers to most problems. If [the value of this knowledge] not as clear, it is very latent. For example, in the coffee industry, local indigenous people knew the crop very well. Science just backed up what they knew. When big companies come and tend to make all decisions, they tend to fail in their attempts. When they're arrogant, they fail.

Guatemala is traditionally a country where the economy is based off agriculture...we have conserved many traditional production processes [in agriculture]. These practices a lot of time are of great utility. Sometimes, they are just as cheap and friendly to the environment as conventional processes.

Through my interviews, it became clear to me that the majority of participants were not trying to alienate themselves from the effects of globalization, but rather, hold on to the traditions of their ancestors and ensuring that their children respect these traditions. Moreover, on a national level, there are several efforts to create space for Guatemalan cuisine that is much needed. On this matter, Pu said

We do not try to be closed off to be new world because here we integrate some ingredients that are international but the base of preparation (the techniques) are 100% [of the] millennium. In addition, all of the forms of preparation, of

presentation of these plates pick up from the ancient, without being closed to the new world. We try to find ways to work our plates with respect to Mayans origins. We believe that the concept of Mayan food is something that is currently in a process. It is something we are trying to present to the general public... We try to also present our plates with the qualities expected by the market

One of the agricultural commodity traders I interviewed believed that the answer increasing access to culturally significant foods can be found within the same systems that creates limitations for that access. He said,

Well history has told us [access to important foods] it is crucial. For example, banana there used to be 100-300 varieties of bananas, now there is only one... There should be a space for both the indigenous and global crops. I do not see why both cannot benefit from each other. There needs to be more regulation so that local and indigenous products can be sustained. This is the responsibility of the country.

Despite the uncertain future of land tenure rights in Guatemala, many people maintain a sense of identity that is directly related to working the land. Out of this, comes a high regard for staple crops such as corn and beans, which are integral to the cultural identity of Guatemalans. Here are some thoughts on the matter.

What is principal is the tortilla and frijol, even if there is not much available, it is important to us.

[Our children] must follow the same rhythm [as us], traditional food is vital. With a pound of beans, a family of four can eat.

The problem is that now the economy is bad. BUT, our country is blessed and beans nor tortillas will never be missing in any household. There will always be frijoles and tortillas... tortillas will never stop being food of ours and that is Mayan... For us Guatemalans, these foods are fundamental in the home. And thank God, they are nutritious, they help. We always have to be aware that they are main dishes and of our ancestors. Because of these nutrients, are ancestors were able to survive and take us where we are now.

When you plant, you eat what you like

Even with several efforts to bring national attention to the treasure that is Guatemalan cuisine, we cannot ignore the implications that limited land and resource rights have on those who produce the ingredients that go into traditional dishes. International demand and the power of transnational corporations, many of whom come from the North, are to blame for the lack of resolution in unequal land access. The year-round availability of some of our favorite fruits, such as bananas, rely of tropical places like Guatemala. Addressing the consumer portion of the food security dilemma in Guatemala as well as questioning our consumption habits is vital. Moreover, supporting and promoting agro-ecological practices is important for improving sustainability as well as placing knowledge back in the hands of farmers.

Looking at the sheer numbers concerning hunger and nutrition in Guatemala, the country presents a glaring opportunity for understanding the failings of our current global food system. The tragedy in Guatemala's situation is how the fertile land that has the potential to provide an abundance of food but instead chooses to prioritizes export production over the wellbeing of hungry people. Furthermore, many of the most poor in Guatemala are employed in the agricultural sector. One of the major problems facing the country's failing food is system is inefficient distribution. Land ownership is at the hands of the few, while many must earn their wages through physical labor. Agricultural workers sometimes do not make enough to feed their families and face an uphill battle in owning their own land. Moreover, far too many resources are dedicated to the production of non-food and export crops that leave the country.

Despite disrupting their forms of life and subjecting them to a trajectory of suffering and displacement, the Spanish never truly conquered the indigenous spirit. Indigenous

culture is alive today in Guatemala. In Guatemala there still exists a desire to reconnect with ancestral customs, and people are well aware of the obstacles they must overcome in order to afford the foods they value the most. Despite economic hardship, the meanings embedded in food and food practices are treasured by many people today. The remediation of Guatemalan gastronomy requires a bottom-up approach that embraces multi-generational and multi-cultural knowledge.

## APPENDIX A

### INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR AGRICULTURAL PRODUCERS

1. What ethnic group do you identify with
2. Of the food you produce in the household, what part is utilized by you and your family?  
None Little Half The majority
3. Is agriculture your main source of income for you and your family?  
Yes No  
3b. If no, what are your other sources of income?
4. Who owns the land you and your family live and cultivate on?
5. Is having legal title to your land important to you? Please explain
6. During your childhood, what were the typical dishes in your household? Do you continue to cook these currently?
7. What type of foods would you like to be more accessible and frequent in your home? Please elaborate and feel free to use examples.
8. What does 'comida tipica' mean to you and what role does it play in daily life?
9. What does 'ancestral foods' mean to you? Please elaborate
10. Is the consumption of ancestral food and 'comida tipica' important for you and your family? Why or why not?
11. What types of foods are consumed in parties or celebrations? Please use examples
12. Do you worry that future generations will not have the ability to enjoy 'tipica' and 'ancestral' foods?  
12b. What solutions do you propose to ensure the benefits of these foods to future generations?
13. Do you receive or consume fortified food or food assistance from the government and/or social organizations? How is this food used? Please be specific
14. Do you believe your community is well represented when it comes to issues of agriculture and food on a national level?
15. How important is the input of your community in relation to land and natural resource management at the national level?

## APPENDIX B

### INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR AGRICULTURAL PRODUCERS- SPANISH

1. ¿Con que grupo étnico se identifica usted?
2. ¿De la comida que se cosecha en su hogar, que parte es utilizada por usted y su familia?  
Ninguna      Poca    La mitad      Mucha
3. ¿La agricultura constituye el ingreso principal de su familia?  
Si              No  
3b. ¿Cuales son sus otras fuentes de ingreso?
4. ¿A quién pertenece la tierra donde usted y su familia viven y cultivan?
5. ¿Se le hace de mayor importancia tener título legal de su terreno? Favor de explicar.
6. ¿Durante su niñez cuales eran los platos típicos? ¿Usted los cocina hoy en día?
7. ¿Qué tipo de alimentos le gustaría tener más accesible o más frecuentes en la mesa? Favor de elaborar.
8. ¿Qué significa la comida típica para usted y que rol tiene en su diario vivir?
9. ¿Qué significa ‘comida ancestral’ para usted? Favor de elaborar.
10. ¿El consumo de comida típica y ancestral es importante para usted y su familia? ¿Porque o porque no?
11. ¿Qué tipo de comidas se consumen en celebraciones o fiestas?
12. ¿Le preocupa que generaciones siguientes no tengan la habilidad de disfrutar de estas comidas? Favor de explicar.  
  
12b. ¿Cuáles soluciones propone usted para asegurarles los beneficios de comida típica y ancestral para las generaciones siguientes?
13. ¿Recibe o consume comida fortificada o alguna asistencia alimentaria del gobierno y/o organizaciones? ¿De qué manera se usa esta comida? Favor de especificar.
14. Usted piensa que su comunidad está bien representada en temas de agricultura y de comida al nivel nacional? ¿Me puede explicar en qué manera son o no

son?

15. ¿Cuán importante se le hace el aporte de su comunidad en relación al uso y manejo de la tierra y los recursos naturales al nivel nacional?

## APPENDIX C

### INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR CULINARY EXPERTS

1. What do you consider to be indigenous food?
2. Are there differences between what you consider to be Guatemalan food and indigenous food? Please elaborate, perhaps with the use of examples.
3. What makes Guatemalan gastronomy stand out in comparison to that of other countries?
4. How important is authenticity in the tourism sector in Guatemala? Please elaborate.
5. How important is universal access to food with cultural and ancestral significance? Please explain

## APPENDIX D

### INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR CULINARY EXPERTS- SPANISH

1. ¿Qué considera usted comida maya o indígena?
2. ¿Existe diferencia entre lo que usted considera comida guatemalteca y comida maya/indígena? Favor de elaborar (quizás con el uso de ejemplos).
3. ¿Que hace que la gastronomía guatemalteca resalte al lado de otras gastronomías?
4. ¿Cuán importante es la comida autentica en el sector turístico de Guatemala? Favor de elaborar.
5. ¿Cuán importante es que cada persona tenga acceso a comida con significado cultural y ancestral?

## APPENDIX E

### INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR AGRICULTURAL COMMODITY TRADERS

1. What sort of impacts can the increase of industrial agriculture have on food security, both positive and negative? Explain
2. Does indigenous knowledge have a place in agro-business? Feel free to use examples.
3. Are biofuels a subject of controversy in your field? Explain.
4. What are the advantages and disadvantages of small-scale agriculture? Please be specific.
5. What sort of changes are needed in the commodity trade industry that can empower farmers?
6. How important do you believe it is for people to have food that has ancestral and cultural significance to them? Why?

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