

FOOD SOVEREIGNTY: AN EMANCIPATORY HUMAN RIGHT

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Lay Abstract

Despite the existence of enough food for the sustenance of the global populace, there are obstacles prohibiting economic and physical access to food. These obstacles are created and maintained by the institutions and social structures that put forth policies encouraging economic and social inequality. The role which small-scale food producers play in global society is integral to the realization of the human right to adequate food. However, the current agricultural system de-values their work. Conceptually, food sovereignty highlights the oppressive nature of the agricultural system and puts forth a response that focuses on small-scale food producers assuming control over the food system. Commodification and exploitation are inherent characteristics of both the capitalist and colonial systems. Food sovereignty aims at dismantling oppressive systems through anti-capitalist and anti-colonial efforts sanctioned by the mobilization and collaboration of oppressed peoples within the context of food production.

Abstract

The globalized neoliberal agricultural regime operates within a neocolonial context and was therefore built upon the ideologies, law, and legacy of the colonial-era. Both capitalism and colonialism, in theory, and in practice, share characteristics that are inherently contrary to the realization of human rights. Given that the human rights framework operates within a globalized capitalist economy, there are systemic barriers to the universal realization of human rights. This thesis holds that the concept of food sovereignty not only highlights this reality but presents a nuanced emancipatory path forward towards a post-capitalist world where universal human rights realization is not only possible but inherent to the functioning of food sovereignty itself.

Food sovereignty presents as a praxis for Marxist agrarian theory in establishing an approach to closing the *metabolic rift*. The existence of the Food Sovereignty Movement also confirms the existence of the *metabolic rift* as the theoretical disconnect between capitalism and human rights which underpins the current agricultural system. As a concept, it accounts for the systemic obstacles to the universal realization of the right to adequate food while also providing an alternative food system centred on the decisions of small-scale food producers. Contrary to capitalist and colonialist approaches to food production, food sovereignty is concerned with universal access to culturally appropriate nutritious foods produced through ecological means. Through a combination of normative and descriptive claims, this thesis examines the official recognition and realization of the right to food sovereignty as a proxy of Marxist ideology. Food sovereignty empowers the

rights-holder to ensure the continued realization of their right to adequate food in underscoring the fact that rights realization is not static in nature but, an ongoing endeavour. As such, the process called for to implement an alternative food system is one of decolonization.

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This thesis is dedicated to my grandmother, Shalini Kashyap. Your unwavering and continual support of my endeavours has been my driving inspiration. My research and this thesis are as much my accomplishments as they are yours.

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Abbreviations

Committee on Social, Economic and Cultural Rights (CSECR)

Farmer's Rights (FR)

Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO)

Food Sovereignty Movement (FSM)

Intellectual Property (IP)

International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR)

International Monetary Fund (IMF)

La Via Campesina (LVC)

Non-Governmental Organization (NGO)

Protection of Plant Varieties (PPV)

Right to Adequate Food (RtAF)

Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPS)

Union for the Protection of New Varieties of Plants (UPOV)

Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR)

World Trade Organization (WTO)

Declaration of Academic Achievement

I, Mrinal Kashyap, declare this thesis to be my own work. I am the sole author of this document. No part of this work has been published or submitted for publication or for a higher degree at another institution.

To the best of my knowledge, the content of this document does not infringe on anyone's copyright.

My supervisor, Dr. Nancy Doubleday, and second-reader, Dr. Violetta Igneski, have provided guidance and support at all stages of this project. I completed all of the research work.

Preface

The prevalence of human rights violations despite international human rights law and bodies to oversee it is a reality I have long refused to accept as “the best we can do.” Understanding where “the system” went wrong and how it can be improved upon has been a prominent part of my philosophical inquiry. My research initially aimed at exploring the failures of the United Nations in being unable to ensure compliance with international human rights law due to its lack of a capable enforcement body. I aimed to choose a particular human rights violation and analyze the systemic failures that allowed for such circumstances to occur.

The intersection between human rights and agricultural production has piqued my interest because the circumstances under which a large community faces human rights abuses is within the agricultural regime. Hunger, despite the existence of enough food, is as illogical as it is inhumane. So, I chose to focus on the Food Sovereignty Movement because it offers a way forward within the agricultural regime that, I believe, could have substantial impacts on our understanding of human rights in general and the most significant obstacles to their universal realization.

Attempting to find the answer to the root of the issues with the current human rights framework, due to its failures, began as a search for academic commentary and evolved into a greater appreciation for grassroots movements. The Food Sovereignty Movement, in particular, and how their thinkers have examined the systemic obstacles to rights realization, provides a salient approach to eradicating hunger. A notable point

throughout my research, which will ultimately be the overall argument that I wish to put forth, is the understanding that there is no singular part of the human rights framework which is incapable of fulfilling its purpose. Rather than attempting to rectify a perceived weakness of the current regime, understanding the *context* within which it operates is necessary.

The context within which the agricultural regime, and indeed the human rights regime, operate is a globalized neoliberal economy during the neocolonial-era. Conceptually, food sovereignty highlights this reality. Food sovereignty, I believe, and the grassroots movement advocating for its recognition and implementation is the catalyst for meaningful and useful reform of the institutions and social relations that are harmful towards both people and the environment.

This paper is largely inspired by the work of La Via Campesina (LVC), a Peasant's Rights grassroots movement advocating for food sovereignty through Peasant mobilization.

Introduction

Before beginning this thesis, I wish to provide an overview of my position in an effort to remain accountable but, also to provide relevant context for my ideas. I have never been hungry or impoverished and therefore cannot claim a “true” understanding of the violation of the right to adequate food. As a colonized person who has ultimately benefited from capitalism, I am, in my living experience, an obstacle to food sovereignty and continue to be a part of the systems that have harmed others. My thesis contains observable generalizations about my experiences with the colonial and capitalist frameworks and while I stand by my claims, I wish to acknowledge that my lived experience differs greatly from that of other oppressed peoples. My intent is not to dismiss or to rank forms of oppression and suffering but to highlight that they are all salient features of the globalized neoliberal world.

I want to highlight that I am writing from a position of privilege. My thesis was an exercise in identifying my privileges and handling them with honesty and openness. Grappling with my position within an overarching oppressive framework necessarily entails an admission of my own faults in perpetuating the current system. I acknowledge that I am writing within an academic setting where the institution of academia has been part of erasure politics, racism, sexism, and elitism. This thesis is not activism, nor will I claim it to be such. My goal, ultimately, is to present an argument in favour of the right to food sovereignty being both officially recognized and universally actualized.

Contextual Information and Key Terms

La Via Campesina (henceforth LVC) was founded by farmers from across the world in 1993 as a result of increasing neoliberal policies promoting the globalization of agriculture. The movement represents small-scale food producers who have been left out of decision-making pertaining to agricultural policies that have favoured large-scale agribusinesses. It represents 200 million farmers, through 182 organizations who have envisioned food sovereignty, and identifies itself as “an autonomous, pluralist, multicultural movement, political in its demand for social justice while being independent from any political party, economic or other type of affiliation.”¹

The existence of international human rights law has not eradicated instances of human rights violations. An easily identifiable human rights violation is the failed realization of the right to adequate food (herein RtAF), which is manifested in the prevalence of global hunger. Since 1948, there has been an international commitment to human rights, and yet adequate food, water, shelter, and medical care are not accessible to everyone. Among the communities subject to consistent human rights abuses are Peasants. This paper will employ the definition of Peasant put forth by Roman-Alcala as “small-scale, diversified, and family farm-based food producers, with an emphasis on the descriptor as a political (self-)construction.”²

¹ La Via Campesina, “Organisational Brochure,” Via Campesina, 28 October 2016, <https://viacampesina.org/en/la-via-campesina-organisational-brochure-edition-2016//>

² The Spanish term “Campesina” translates as “peasant” in English. While the communities composing LVC are reclaiming this once pejorative term, in solidarity, I will employ “members of LVC” to maintain an appropriately respectful and neutral tone. See Antonia Roman-Alcala, “Looking to food sovereignty movements for post-growth theory,” *Ephemeris: Theory and Politics in Organization* 17 no. 1 2017: 121.

The term “agricultural regime” implies the understanding of a food regime set out by Robbins: “a periodic arrangement in the production and circulation of food on a world scale, associated with various forms of hegemony in the world economy.”³

This paper understands agroecology as an ecological approach to agricultural production centred upon sustainability, soil conservation, and upon building, and maintaining biodiversity through both traditional and scientifically-based practices.⁴ When placed within the context of a post-growth economy, profit and productivity would no longer be the driving force behind agricultural outputs.⁵ Harmonious living with the environment despite food production is an approach to agriculture that has been stifled by the colonial-era and maintained in the neocolonial-era under capitalism.

The RtAF holds particular significance in the realization of other rights, a concept explored in Chapter 1. Its prevalent violation, manifested in the number of hungry people across the globe, affects the realization of other rights given that hunger attacks the corporeal form through which one experiences all rights. The globalized neoliberal agricultural regime operates within a neocolonial context and is therefore built upon the ideologies, laws, and legacy of the colonial-era. Capitalist agricultural production is encouraged and maintained by state and supranational bodies. Both capitalism and colonialism, in theory, and practice, share characteristics that are inherently contrary to

³ Martha Jane Robbins, “Exploring the ‘localisation’ of food sovereignty,” *Third World Quarterly* 36 no. 4 2015: 451.

⁴ Lauren Kepkiewicz and Bryan Dale, “Keeping ‘our’ land: property, agriculture and tensions between Indigenous and settler visions of food sovereignty in Canada,” *The Journal of Peasant Studies* 46 no. 5 2019: 991; Robbins, “Exploring the ‘localisation’ of food sovereignty,” 456.

⁵ Kepkiewicz and Dale, “Keeping ‘our’ land,” 992.

the realization of human rights. Given that the human rights framework operates within a capitalist economy, the realization of human rights faces systemic barriers. This paper holds that the concept of food sovereignty not only highlights this reality but presents a nuanced emancipatory path forward towards a post-capitalist world where universal human rights realization is not only possible but inherent to the functioning of food sovereignty itself.

Section Breakdown

This paper is divided into three chapters. In the first chapter, I will provide an overview of some of the relevant documents and statements about the RtAF and food sovereignty before arguing that the intrinsic value of food producers is akin to the predominant rights-provider: the state. Given the failures of the universal realization of the RtAF prompted the Food Sovereignty Movement (herein FSM), these failures set the foundation for understanding the demands of food sovereignty as a human right. The FSM's existence proves that the presence of rights, as written in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (referred to as UDHR), does not guarantee their realization for if codification was sufficient, the Movement need not exist in the first place.

'Food sovereignty' is broadly defined as "the right of communities, peoples, and states to independently determine their food systems and advocates a green economy, fair and equal resource allocation, and encourages democratic decision-making processes, particularly on matters affecting smallholder food producers."⁶ In principle, food

⁶ Roman-Alcala, "Looking to food sovereignty movements", 130.

sovereignty is the understanding that the current system of injustice is not strictly based on the state-producer relationship, but, the state-supranational-non-governmental system that directly affects agricultural policies.⁷ Ultimately, this chapter will establish the RtAF as inadequate in eradicating hunger while food sovereignty presents a nuanced solution to the issue.

Chapter 1 concludes by arguing that the sovereignty of the members of LVC is warranted because of both their intrinsic and instrumental value. Instrumentally, the production of food is foundational in aiding the realization of other human rights. When food sovereignty is viewed as a response to the contextual background, which creates and maintains the oppressive circumstances experienced by members of LVC, it establishes the bodies responsible for oppressive social relations. It provides an answer that acts as a systemic remedy through empowering members of LVC to participate in decision-making.

After developing a more thorough understanding of food sovereignty as a concept, I examine the characteristics of both capitalism and colonialism, the frameworks which create and perpetuate unequal and oppressive relations, and how they threaten one's RtAF. Threats to the RtAF are addressed by food sovereignty because food sovereignty itself exists under the supposition of a post-capitalist (or post-growth) world. The egalitarian properties inherent to food sovereignty are within post-growth literature, which advocates ecological economics as well as democratic decision-making and land

⁷ Priscilla Claeys, "The rise of new rights for peasants. From reliance on NGO intermediaries to direct representation," *Transnational Legal Theory* 9 no. 3 2012: 249.

control so that one can access their rights without having to “buy” them. The commodification of everything, including one’s human rights, is an overarching focus throughout the second chapter.

Food sovereignty neatly connects the commodification of rights access and the prevalence of human rights abuses. The inequality latent within capitalism and colonialism points to the need for a kind of egalitarianism that encourages access to rights irrespective of wealth. The third and final chapter of this project uses the Marxist rhetoric utilized by LVC as a prompt to explore the Marxist conception known as the *metabolic rift*⁸ because, much like food sovereignty, it captures the reality of capitalist agricultural practices and their consequences. Food sovereignty directly answers to the picture painted by the *metabolic rift* given that both highlight intersections between environmentalism, land, and food sovereignty within the neoliberal globalized agricultural regime.

The importance of the success of the FSM is two-fold. In the first place, it demonstrates the ability of a self-defining grassroots group to use the existing rights framework, which in fairness has been compliant in their oppression, to successfully demand justice.⁹ Second, the FSM speaks to the importance of the democratization of human rights, shifting power away from the state and supra-state entities and into the hands of the rights-holders themselves, which directly addresses the problematic nature of speaking for others which has only perpetuated the current regime. This kind of shift

⁸ Marxist conception denoting the physical and mental rift between food producers and consumers under capitalist agricultural production.

⁹ Mark Edelman and Carwil James, “Peasants’ rights and the UN system: quixotic struggle? Or emancipatory idea whose time has come?” *The Journal of Peasant Studies* 38 no. 1 2011: 82.

promotes the FSM's agenda as it will allow women's voices, environmental concerns, and historically neglected groups to be a part of the acquisition of justice in the way that they see fit, thereby facilitating the kind of autonomous emancipation that the FSM aims at achieving.

Trigger Warning: suicide, self-harm, death

The current agricultural regime actively harms food producers. Although this thesis is predominantly focused on food sovereignty as a concept, the implications of food sovereignty being recognized as a human right are tied to real lives. I will begin this discussion with the unsettling story of Lee Kyung Hae, a South Korean farmer, and activist. Lee argued against the World Trade Organization (herein referred to as WTO) and neoliberalism more generally, citing harmful policies that have affected small-scale food producers. In September of 2003, while continuing to protest the neoliberal agenda, Lee took his own life in front of the Fifth WTO Ministerial Conference after releasing an account of Peasant struggles. Parts of Lee's statement will be referenced throughout this paper. The gripping conclusion paints a painful picture of the current globalized neoliberal regime, and so, I will begin at the end of his statement, which states:

“My warning goes out to all citizens that human beings are in an endangered situation. That uncontrolled multinational corporations and a small number of big WTO Members are leading an undesirable globalization that is inhumane, environmentally degrading, farmer-killing, and undemocratic. It should be stopped immediately. Otherwise the false logic of neoliberalism will wipe out the diversity of global agriculture and be disastrous to all human beings.”¹⁰

¹⁰ Laura Carlson, “WTO Kills Farmers: In Memory of Lee Kyung Hae,” Via Campesina, 5 September 2016, <https://viacampesina.org/en/take-agriculture-out-of-the-wto-farmer-lee-kyung-hae-reproducing-his-letter-from-2003/>.

Chapter 1: Food Sovereignty As a Remedy for the RtAF

1.1 Introduction

The international commitment to the RtAF has not eradicated hunger. Adequate food exists but is inaccessible to 1 billion people globally, among them are members of LVC. Small-scale food producers provide the majority of the world's food but often cannot access food themselves. The current food system favours large-scale agricultural production (explored in Chapters 2 and 3) while, at the same time, harming small-scale food producers. Food sovereignty is a right which allows food producers to dictate and control their own food system.

This chapter aims at providing an understanding of the commitment that states have made concerning food. In examining the human rights framework, through which the RtAF is guaranteed, this chapter also explores the kind of commitment to the framework which food producers are advocating. This chapter will address both the RtAF and the right to food sovereignty as they relate to the FSM. In the first section, I will explore the RtAF as outlined by the UDHR, followed by elaboration on the content of the right by the *Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights* (referred to as *CESCR*). The following section establishes the conception of food sovereignty put forth by LVC. Together, these sections provide the contextual information for an examination of the merits of the rights framework in eradicating food insecurity. This chapter concludes with a discussion of the fundamental nature of the RtAF as a guarantor of other human rights. Food producers who fulfill this right have a particularly strong claim to sovereignty.

This chapter will put forth the idea that the RtAF is fundamental for the realization of other human rights because its fulfillment is necessary for the corporeal form through which all other rights are experienced. It is the sacrosanct status of the RtAF, which extends towards those who fulfill it: food producers. Food producers are essential to fulfilling a human right, and therefore, have an instrumental value similar to that of the state by sharing in the particular state responsibility of respecting, protecting, and fulfilling the RtAF.

1.2 The Right to Adequate Food (RtAF)

In this section, I will outline the RtAF, as found in Article 25 of the UDHR. Next, an overview of Article 11 of the *International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights* (henceforth *ICESCR*) will be provided to elaborate on Article 25 of the UDHR. In response to Article 11, General Comment 12, drafted by the CESCR, will be discussed. The purpose of this section is to demonstrate that the requirements for the realization of the RtAF have been elaborated on and expanded upon extensively.

The RtAF appears in Article 25 of the UDHR, established during its creation in 1948, which reads:

“Everyone has the right to a standard of living adequate for the health and well-being of himself and of his family, including food, clothing, housing and medical care and necessary social services, and the right to security in the event of unemployment, sickness, disability, widowhood, old age or other lack of livelihood in circumstances beyond his control.”¹¹

¹¹ United Nations, “Universal Declaration of Human Rights,” 1948, <https://www.un.org/en/universal-declaration-human-rights/>.

In order to gain clarity on the responsibilities of the state in fulfilling the RtAF, *CESCR* created the *ICESCR* in 1996. Article 11 of the *ICESCR*, which speaks to Article 25 of the UDHR, stipulates that:

“1. The States Parties to the present Covenant recognize the right of everyone to an adequate standard of living for himself and his family, including adequate food, clothing and housing, and to the continuous improvement of living conditions. The States Parties will take appropriate steps to ensure the realization of this right, recognizing to this effect the essential importance of international co-operation based on free consent.2. The States Parties to the present Covenant, recognizing the fundamental right of everyone to be free from hunger, shall take, individually and through international co-operation, the measures, including specific programmes, which are needed:

(a) To improve methods of production, conservation and distribution of food by making full use of technical and scientific knowledge, by disseminating knowledge of the principles of nutrition and by developing or reforming agrarian systems in such a way as to achieve the most efficient development and utilization of natural resources;

(b) Taking into account the problems of both food-importing and food-exporting countries, to ensure an equitable distribution of world food supplies in relation to need.”¹²

Further elaboration of the RtAF and Article 11 is found in General Comment 12 of the *ICESCR*. While the entire document is quite extensive in detailing the requirements for the realization of the RtAF, for the purposes of this chapter, I wish to focus on a particular statement found at the close of the introduction, on page 3, which reads:

“Fundamentally, the roots of the problem of hunger and malnutrition are not lack of food but lack of access to available food, inter alia because of poverty, by large segments of the world’s population.”¹³

¹² Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, “International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights,” 1966/1976, <https://www.ohchr.org/en/professionalinterest/pages/cescr.aspx>.

¹³ CESCR, *ICESCR* 1966/1978, 3.

Article 25 of the UDHR is the object of commitment, the RtAF, while Article 11 of the *ICESCR* outlines the tenets of that objective. I have included General Comment 12 of the *ICESR* to highlight the greatest obstacle to the realization of the RtAF: lack of access to available food as the result of poverty. The expanded contents of the RtAF have been insufficient in combatting the threat and prevalence of hunger, and in response, food sovereignty conceptually aims to pinpoint and rectify the obstacle itself.

1.3 Food Sovereignty

The concept of food sovereignty was introduced in 2007, at The World Forum for Food Sovereignty, and codified in the *Declaration of Nyeleni*.¹⁴ A meeting of 500 delegates from 80 countries, spanning five continents, for the purposes of conceptualizing and expanding upon food sovereignty and an agenda for the recognition of food sovereignty as a right. The *Declaration* states:

“Food sovereignty is the right of peoples to healthy and culturally appropriate food produced through ecologically sound and sustainable methods, and their right to define their own food and agriculture systems. It puts those who produce, distribute and consume food at the heart of food systems and policies rather than the demands of markets and corporations. It defends the interests and inclusion of the next generation. It offers a strategy to resist and dismantle the current corporate trade and food regime, and directions for food, farming, pastoral and fisheries systems determined by local producers. Food sovereignty prioritises local and national economies and markets and empowers peasant and family farmer-driven agriculture, artisanal fishing, pastoralist-led grazing, and food production, distribution and consumption based on environmental, social and economic sustainability. Food sovereignty promotes transparent trade that guarantees just income to all peoples and the rights of consumers to control

¹⁴ See <https://viacampesina.org/en/declaration-of-nyil/>.

their food and nutrition. It ensures that the rights to use and manage our lands, territories, waters, seeds, livestock and biodiversity are in the hands of those of us who produce food. Food sovereignty implies new social relations free of oppression and inequality between men and women, peoples, racial groups, social classes and generations.”¹⁵

The FSM successfully garnered UN support for the recognition of the right to food sovereignty by partnering with non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and human rights experts.¹⁶ The current human rights regime operates under the same top-down approach as the Westphalian state, where legitimization of rights claims are determined by “gatekeepers,” in the form of official bodies, like Amnesty International and the Human Rights Watch.¹⁷ Thus, strategic alliances are a necessary part of the FSM's efforts to work within a system to change it. The Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), the branch of the UN, which oversees reduction strategies towards hunger reduction, joined LVC in 2013.¹⁸ Two years later, the UN officially recognized the Rights of Peasants, codified in the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Peasants and Other People Working in Rural Areas.

The right to food sovereignty is not only in response to food insecurity but a remedy for the failures of the current agricultural regime. The concept of food sovereignty is unique in nature because it works within the current rights framework and

¹⁵ LVC, “Organisational Brochure,” 2.

¹⁶ Claeys, “The rise of new rights for peasants,” 388.

¹⁷ Claeys, “The rise of new rights for peasants,” 392.

¹⁸ About FAO,” Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, <http://www.fao.org/about/en/>; Roman-Alcala, “Looking to food sovereignty movements,” 121.

towards a post-capitalist reality through the agricultural regime. In the following section, a deeper understanding of the concept, as a right, will be discussed.

The term “Peasant” captures a self-defined culture-possessing body¹⁹ within LVC which spans the globe and is composed of a large proportion of the global population. I would note that the suggestion that LVC members are a ubiquitous community is misleading and so, it may be more accurate to understand the term as encapsulating a multitude of communities, cultures, and knowledge self-identifying under a singular term. The identification of Peasants within the definition of food sovereignty highlights the uniqueness of the concept as a right because its expressive value²⁰ is outside of what the current rights system has seen.

It is an approach to social relations, ecology, and economics while simultaneously encouraging a process of decolonization. It is a direct affront to colonial and capitalist ties present within the agricultural regime because it is a response to the oppressive regime that has prohibited the realization of the most fundamental right. The response, through food sovereignty, is a reclaiming and re-distribution of power such that the rights-holder can actualize their rights themselves. As a system predicated on the actualization of the RtAF in an environmentally conscious, long-term goal-oriented fashion, in conjunction with culturally relevant knowledge and practices, food sovereignty centres food as the instrument through which to facilitate decolonization. Ultimately, it is interesting to see

¹⁹ Edelman and James, “Peasants’ rights and the UN system,” 98.

²⁰ Edelman and James, “Peasants’ rights and the UN system,” 97.

the necessity of food extend beyond the enjoyment of one's corporeal form but, also as part of the emancipatory project that small-scale food producers have highlighted through the FSM.

I will touch upon food security, as a concept, briefly, as it provides further background into the necessity of ensuring that food sovereignty is a recognized and actualized human right. The four pillars include:

1. Physical availability of food
2. Economic and physical access to food,
3. Food utilization,
4. The stability of the aforementioned three²¹

All four of these pillars appear to be salient in the definition of food sovereignty. Food sovereignty, as an alternative food system, calls for food security while also describing it as dependent upon food producers. In so doing, one can see both its prescriptive and descriptive nature.

The physical availability of food is threatened under the current neoliberal agricultural model. As will be discussed in Chapter 2, the capitalist approach to ecology is one in which long-term environmental concerns are not necessarily a determinant factor in decision-making processes. Given that food sovereignty is based on agroecological knowledge and practices, it addresses the environmental concerns of climate change facilitated by agricultural production under the current system. While there are a host of

²¹ Husen Ahmed Tura, "Achieving zero hunger: implementing a human rights approach to food security in Ethiopia," *Third World Quarterly* 40 no. 9 2019, 1616.

other reasons why food would be physically unavailable, exploring them individually is beyond the scope of this paper. It should be noted, however, that the preconditions of food sovereignty are such that the circumstances under which the unavailability of food exists, are meant to be dismantled. These implications will become clearer as the paper goes on. The first two pillars are notably different but share a connection through food producers.

Availability and access cannot be disjointed for if food is available but inaccessible, one's RtAF is violated. The inclusion of economic access to food in addition to physical access, within the second pillar, is notable when considering food sovereignty because the commodification of food has created an additional barrier to its availability and accessibility. Commodification will be discussed further in Chapter 2. If the first two pillars are met, the third, food utilization may be achieved. However, as will be explored throughout this paper, the current agricultural regime threatens the third pillar in order to meet the demands of capitalism. It is the fourth and final pillar that I argue that food sovereignty inherently ensures.

Given that food sovereignty is predicated on the absence of oppressive social relations, stability is arguably a defining characteristic. Food sovereignty encourages the localisation of food systems, a topic that will be touched upon in Chapter 2. By putting the food consumer physically closer to food producers, and inevitably closing the *metabolic rift* (to be discussed in Chapter 3), the right to food sovereignty enables everyone to source their own food in the means they deem most appropriate for themselves. It is an alternative food system built upon ensuring the availability of food.

Further, because one of the preconditions of food sovereignty is democratic decision-making, and indeed an active part of the realization of the right to food sovereignty, these processes encourage the identification of community needs and adequate solutions to address them.

As a post-capitalist agricultural system (a notion to be explored further in Chapter 2), food sovereignty is centred upon the presence of both economic and physical access to food. The preconditions of food sovereignty necessitate partnerships with other social movements so that their agendas, ultimately all centred on the re-shaping and dismantling of oppressive social relations, can become a reality.

Agroecological practices are in direct contrast to capitalist agricultural practices. The former is predicated on ensuring a healthy environment to produce nutritious food while the latter is concerned with profit, a topic that will be discussed at length in Chapter 2. Furthermore, food sovereignty, in its definition, highlights the importance of culturally appropriate food being available and accessible. As a process of decolonization, food sovereignty actively encourages the use of traditional knowledge and practices in direct contradiction to the expectations of the capitalist agricultural regime. It is these agroecological practices, paired with non-oppressive social relations, that have the capacity to ensure the continued availability, accessibility, and use of food. As a result, the stable use of food is greatly encouraged by food sovereignty because it is an alternative food system also grounded in agroecology.

Food Sovereignty and The Current Rights Framework

Conceptually, food sovereignty is a direct response to capitalism and specifically the economic climate that has forced small-scale food producers out of policy-making conversations and continued a cycle of perpetual poverty and injustice for the sake of neoliberal free trade.²² The absence of representation of small-scale food producers at the proverbial decision-making table has led to policies which not only dictate their agricultural practices but have put those who produce the majority of the world's food at the losing end. The tenets of food sovereignty, therefore, are inherently anti-capitalist both in theory and as is evident in the language used by the FSM.

The state's responsibility to respect, protect, and fulfill the rights outlined in the UDHR, in relation to the right to food, has instead led to an increase in both agribusiness profit and the number of hungry people. Despite food producers being so physically close to food and integral to the continued sustenance of both humans and animals, their ownership of the means of production is limited and they make up the majority of the world's hungry population.²³ This is due to agricultural policies being determined by supranational mandate through bodies, such as the WTO, that do not have a shared responsibility with the state to respect, protect, and fulfill human rights.²⁴ Food

²² Priscilla Claeys, "The Creation of New Rights by the Food Sovereignty Movement: The Challenge of Institutionalizing Subversion," *Sociology* 46 no. 5 2012: 845.

²³ Tina D. Beuchelt and Detlef Virchow, "Food sovereignty or the human right to adequate food: which concept serves better as international development policy for global hunger and poverty reduction?" *Agri Hum Values* 29 2012: 260.

²⁴ Raj Patel, "What does food sovereignty look like?" *The Journal of Peasant Studies* 36 no. 3 2009: 667.

sovereignty is, as a result, an alternative to the current agricultural model.²⁵ Further elaboration on the two aforementioned points will take place within Chapter 2.

It should be noted that the RtAF and food sovereignty are different, and in understanding that which makes them different, one can understand why the FSM advocates for food sovereignty rather than reiterate the RtAF. Beuchelt and Virchow explain that the RtAF is a legal concept, whereas food sovereignty should be understood as a political one.²⁶ While the former is recognized internationally and is binding on the state, the latter is neither - except for the handful of states that have included “food sovereignty” in their own legislation. Although both concepts are meant to address and protect all people, food sovereignty is particularly concerned with marginalized agricultural producers. In essence, the FSM attempts to address the injustices born of the post-colonial, neoliberal globalized economy.²⁷

Advantages and Disadvantages of Food Sovereignty

Rights are a universally understood concept and, therefore, an appealing starting point. To speak of rights is to speak of something linguistically and conceptually tangible because human rights are both codified and explicitly committed to by the state. Thus, the introduction of a new right, namely food sovereignty, partially adheres to the already existent framework. Although a seemingly positive lens, the new right framework is not

²⁵ Beuchelt and Virchow, “Food sovereignty or the human right to adequate food,” 269.

²⁶ Robin Dunford, “Human rights and collective emancipation: The politics of food sovereignty,” *Review of International Studies* 41 2015: 242.

²⁷ Beuchelt and Virchow, “Food sovereignty or the human right to adequate food,” 269.

without disadvantages, and it would be prudent, when exploring the potential success of the FSM, to discuss both sides of the proverbial coin.

There are several notable advantages with the recognition of food sovereignty as a right, which creates a compelling case for an official international commitment. As previously mentioned, food sovereignty focuses on those groups which have been consistently and historically placed at a disadvantage both politically and economically. If food sovereignty was explicitly referred to in international human rights law, this would bind states to ensure that small-scale food producers have access to the decision-making table on their own behalf. This point, I wish to stress as there has been a tendency, especially in Western culture, to view the West as a kind of “saviour” that advocates for those who are unable to speak for themselves or be heard. Dunford identifies this phenomenon as elitism within emancipatory politics where emancipation is advocated for on behalf of victims. As a result, abstract utopianism is also adopted because there is a focus on messaging and not on the needs of the people.²⁸ However, LVC is the physical embodiment of an alternative emancipatory model: collective rights-based emancipation.²⁹ Under this model, victims advocate for themselves, and the introduction of food sovereignty as a new human right, undoubtedly, is part of their advocacy. This new rights framework, therefore, is a hallmark of empowerment against the oppressive nature of capitalism.

²⁸ Robin Dunford, “Human rights and collective emancipation: The politics of food sovereignty,” *Review of International Studies* 41 2015: 242.

²⁹ Dunford, “Human rights and collective emancipation,” 240.

The aforementioned advantage extends into further positive characteristics, including allowing for intersectional lenses and perspectives to highlight global interrelated issues such as climate change, women's rights, and children's rights.³⁰ Food sovereignty involves core tenets of the environmentalist agenda, for example, by rejecting the use of chemical inputs to maximize agricultural exports.³¹ In attempting to protect traditional agricultural, environmentally conscious, and sustainable practices, the FSM necessarily entails certain preconditions to be met for the realization of a new right. Threats to one's surrounding environment or body will have a direct impact on their food sovereignty, and so, other injustices cannot be separated from this right.

A new right was a necessary component of the FSM because it highlights a key feature of its commitments: collective emancipation, just as Dunford discusses. In wanting to decide on and create those policies which affect their livelihoods, small-scale food producers had to highlight their collective fight against the current power structure.³² The cycle of dependency born from the corporate food regime is one that Dunford explains is the product of land grabbing leading to the displacement of farmers who, already impoverished, are forced into increasingly dire circumstances.³³ Although a farmer may continue to produce food, their agricultural practices must abide by the policies dictated by the current food regime, thereby discouraging the use and

³⁰ Claeys, "The Creation of New Rights," 847.

³¹ Beuchelt and Virchow, "Food sovereignty or the human right to adequate food," 261.

³² Claeys, "The Creation of New Rights," 848.

³³ Dunford, "Human rights and collective emancipation," 252.

continuation of local traditional agricultural knowledge and practices. Their agricultural outputs are then sold to a global market, and prices are set by forces outside of the producer, and so, their food security can only be guaranteed via external parties, hence, the tendency towards abstract utopianism and elitism that Dunford brings to light.³⁴ While the advantages of the food sovereignty frame are evident and abundant, this framework can be problematic.

Using the existing rights framework, in general, can be viewed as using and supporting the system that has perpetuated oppression and the cycle of dependence outlined above. The FSM does not necessarily advocate for the individual but for a community as being the subject of rights.³⁵ This is a particularly key disadvantage as hunger, the realization of the RtAF, and food sovereignty, depend on transnational cooperation given the globalized economy.³⁶ With this in mind, it is also important to note, as Beuchelt and Virchow explain that food sovereignty does not actually put forth a comprehensive agricultural policy which can combat hunger.³⁷

A concept that I hold to be central to the necessity for the realization of a right to food sovereignty is what Arendt identifies as a right to have rights.³⁸ Victims of human rights abuses are not subject to merely that particular wrong, there is a deeper level to uncover that speaks to why that kind of oppression could have happened in the first place.

³⁴ Dunford, "Human rights and collective emancipation," 252.

³⁵ Claey's, "The Creation of New Rights," 851.

³⁶ Claey's, "The Creation of New Rights," 847.

³⁷ Beuchelt and Virchow, "Food sovereignty or the human right to adequate food," 270.

³⁸ As cited in Patel, "What does food sovereignty look like?" 667.

Arendt puts forth the notion that there may be a right to think freely, but there is also a right to express one's opinion, and it is the latter wherein the problem lies.³⁹ Patel expresses concern for the FSM because of Arendt's observation given that historically, food producers have always been marginalized and so, re-asserting the existence of rights may not be fruitful because codification of these rights has not been sufficient in ensuring their realization.⁴⁰ It seems, therefore, that the demand for additional rights is counter-intuitive.

Patel argues that "the language of rights" may prove problematic for the right of food sovereignty because of the nature of rights as being a state responsibility. To assert a right to x is to assert that the state must ensure that x is realized within its physical boundaries.⁴¹ The unilateral nature of rights, it appears, is contrary to the concept of food sovereignty because there is another sovereign involved: small-scale food producers. Rights place a duty on the state but, food sovereignty holds small-scale food producers to account for use of their own land.⁴² While it is the case that conceptually, the state is a necessary component of the actualization of food sovereignty, the right itself does not identify a duty-bearer in the same way that other human rights do because there is no specificity with which to identify the sovereign (a topic that I will come back to in

³⁹ Patel, "What does food sovereignty look like?" 667.

⁴⁰ Patel, "What does food sovereignty look like?" 667.

⁴¹ Patel, "What does food sovereignty look like?" 667.

⁴² Patel, "What does food sovereignty look like?" 668.

Chapter 2).⁴³ Although these concerns should be addressed, the unique nature of the right to food sovereignty may be able to combat them.

While the state plays a hand in the realization of rights, the commodification of rights has ensured other players do as well. Commodities are available to everyone but not accessible to everyone. Those with access have inevitably taken away from those without because our resources are finite. There is only so much available at one time, but it is important to note that there is *enough* available. Commodifying rights entails that not everyone will have access to them. In the same way that capitalism is an (anti-)ecological⁴⁴ approach, I would argue that it is also an approach to social relations that are inherently oppressive (the topic of Chapter 2).

1.4 Connections Between Food Producers and the State

Food holds a particularly sacrosanct place within the confines of human life. Most obviously, nourishment is the quintessential notion behind the RtAF: all humans must eat. Aside from water, food is the only truly essential ingredient to life. This is not to say that food is the most important right (although this may be a fair preposition) but that it is a precondition, or necessary for the fulfillment of other rights. Beyond being a fundamental building block of life, food carries cultural and social significance. While these are also important points to consider, I will focus on the aforementioned characteristic of necessity.

⁴³ Claeys, “The Creation of New Rights,” 850.

⁴⁴ To be clear, I am employing a satirical application of the term “ecological” given that capitalist practices, in their neglect of the environment, are antithetical to a true ecological approach.

As I see it, food can be equated with life. Without the former, the latter ceases to exist in its most basic form. It is with food that the physical self can continue to simply be, or exist in the world. Food, then, literally ties us to the plain upon which rights exist. It is, therefore, the foundation for not just existence but, by extension, rights more generally and, as such, can be seen as the key to opening the doors towards other rights.

Among other potential perils that could be a part of the human experience, hunger remains particularly dire. Beyond discomfort, the autonomy of a person is at risk when hunger is a reality. A peril that is paired with hunger becomes exponentially worse because one's corporeal form is threatened: one's ability to experience life has been diminished. Without food, any peril which is experienced is not only exacerbated but remains insignificant relative to the destruction of one's corporeal form.

The term 'sovereignty' within 'food sovereignty' challenges the existing framework, which has recognized states as being sovereign, thereby leading to the question of who exactly the sovereign is in discussions about food sovereignty.⁴⁵ Rather than competing for superiority over one another, I argue in favour of what Roman-Alcala deems 'relational sovereignty',⁴⁶ which will be explored in Chapter 2.

If it is the case that the RtAF holds some kind of sacrosanct status because of what it guarantees for the rights-holder, namely, life, so too do those who produce it. Naturally, every job within a society, in some form, can be said to contribute to the polity's

⁴⁵ Saturnino M. Borrás Jr., Jennifer C. Franco and Sofía Monsalve Suárez, "Land and food sovereignty," *Third World Quarterly* 36 no. 3 2015: 602.

⁴⁶ Roman-Alcala, "Looking to food sovereignty movements", 136.

functioning. Food producers, naturally, have a very obvious contribution to society: they provide that which we eat. One may be inclined to assign importance to food producers based on the discussion above. While I do believe that the aforementioned should be considered, there are additional reasons and ways to see the importance of food producers.

The Value of Food Producers

In providing the food which nourishes us, food producers are instrumental to the realization of the RtAF. Another entity that is similarly instrumental to the realization of the RtAF, and indeed all human rights, is the state. The apparatus which is meant to respect, protect, and fulfill human rights relies on food producers to ensure that their duty has been looked after. In this way, food producers have a connection to the state that is also ontological in nature, rooted in their responsibility to ensure rights fulfillment.

As was previously established, only states are charged with the duty to respect, protect, and fulfill human rights. Nevertheless, food producers take part in protecting and fulfilling the RtAF. Thus, by extension, they share in the state's role as it pertains to food. In being the sovereign, the state is able to dictate the policies which affect its constituents, including food producers. In doing so, the state asserts dominion over that which has been assigned to another group. In other words, the state alone creates and enforces agricultural policies to ensure the RtAF is realized despite relying on a partnership between it and the world's small-scale food producers. This is to say that there is a case to be made for small-scale food producers dictating the policies which directly impact their livelihoods -

one that guarantees subsistence, the realization of the RtAF, and by extension, all other rights. Given that by occupation, they are necessarily integral to the realization of all human rights, the connection between the state and small-scale food producers deepens.

The RtAF which food producers by virtue of their livelihood ensure the realization of, is deemed a 'fundamental right' by the *CESCR*, a category under which no other right belongs.⁴⁷ Although the producers themselves do not have this responsibility in the same capacity as the state, their involvement in the fulfillment of the right is indicative of their importance to the overall functioning of a given society. Food producers are, it seems, intrinsically connected to the state which begs the question as to why the current agricultural system does not treat them as such.

1.5 Conclusion

Challenging the existing framework requires more than just agrarian reform but the dismantling of an entire oppressive regime. The obstacle to the reduction of hunger was identified as an inability to access available food, which is a reality that the FSM sees as being rectified through the right to food sovereignty. Hence, food sovereignty concerns economic and social reforms alike to ensure guaranteed access to the necessities of life. The unique nature of food sovereignty as a right which is actualized through the right-holder's capability and not reliant on a duty-bearer for realization begins a shift of power predicated on non-oppressive relations. Members of LVC need not rely on others

⁴⁷ Hans Morten Haugen, "International Obligations and the Right to Food: Clarifying the Potentials and Limitations in Applying a Human Rights Approach When Facing Biofuels Expansion," *Journal of Human Rights* 11 2012: 406.

speaking for their communities and solidified this position in asserting a unique right, one with emancipatory capability. Food sovereignty is indeed a revolutionary concept as it works within the status quo to inspire a systemic change.

This chapter sought to establish two main points. In the first place, that food, and access to food, are inherent to universal human rights realization. The RtAF is both, in theory, and realistically, the foundational right upon which all others rely. That is to say that the realization of the RtAF facilitates the realization of the other necessities of life. Secondly, this chapter established the intrinsic and instrumental values of food producers in their contribution to the realization of the RtAF.

While this chapter noted the definition of food sovereignty, the heart of the concept appears simple in nature, but it is indeed multidimensional and is not separate from the context within which it exists. In the following chapter, I delve into food sovereignty by examining the contexts from within which its existence was made necessary. I aim to build upon the understanding of food sovereignty presented in this chapter.

Chapter 2: The Commodification of Rights

2.1 Introduction

“Farmers who gave up early have gone to urban slums. Others who have tried to escape from the vicious cycle have met bankruptcy due to accumulated debts. For me, I couldn’t do anything but just look around at the vacant houses, old and eroding. Once I went to a house where a farmer abandoned his life by drinking a toxic chemical because of his uncontrollable debts. I could do nothing but listen to the howling of his wife. If you were me, how would you feel?

I believe that farmers’ situation in many other developing countries is similar. We have in common the problem of dumping, import surges, lack of government budgets, and too many people. Tariff protection would be the practical solution.”⁴⁸

The necessary recognition of food sovereignty as a right is a response to the current agricultural regime and its treatment of small-scale food producers. The globalized neoliberal economy is one which threatens the realization of the RtAF because the inequality inherent within capitalist practices reflects in people’s access to rights. This chapter aims to prove that the greatest threat to the realization of food sovereignty, and indeed all human rights by extension, is capitalism. First, I discuss the definition of food sovereignty provided in Chapter 1 in order to establish how the right should be understood. Next, I examine the overlap between capitalism and colonialism in order to establish their symbiotic relationship. Finally, this chapter explores the concept of relational sovereignty as a potential bridge between the current system and one that can address universal human rights realization.

⁴⁸ Carlson, “WTO Kills Farmers”.

The context within which one is to understand food sovereignty is also not in isolation as the concept itself was born of historical struggles and the creation of the current agricultural regime. Thus, it would be prudent to highlight how it is that we have come to a place where the right to food sovereignty is being advocated as a human right. The long history that has culminated in the FSM cannot and should not be separated from our understanding of what constitutes food sovereignty. A historical, political, economic, and social context is a fundamental part of understanding why it is that the FSM emerged in the first place. It is in understanding this context that one can become uniquely aware of not only what food sovereignty is on a conceptual level but also why it is necessary.

Food Sovereignty as a Process

Food sovereignty is not an end but a process. In the same way that the RtAF is not simply met when one is able to eat an appropriate meal at a given time, food sovereignty requires continuous and ongoing efforts towards its realization. The realization of any given human right at a single point in time does not absolve the duty-bearer, the state, from their duties. While the state has ultimately fulfilled its duty in this isolated instance, it must continue to do so in perpetuity. Rights realization, therefore, is an ongoing process. The process involved in the realization of food sovereignty, the topic of this section, is a process of decolonization.

The definition of food sovereignty, provided in Chapter 1, contains the heart of the decolonization effort necessary for its realization, found in its closing statement. “Food sovereignty implies new social relations free of oppression and inequality . . .” The term

“implies” denotes that social relations free of oppression and inequality are a precondition of food sovereignty. “Oppression” and “inequality” are undeniably broad terms and are notably applied “. . . between men and women, peoples, racial groups, social classes and generations,” under this definition. I hold the aforementioned statement as crucial to the realization of food sovereignty because it highlights the two systems that are its obstacles: colonialism and capitalism. Grey and Patel argue that “food sovereignty is the continuation of anti-colonial struggles in ostensibly postcolonial contexts.”⁴⁹ Postcolonial-era institutions maintain colonial-era power structures and therefore the process of decolonization entails their dismantling. The following section explores these structures.

2.2 Colonialism and Capitalism

LVC identifies capitalism, free trade, the patriarchy, transnational companies, and agribusinesses as impediments to the realization of food sovereignty. The WTO is specifically identified as a threat to food sovereignty, and as a result, dismantling the institution is part of the FSM. The aforementioned structures perpetuate colonial ideologies within the neocolonial-era in maintaining and effectively mandating social relations that are inherently oppressive and unequal. In this section, I aim to highlight the symbiotic relationship between capitalism and colonialism in an effort to demonstrate

⁴⁹ Sam Grey and Raj Patel, “Food sovereignty as decolonization: some contributions from Indigenous to food system and development politics,” *Agriculture and Human Values* 32 2015: 433.

how the aforementioned structures maintain a system that threatens food sovereignty, and ultimately the universal realization of all human rights.

There are three overarching similarities between these economic, social, and political systems. Both encourage and maintain inequality through the concentration of power at the expense of others for the benefit of few. Both systems also encourage and maintain a form of unilateralism in which individualistic needs surpass communal ones. Finally, both commodify everything in their ascription of monetary value towards people, objects, and the environment.

Conceptually, colonialism is premised on both oppression and inequality because it is inherently exploitative. The definition of colonialism that this paper assumes is as follows: colonialism is the policy or practice of acquiring full or partial political control over another country or territory, occupying it with settlers, and exploiting it economically.⁵⁰ The power imbalance between the colonizers and the colonized is obvious given the political, physical (social), and economic imposition. If, however, one examines the definition of capitalism, the oppression and inequality within the system are not as explicit on a conceptual level.

For the purposes of this paper, capitalism is understood as an economic and political system in which a country's trade and industry are controlled by private owners for profit, rather than by the state.⁵¹ Control is part of both definitions but over seemingly

⁵⁰ Oxford Dictionary Online.

⁵¹ Oxford Dictionary Online.

different domains as the capitalist controls trade and industry, whereas the colonizer controls people and land. Both concepts assume that there is a body with said control, and therefore, there is necessarily also a body without it.

The duality between colonizer and colonized is reflected in the relationship between the rich and poor. It is the “for-profit” model associated with capitalism that creates the power imbalance due to the resulting unequal distribution of wealth, a reality also latent within the colonial-era. The for-profit model, as I understand it, entails one earning more money than one spends. For a corporation, therefore, the goal under capitalism is to maximize profit by reducing costs and increasing sales revenue. Ideally, only businesses that are profitable continue to operate under the capitalist system.

Under both colonialism and capitalism, the owners of wealth assert control. The colonialist had stolen and exploited their wealth but nevertheless says that it is their own and uses their resources and resulting authority to maintain control. The capitalist earns their wealth (profit) and uses it to participate in a free market whose other participants are also owners of wealth. Naturally, more wealth entails increasing control, and therefore, a lack of wealth leads to an absence of control. Accumulation of wealth, in mass amounts and in concentrated quantities, occurs in both systems because “growth” is a shared fundamental characteristic.

The neocolonial-era has witnessed a great wealth divide between the rich and the poor: the capitalist, and the working person, respectively. In 2019, the Credit Suisse

Wealth Report found that the richest 1% held 44% of global wealth.⁵² Forbes reported that in the same year, the world's top 10 richest billionaires were worth a combined total of \$801 billion.⁵³ Additionally, Oxfam has reported that in 2009, 380 billionaires shared the combined wealth of the world's poorest 50%.⁵⁴ By 2019, the number of billionaires who held the same amount of wealth was 26.⁵⁵ These statistics indicate that wealth is continuously being concentrated amongst the already wealthy, who are then able to grow their earnings exponentially. As well, this information sheds light on how much wealth the global poor *do not* have. Regardless of whether one has inherited or "earned" their wealth, it is evident that a massively unequal distribution of wealth continues in the post-colonial world under capitalism.

These concentrations of power and wealth maintain the same kind of imbalance latent within the colonial-era because the current neoliberal globalized economy was born of colonial-era laws and ideologies. Subjugation under a colonizer was a political, social, and economic reality wherein only the colonizer truly benefits within all three realms. Under the capitalist system, it has been argued that everyone stands to benefit. While it may be true that innovation and the resulting accumulation of global wealth under a capitalist system has lifted people from poverty and made available commodities and jobs that ceased to exist in the past, the benefits of the system have evidently been

⁵² "Wealth Inequality." Inequality.org. <https://inequality.org/facts/wealth-inequality/>.

⁵³ "Wealth Inequality." Inequality.org. <https://inequality.org/facts/wealth-inequality/>.

⁵⁴ "Wealth Inequality." Inequality.org. <https://inequality.org/facts/wealth-inequality/>.

⁵⁵ "Wealth Inequality." Inequality.org. <https://inequality.org/facts/wealth-inequality/>.

disproportionate and in favour of the already wealthy. In fact, the narrative regarding prosperity under capitalism is a misleading one. Under the current hyper-industrialized agricultural regime, 1 billion people are hungry while 1.5 billion are obese.⁵⁶ Not only has the capitalist been able to accumulate a disproportionate amount of wealth but has also been able to dictate policy to even further garner benefit.

The WTO is the quintessential example of an institution that is created by and for the capitalist while also garnering colonial-era sentiments. Its international treaty, the Agreement on Agriculture (AoA), coming into existence in 1995 is directly responsible for the inequality perpetuated by global trade.⁵⁷ As the international body that regulates and oversees global trade, the WTO, much like the concept of capitalism, is superficially and theoretically beneficial. Ensuring fair and free trade for the purposes of global economic development ultimately, encouraging and maintaining peace and prosperity between and within states, is a seemingly valid justification. However, as has become increasingly evident, the WTO may have increased trade but poses a direct threat to universal human rights realization.

Unfortunately, the WTO is not responsible for regulating or overseeing the labour or environmental aspects of trade. As a result, trade policies can and have been negligent towards both people and the environment. The current human rights regime operates with states being responsible for both adherence to and violations of human rights law.

⁵⁶ Patel, "Food Sovereignty," 2.

⁵⁷ The Treaty addresses subsidies, dumping, and selective tariffs; Haugen, "International Obligations and the Right to Food," 416

However, non-state actors like the WTO are responsible for the conditions under which human rights violations occur.⁵⁸ Due to the kind of growth required under the current capitalist regime, accumulation takes precedence over the negative consequences of such growth.⁵⁹ Small-scale food producers have faced particularly challenging economic circumstances because they must adhere to WTO policy, which is adopted into the legal framework by the state in which they live.⁶⁰ In focusing on trade rather than people and the environment, the WTO maintains a neglectful parallel to colonial-era attitudes.

As has been observed, the global poor are often the first people to experience the effects of climate change.⁶¹ Similarly, the members of LVC are the first group of people affected by trade agreements, and while one would assume that this would promote economic growth, it does the opposite. Although it may be tempting to view all sectors, especially the agricultural sector, as largely globalized and in need of a supranational body to oversee its transactions, less than 15% of food leaves the parameters of its state of origin.⁶² We evidently acquire food more locally than the capitalist narrative allows us to believe.

“La Via Campesina has long been warning the world of the risks of environmental deregulation and unbridled expansion of global capital. As people working in the field to feed 70% of the world’s population, we were the first to face the brunt of free trade agreements that were pushed forth by WTO

⁵⁸ Haugen, “International Obligations and the Right to Food,” 418.

⁵⁹ Roman-Alcala “Looking to food sovereignty movements for post-growth theory,” 124.

⁶⁰ Sofia Monsalve Suarez, “The human rights framework in contemporary agrarian struggles,” *The Journal of Peasant Studies* 40 no. 1 2013: 243.

⁶¹ Beuchelt and Virchow, “Food sovereignty or the human right to adequate food,” 264.

⁶² Roman-Alcala, “Looking to food sovereignty movements”, 121.

and other multilateral institutions. WTO led the pack in seducing and coercing our governments to sign up to the grand plans of a few rich countries. The devastation caused by this top-down model of global governance was first felt in our territories when it crashed the prices of our produce, destroyed local peasant markets, wiped away the rich biodiversity that existed in our fields, took away our autonomy over seeds and evicted millions of our sisters and brothers from their territories.”⁶³

The colonial-era created a wealth divide between states that imposed their power and states that became subject to that power. The economic inequality that was born of the exploitation of natural resources in colonized areas, for the benefit of the colonizer’s state, has not been rectified in the neocolonial-era. Thus, some states that were subject to colonial rule had to emerge from a position of having had their resources taken for the building of another state. The same kind of exploitation may look different today, but its legacy remains.

In the neocolonial-era, capitalism continues to subjugate some for the benefit of others. The finite nature of resources paired with the drive for infinite accumulation leads to an unequal distribution of wealth. The nature of the “growth” economy disregards equality because growth, in the capitalist context, is not linear but exponential. Capitalism is, by definition, individualistic as the accumulation of profit for oneself is paramount. The other side of the coin, however, is also an unwillingness to then part with one’s profits for no other reason than to accumulate additional wealth. Thus, when finite

⁶³ "La Via Campesina issues call to mobilise against WTO and Free Trade Agreements," La Via Campesina, 2 September 2019, <https://viacampesina.org/en/la-via-campesina-issues-call-to-mobilise-against-wto-and-free-trade-agreements/>.

resources are collected, they are not distributed, and those who were unable to quickly or effectively accumulate wealth become forced into a perpetual cycle of continual loss.

Even the world of philanthropy is partially to blame for the state of the agricultural sector. Together, the Ford and Rockefeller Foundations pushed an agenda of industrialized agriculture within Africa by funding hybrid seed, fertilizer, and pesticide use. Given that the pesticide industry has paired closely with the hybrid seed industry, one can see how power, in the form of capital specifically, within the neoliberal age, also forces conformity to the “right” practices. It is important to note that in addition to the state and supranational entities, non-profit organizations are also part of the global agricultural regime and therefore have also created obstacles to food sovereignty.

Traditional agricultural knowledge is often harboured by women. Unfortunately, women are particularly disadvantaged under the current agricultural regime due to patriarchal ideas permeating from the colonial-era. The result is the suppression of traditional knowledge and practices as women are consistently left out of the agricultural system due to a lack of access to land and capital.⁶⁴ The feminist agenda, as was previously mentioned, is particularly important to the FSM because women are disadvantaged within the global food regime.

The WTO maintains the imbalance between already rich and poor states through policies that necessarily benefit corporate interests and not those of working individuals. It is not necessarily that the policies are outwardly in favour of some states and not others

⁶⁴ Rajeev C. Patel, “Food Sovereignty: Power, Gender, and the Right to Food, PLoS Medicine, 2012: 3.

but that the policies assume a starting point of social and economic equality, which is far from the case. The colonial-era gave rise to industrial growth, but only for states who were on the receiving end of the colonial enterprise. In an age of no environmental regulations or labour standards, states that had exploited wealth from many other places experienced accelerated economic growth. In the neocolonial-era, these states remain at an economic advantage, which is partially maintained and encouraged by WTO policy.

India has been able to combat one of the ways that the WTO has disproportionately affected small-scale food producers. In the following section, I will turn to the work of Peschard. The historical context behind current agricultural policies in India requires a thorough exploration, but, for the purposes of this chapter, I will highlight the significant actions by the three relevant parties mentioned above: small-scale food producers, the state, and the WTO.

India's Legislative Solution

After the establishment of the WTO's Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPS), the International Union for the Protection of New Varieties of Plants (UPOV), an inter-governmental body overseeing adherence to the subset of intellectual property (IP) law dealing with the rights of plant breeders, produced legislation that much of the Global South would adopt. However, in 2001, India produced *sui generis* ("of its own kind") legislation known as the Protection of Plant Varieties (PPV) and Farmer's Rights (FR) Act.⁶⁵

⁶⁵ Karine Peschard, "Farmers' rights and food sovereignty: critical insights from India," *The Journal of Peasant Studies* 40 no. 6 2014: 1086.

The historic legislation was the product of a grassroots social movement composed of smaller organizations fighting for environmental and social justice. It should be noted that IP law pertaining to plant varieties was not a policy that India had adopted prior to having joined the WTO. The state implemented the PPV and FR Act so that farmers would have the same protections for their seeds as plant breeders.⁶⁶

However, one year later, facing pressure from the other UPOV members and the national seed industry, the Indian government contemplated joining the UPOV, which necessitated the amendment of the PPV and FR Act.⁶⁷ In order to prevent a loss of farmers' rights, an ally of the farmers' rights movement, the Gene Campaign, took legal action to hold the state accountable for adhering to the legislation they had created in the first place. The Resulting Public Interest Litigation successfully led to India's ultimate decision not to join the UPOV.⁶⁸

The PPV and FR is not without criticisms and its practical manifestation is questionable. What it represents, however, and its contents, are the subject of focus for this section because its unique nature has, as Peschard notes, been the subject of study on the future of agricultural policy and indeed food sovereignty more broadly.⁶⁹

⁶⁶ Peschard, "Farmers rights and food sovereignty," 1088.

⁶⁷ Peschard, "Farmers rights and food sovereignty," 1094.

⁶⁸ Peschard, "Farmers rights and food sovereignty," 1095.

⁶⁹ Peschard, "Farmers rights and food sovereignty," 1104.

Ownership

The colonial conception of ownership extends to an integral part of food sovereignty because land ownership and food sovereignty are inextricably linked. In order to produce food, one needs adequate resources, prime among them being land on which to grow food. It is not the absence of food or land that is foundationally unsteady but power over food and land.⁷⁰ Only the state can grant ownership of land within its borders and therefore within the context of the realization of the right to food sovereignty, the state would be solely responsible for the fair and just distribution of land society-wide. The commodification of the basic building blocks of life, addressed in the previous chapter, extends to the land which is undeniably an integral part of one's right to food, food sovereignty, and life. In discussing what food sovereignty looks like, as a matter of practice, land reform must also be discussed.

Although, as an individual, one seems insignificant in the face of the insurmountable power of the state, the collective populace of those individuals is, among any other group, the largest. Their influence is therefore just as insurmountable as the state. Viewing the state as having dominion over its constituents is contrary to democratic theory. If it is the case that the consent of the governed confers power to the state, it is the state that is in and remains in a submissive position. Indeed, anyone outside of the food production has a duty, the ultimate responsibility, to align themselves with the demands of the FSM. Aside from the general social, political, and economic justice reforms that are called for by the LVC's members, which also benefit the public, the sacrosanct status of

⁷⁰ Patel, "Food Sovereignty," 1.

food-producers and resulting state-like characteristics (established in Chapter 1), exists because everyone consumes food. It should be understood that public support for the FSM is not and should not be embodied in speaking for or on behalf of LVC members. While it is true that the right to food sovereignty is everyone's right, small-scale food producers have spearheaded the FSM for all, including in an effort to fully realize Peasant Rights and should not, therefore, be silenced in demonstrations of public support. Adequate public support is determined by LVC members and remains integral to the FSM and the realization of the right to food sovereignty because of the influence that the private individual has over their state.

Land sovereignty is one of the pre-conditions to food sovereignty and requires the democratization of land control.⁷¹ Land reform, however, is a necessary but insufficient component of food sovereignty.⁷² As Borras et al. explain, land reforms have a tendency, from a historical vantage point, of maintaining and growing state control over small-scale food producers. Food sovereignty, however, necessitates farmer control over land.⁷³ The reason that the state cannot be ignored in any discussion of food sovereignty is largely because of the laws of the colonial-era, carried through to the neocolonial-era which we are currently living within, that allows the state to decide on land access and control. Ultimately, it is the state that grants land ownership.⁷⁴ Within the context of capitalism, land can be bought and sold, ascribed monetary value, and ultimately be owned.

⁷¹ Borras et al., "Land and food sovereignty," 614.

⁷² Borras et al., "Land and food sovereignty," 605.

⁷³ Borras et al., "Land and food sovereignty," 606.

⁷⁴ Borras et al., "Land and food sovereignty," 606.

The tendency of the capitalist system to focus on the individual extends through ownership laws and the overall encouragement of privatization. The ownership of land by a single person or body is seen as a tool for the accumulation of private capital.⁷⁵ In accumulating and “owning” mass amounts of land, commodifying that land and/or its crops, the capitalist has effectively driven the food producer away. Yet, it still needs the food producer to provide. The power imbalance and continued subjugation of the food producer creates a reliance on the one who needs *them* rather than the other way around. The flaw here is that the need for food to sustain life supersedes the need for accumulation - if one is not alive, they cannot enjoy the so-called pleasures of capitalism. And so, at some point, the need for food and essentially the food producer themselves will outweigh capitalist incentives. Much like the rise and fall of the colonial-era, an oppressive system has nowhere to go but downward because they are neither sustainable nor wholly beneficial.

The incompatibility between the current neoliberal globalized system and human rights is highlighted in the commodification of people. In the very nomenclature of the term “living wage,” It is evident that not only is there a widespread recognition of the unitary value placed on the ability to access the basic necessities of life but also that not everyone has this access. And who is responsible for providing such access via a “living wage” but those who have accumulated mass amounts of wealth? The cycle of dependence on those with the most wealth, and therefore those with the greatest access to

⁷⁵ Borras et al., “Land and food sovereignty,” 610.

rights realization, starts with needing wealth to access rights in the first place because they have a price.

If it is the case that the necessities of life such as food and land, must be bought, then they have been ascribed unitary value. Access to these rights depends on one's accumulation of wealth, as is evident in the fact that it is only ever the poor who are consistently victims of human rights abuses. The absence of wealth also means the absence of life's necessities or a lack of access to them. The mass amalgamation of wealth by a concentrated number of people creates both economic *and* rights imbalances. More wealth means increased access to anything commodified: which is essentially everything.

Unfortunately, the promise of consistent growth and prosperity under a capitalist system has instead led to a constant devaluing of people and the environment. Climate change, and its effects, are deemed "negative externalities" in economic terms meaning that because the cost is pushed onto a third party, it is not reflected in the economic considerations of a given actor.⁷⁶ We are so aware of the consequences of how climate change disproportionately affects those outside of corporate transactions that there is a term to capture the willful neglect exercised when it comes to environmental considerations.

It appears that if a particular environment is no longer exploitable, it is no longer considered "valuable." The instrumental value of the environment is part of the capitalist (anti-)ecological position. Perhaps I should amend my earlier assertion regarding the

⁷⁶ Christian Garmann Johnsen, Mette Nelund, Lena Olaison, and Bent Meier Sørensen, "Organizing for the post-growth economy," *Ephemera: Theory and Politics in Organization* 17 no. 1 2017: 10.

commodification of everything to “everything except that which poses a hindrance to the ‘for-profit’ model.”

‘Post-Growth’: Literature and Economies

Post-growth literature addresses alternative economic models that are not focused on “growth” (i.e. profit). Instead, post-growth economic models are predicated on the fair and just distribution of necessities, like land, and highlight access to necessities as fundamental. Rather than amassing wealth for oneself, these models focus on the sharing and distribution of wealth for one’s community. The inherent inequality that capitalism perpetuates as a result of its for-profit focus ceases to become a reality under post-growth economies.

Food sovereignty involves a variety of preconditions in the form of the fulfillment of other human rights, the dismantling of oppressive social structures, and the democratization of resulting social structures. It is these preconditions that essentially outline the process that is food sovereignty almost as though they were the chapters of a book. While each chapter contains the details of the story, when taken individually, a smaller and more focused look at what is an incomplete story is left. When put together, however, the chapters work together to formulate an overarching harmony of sub-stories comprising a larger, more fulfilling one.

The underlying democratic process that is implied within food sovereignty runs the risk of either exacerbating or failing to recognize the marginalized position that members of LVC are in from a historical, social, and economic standpoint.⁷⁷ The

⁷⁷ Roman-Alcala, “Looking to food sovereignty movements”, 133.

inequality latent within the current system must be addressed before decision-making processes, and ultimately, food sovereignty is realized. I argue in the next section that relational sovereignty may be the bridge needed between our current regime and a post-growth reality.

Viewing food sovereignty as a process rather than an end is particularly important when considering its practical implications. The criticism (explored in Chapter 1) that the FSM has not put forth a legitimate policy solution to the issues that it highlights is one that may not necessarily hold if one can understand that food sovereignty is a process. In truth, the idea that there is some end to reach is rather inconceivable as we have not lived in a world free from both colonial enterprise and its resulting ideologies. There is nothing static as it pertains to the fulfillment of a right because said right must consistently and constantly be actualized. An “end” denotes a kind of finality that is incompatible with the dismantling of a current system for the building of a new one. And so, if we are to consider food sovereignty in practice, we need to turn to how dismantling the system can become a reality.

2.3 Relational Sovereignty

The ways in which we view power are naturally part of a narrative rooted in colonial narratives on power. As a result, viewing power relations as being competitive in that one competes for power over another (to avoid being under another’s power), as the modern Westphalian system does, is also a product of colonialism. Viewing the state as sovereign, powerful, and *above* is part of the narrative of power. If we can view sovereignty through an uncompetitive lens, we arrive at what has been termed aptly as

relational sovereignty. In other words, adopt a non-statist and non-elitist understanding of ‘a sovereign.’⁷⁸

Conceptually, food sovereignty is simply understood as the ability to dictate food policy for oneself. As a practical matter, however, “sovereignty” is difficult to grasp as a new group has formed while declaring sovereign status against other sovereign entities - but solely on the subject of food. Declarations of sovereignty are not a new occurrence. Of course, various bodies have declared sovereign status successfully in the past. The difficulty with this situation, however, is rooted in the fact that the entity in question is a group of people rather than a state. Moreover, this group is dispersed across the globe, tied together by occupation and similar social, political, and economic considerations.

The sovereign status of the state is threatened when another sovereign is declared within its boundaries. The idea that small-scale food producers are attempting to compete for sovereign status, however, is entirely misguided. One sovereign does not necessarily have to swallow another. Sovereign states coexist, and therefore, sovereign entities within sovereign states, it seems, should be able to coexist as well. In the global agricultural regime, it is not just the state who asserts sovereignty, but, as was previously discussed, non-state actors are also in “competition” for power. The kind of growth expected of the capitalist plays into the competitive dynamic between decision-makers who are ultimately trying to “out-accumulate” other entities.

Letting go of colonial sentiments is entirely part of the project at hand. The idea that small-scale farms are inefficient or incapable of success is in itself part of a

⁷⁸ Borras et al., “Land and food sovereignty,” 601.

neocolonial narrative that has propagated the idea that only the current industrialized agricultural model is sustainable. We know, for a fact, that the narrative that a hyper-industrialized agricultural regime is efficient, effective, and sustainable is a false one. Environmental degradation can be considered a hallmark of the current system, given that industrialized corporate agriculture requires extensive land transformation and the use of hazardous chemical inputs. The failure to harmonize agricultural practices with the environment is a product of the neocolonial-era, which incentivizes certain agricultural practices while also forcing the abandonment of traditional cultural, agricultural practices.

Capitalism actively produces concentrations of wealth that are so excessive that accessibility is limited. Universal human rights realization necessitates the guarantee of necessities while the capitalist system does not. While it may encourage excess, it does not guarantee necessity.

The resulting imbalance creates a cycle of dependency in which those with less wealth are forced to rely on those with wealth for access to their own rights. I would argue that this is precisely why socialist policies are rampant in states with a high standard of living: wealth redistribution allows increased access to rights amongst more people because the individual has the means to access their rights.

Relational sovereignty is not possible if the participants in the process disagree on fundamental values. Of the principles that must be agreed upon, for the realization of food sovereignty, is that capitalist growth is contrary to food sovereignty.⁷⁹ Transitioning out of

⁷⁹ Roman-Alcala, "Looking to food sovereignty movements", 136.

the neoliberal era we are currently living in is not a project that can be left to a particular body but requires mass mobilization towards emancipation.

2.4 Conclusion

Imagine that you are invited to a once-in-a-lifetime car race. If you win, you win the car. The driver is the current owner of the car who is excited to take you along. Once inside, you are strapped into place with what looks to be an intricate series of ribbons. The driver assures you of the safety of the ribbons and that the multiple strands will be effective. They, however, are fitted with a seat belt and harness. The race begins, speed picks up, and somewhere along a seemingly never-ending track, the car swerves out of control sending both you and the driver out of your original seated position. The driver is held in place but, one by one, the ribbons holding you to the seat begin to break.

In this unlikely scenario, the car is capitalism under which getting to the primary goal is to happen as quickly as possible. Hence, the car accelerates continuously which is indicative of the capitalist trend of growth and accumulation, quickly and frequently. The driver, the capitalist, has control of the car in this scenario and has ensured their own safety but is evidently unconcerned with yours. Although they have provided an illusion of safety, in the form of a series of ribbons, they know these to be insufficient. This example mimics the absurdity of the capitalist system. It promises nay *markets*, a hopeful message that is misleading. While the capitalist suggests that you may have a chance to drive the car, the chances of you doing so are slim and entirely based on *their* decisions, not yours.

The rationale perpetuating the capitalist system is arguably the most successful marketing campaign and as has become increasingly evident, it is based on narratives from an era of oppression. It is not the structures within the neoliberal world that are explicitly individually to blame because the system, as a whole, is in its nature unequal and therefore oppressive. Universal human rights realization is not possible under capitalism. I firmly stand by the notion that understanding and accepting the capitalist system as the mechanism through which colonialism continues is part of working toward dismantling it.

As much as one might be tempted to resist calls for the dismantling and shifting away from what has been the predominant economic model in the neocolonial-era because doing so can be seen as “too radical,” one is also faced with the failures of a system that claims to be beneficial for all. In a time when we are seeing rapid technological advancement, where there is more wealth than ever before, more widespread education and the like, we must ask ourselves serious and uncomfortable questions about how these resources are being used. In an age of the most advanced medical practices in human history, access to medical care is something that is lacking in even the wealthiest state: the United States. And yet, having access to adequate healthcare is a human right. If the state that represents the hallmark of the current neoliberal regime cannot and does not combine human rights and capitalist practices, it is time that we make serious inquiries as to the limitations of the current system and whether it actually *is* what it claims to be. As has become increasingly evident, we have commodified life. If we

want to talk about radicalism, we are in the throws of it. If capitalism is so great, why must socialism have to bail it out all the time?

“Soon after the Uruguay Round Agreement was sealed, we Korean farmers realized that our destinies are no longer in our own hands. We cannot seem to do anything to stop the waves that have destroyed our communities where we have been settled for hundreds of years. To make myself brave, I have tried to find the real reason and the force behind those waves. And I reached the conclusion, here in front of the gates of the WTO. I am crying out my words to you, that have for so long boiled in my body:

I ask: for whom do you negotiate now? For the people, or for yourselves?

Stop basing your WTO negotiations on flawed logic and mere diplomatic gestures.

Take agriculture out of the WTO system.

Since (massive importing) we small farmers have never been paid over our production costs. What would be your emotional reaction if your salary dropped to a half without understanding the reasons?”⁸⁰

⁸⁰ Carlson, “WTO Kills Farmers”.

Chapter 3: A Lesson From Marx

3.1 Introduction

“Widely paved roads lead to large apartments, buildings, and factories in Korea. Those lands paved now were mostly rice paddies built by generations over thousands of years. They provided the daily food and materials in the past. Now the ecological and hydrological functions of paddies are even more crucial. Who will protect our rural vitality, community traditions, amenities, and environment?”

I have been so worried watching TV and hearing the news that starvation is prevalent in many Less Developed Countries, although the international price of grain is so cheap. Earning money through trade should not be their means of securing food. They need access to land and water. Charity? No! Let them work again!”⁸¹

In the first chapter, I established the intrinsic value of food producers given their role in the fulfillment of the RtAF. It is due to their livelihood and its resulting contribution to society at large which provides sufficient reason for why small-scale food producers should be viewed as and treated as, sovereign. Chapter 2 explored why small-scale food producers are currently not recognized as sovereign under the current neoliberal globalized agricultural regime. Colonialism and capitalism share characteristics that position both systems as contrary to the realization of human rights in general. Both of these systems, I argued, are maintained through capitalist institutions born of colonial-era laws and ideologies. Taken together, the first two chapters highlight the process of decolonization, food sovereignty, as the dismantling of capitalism. If the most fundamental human right, the RtAF, is being violated and those who play a crucial

⁸¹ Carlson, “The WTO Kills Farmers.”

role in its fulfillment are identifying the obstacles to its realization while also prescribing a solution, is there room to doubt that these obstacles also prohibit the universal realization of human rights in general?

It has already been established that food sovereignty, as a human right, applies to all people but, given that it is food producers who are advocating for its recognition and implementation, those outside of the realm of food production appear superficially unrelated to the issues at hand. In this chapter, I aim to explore what food sovereignty means to those outside of agricultural production in order to argue for why it is everyone's responsibility to not only support the FSM but also ensure its success.

In the first place, the current neoliberal globalized agricultural model has oppressed everyone, not just food producers. Secondly, as a process of decolonization, food sovereignty directly impacts everyone within the food regime - producers and consumers - who are ultimately instrumental to the process. In order to explore these two points, I turn to Marxist agrarian theory, and specifically the Marxist conception known as the *metabolic rift* in order to illustrate the ways in which the current system has been disadvantageous for everyone.

Given that this paper is premised on the incompatibility of capitalism and universal human rights realization, examining a Marxist perspective seems fitting. The kind of radical egalitarianism inherent in Marxism speaks to that which is required to rectify the wrongs under the current human rights regime.⁸² If all people are deserving of

⁸² Patel, "What does food sovereignty look like?" 670.

human rights, and the necessities of life are included among these rights, it follows that everyone deserves the necessities of life. There are people with and without vast amounts of wealth but, those without it are unable to access the basic necessities guaranteed to all persons. Therefore, some kind of economic egalitarianism appears to be the solution.

3.2 The *Metabolic Rift*

No anti-capitalist discussion would be complete without some mention of Marx. The anti-capitalist rhetoric employed by LVC and indeed the way in which I have broadly discussed the FSM, is reminiscent of Marxist concepts. One concept in particular which speaks directly to the FSM is that of the *metabolic rift* as it accurately captures the (anti-)ecology of capitalism and the reality of the current agricultural regime. This section will be dedicated to understanding this concept and its manifestation. In the following section, I aim to establish some of the notable consequences of the *metabolic rift* which affect everyone including environmental degradation and the devaluing of food producers. I will argue that these effects ultimately threaten everyone's RtAF.

Understanding and Manifestation

The *metabolic rift*, as I understand it, is the inherent disconnect between people and the environment as the result of capitalist agricultural production. There are 3 identifiable lessons that this Marxist conception holds in relation to the FSM. In the first place, the *metabolic rift* captures both the capitalist and colonialists frameworks within which the current agricultural regime operates. Perhaps this is most evident in the unfortunate reality that the cheapest foods tend to be the most processed while the most expensive foods tend to be marketed as “organic” or “natural.” Secondly, food

sovereignty appears to be a seemingly perfect solution as an alternative food system in response to the *metabolic rift*. Food sovereignty is focused on localised food production, while the current agricultural regime encourages globalization.⁸³ Food sovereignty is a system which, I shall argue, appears capable of closing the *metabolic rift* by bringing consumers closer to food production.

The concept of the *metabolic rift* draws upon the interconnectedness of environmentalism, land sovereignty, and food sovereignty by highlighting the capitalist approach to ecology. As Kepkiewicz and Dale explain, it has been argued that there is no separate ecological regime latent within capitalism because capitalism is an ecological regime - one that happens to be the antithesis of environmental protection.⁸⁴ According to Robbins, “ecological damage is not a side-effect of capitalist accumulation; rather it is an intrinsic part of it.”⁸⁵ The FSM is directly opposed to the mechanisms that allow the *metabolic rift* to continue because it is focused on practices in conjunction with the environment rather than against it. Heavy reliance on exploitation for profit is mirrored in the treatment of both people and the environment. It is clear, therefore that the connection between humans and the natural environment (particularly for food production) is an integral part of human rights realization.

If the environment in which organisms live is not flourishing, how will the beings within it flourish? The capitalist approach to the environment is, as I see it, one which views people and the environment as separate entities with a unilateral connection instead

⁸³ Robbins, “Exploring the ‘localisation’ of food sovereignty,” 450.

⁸⁴ Kepkiewicz and Dale, “Keeping ‘our’ land,” 992.

⁸⁵ Robbins, “Exploring the ‘localisation’ of food sovereignty,” 452.

of inherently interconnected. Harmonious living with one's environment is not a new concept but one which was actively discouraged within the colonial-era and perpetuated in the neocolonial-era. Agroecology is directly opposed to the current neoliberal globalized agricultural regime and therefore important in the realization of food sovereignty. In reversing the general trend of environmental neglect characteristic of the agricultural production under capitalism, agroecological practices encourage the closing of the *metabolic rift*.

Neglecting the agricultural sector of a society has consequences beyond the violation of the RtAF. Schiavoni notes the Caracazo of 1989 in Venezuela, wherein protests, riots, looting, and violence took place as the result of economic and food crises.⁸⁶ The Venezuelan President had signed a deal with the International Monetary Fund (herein IMF) in an effort to address the country's debt. The resulting reforms, upon which the IMF's help was predicated, created a booming petroleum industry. However, the investments which were put into the country's petro-industry were diverted away from agriculture and rural communities. In a state which once produced much of its own food, Venezuela became the world's first net food importer. Drops in oil prices led to spikes in food prices so much so that the price of bread had increased by 600%. Hunger was a rampant issue and food producers were harmed greatly by government policies that encouraged food imports and ultimately, discouraging food sovereignty.⁸⁷

⁸⁶ Christina M. Schiavoni, "The contested terrain of food sovereignty construction: toward a historical, relational and interactive approach," *The Journal of Peasant Studies* 44 no. 1 2017. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/03066150.2016.1234455>, 5-7.

⁸⁷ Schiavoni, "The contested terrain of food sovereignty construction," 5-7.

This example highlights the root of hesitation in shifts away from the current agricultural regime. Given that food is linked so intrinsically to power, as has been explored throughout this paper, changes in the agricultural regime could affect political power in ways that are contrary to the interests of those who currently possess it. Nevertheless, shifts in political power to ensure the universal realization of the RtAF appears to be a fair trade-off.

The Process

It should be noted that “localization” within the context of markets which perpetuate food sovereignty, deals with distance but not solely in a geographical sense. Within a given state where agricultural production demands large portions of land, thereby pushing production further away from the consumer, the distance over which food travels amass costs. Robbins explains that the *metabolic rift*, “. . . necessitat[es] a chain of intermediaries and market relations with ‘innumerable points for the extraction of value . . .’.”⁸⁸ Essentially, the distance between food producers and consumers creates a chain of proverbial hands who eventually bring the food to its final destination, where it is to be sold to the consumer.

In contrast, food sovereignty encourages access to food and food systems that are wanted and needed by both food producers and consumers.⁸⁹ Through localizing control over food, power is shifted away from a rights-guarantor and into the hands of the rights-holder such that the latter no longer needs to be reliant on other bodies for the fulfillment

⁸⁸ Robbins, “Exploring the ‘localisation’ of food sovereignty,” 460.

⁸⁹ Robbins, “Exploring the ‘localisation’ of food sovereignty,” 455.

of the most fundamental human right, the RtAF. Food sovereignty allows marginalized individuals to be the agent of change in their own lives.⁹⁰ The *metabolic rift* highlights the fact that food and the food system within which it is produced are not separate and that this system affects more than just one's corporeal form. In fact, it is because food sovereignty specifically identifies control over the food system as necessary for food sovereignty, it bridges the gap between the concept of food security and the RtAF.⁹¹

Although technically, food sovereignty exists outside of both capitalism and neocolonialism, policies which seek to encourage food sovereignty within the existing framework (described in Chapter 2), can be conceptualized. Beuchelt and Virchow identify some of these policies as the following:

“ . . . a ban on food storage and “hoarding” on the part of transnational corporations and the private sector; international treaties and competition laws aimed at limiting the concentration and market power of major agri-food corporations; the introduction of minimum prices for each country, adjusted to production (and living costs) and regulated by an international institution; a legal ban on exporting food at prices below the minimum price; the introduction of improved national and international marketing boards and of international commodity agreements which regulate the total output on world markets as well as national and international supply management, in order to avoid over-production.”⁹²

While some of the policy approaches to food sovereignty are directly aimed at regulating food production, the established connection between consumers of food and food producers means that these policies will affect everyone. Although there is debate

⁹⁰ Dunford, “Human rights and collective emancipation,” 243.

⁹¹ Patel, “What does food sovereignty look like?” 665.

⁹² Beuchelt and Virchow, “Food sovereignty or the human right to adequate food,” 262.

about who the FSM should be directed towards, where to take the proverbial fight, and I have discussed the relevant parties to the issue, I would argue that this debate should be settled on “everyone.” Every consumer of food is touched by the current agricultural regime because they are inherently a part of it and so any shifts in the regime undeniably include and affect them. As a process of decolonization, food sovereignty necessitates the active participation of both benefactors and victims of the colonial-era. The historical context, discussed in the previous chapter, is a necessary part of understanding what food sovereignty is and the reality of today’s agricultural production in relation to hunger. When understood within the context of a post-growth global economy and particularly as a process, the concept does, in fact, have a comprehensive approach for addressing hunger and poverty.⁹³ Decolonization *is* the process.

Rather than prescribing a policy solution, food sovereignty is the solution. The RtAF exists within a framework that perpetuates its violation and so, the existence of the right as a codified entity does not guarantee its realization. However, food sovereignty is a process towards its own realization and is not simply a human right in the way that one would understand the aforementioned RtAF because it requires active transformation.⁹⁴ It asserts, as a concept and an endeavour, that the rights-holder is in control of their life.⁹⁵ Indeed, as I shall argue in the following section, it also provides everyone with a more

⁹³ Beuchelt and Virchow, “Food sovereignty or the human right to adequate food,” 256.

⁹⁴ Dunford, “Human rights and collective emancipation,” 253.

⁹⁵ Dunford, “Human rights and collective emancipation,” 254.

salient decision-making power when it comes to the fulfillment of their most fundamental right.

3.3 Consequences

This chapter will conclude by examining the consequences of the *metabolic rift*. I identify two particular effects of the concept. Firstly, the current agricultural regime victimizes everyone by ultimately putting all people in a worse off position. Under the aforementioned neoliberal globalized agricultural regime, there is a reliance on others outside of oneself to ensure the realization of the most fundamental right, a willingness to maintain a system that fails to feed everyone, and the continuation of a system designed to destroy the environment. Taken together, capitalism and the agricultural regime within it threaten the RtAF in failing to consider long-term ecological sustainability and devaluing the work which food producers do despite their foundational role within the functioning of society. The second consequence of the *metabolic rift* is the commodification of everything *except* negative consequences (externalities). The (anti-)ecology of capitalism is often ignored despite this characteristic being a defining feature that has given rise to the oppressive social structures which the FSM identifies as barriers to equality.

Under capitalism, which encourages and maintains environmental degradation, the natural environment is depleted due to intensive and demanding production. The resulting absence of vital nutrients in soil coupled with heavy chemical inputs of fertilizers has hurt both the environment and the food producer. According to Marx, “all progress in capitalist agriculture is a progress in the art, not only of robbing the worker, but of

robbing the soil.”⁹⁶ Additionally, the industrialization of agricultural production has relied heavily on fossil fuels particularly for the transportation of goods. Along with depleting soil used for production, the current agricultural regime has also polluted and destroyed bodies of water, air, and land outside of immediate farming spaces.⁹⁷

Recall in Chapter 2 the concept of “negative externalities” within economics which bars climate change from being considered in economic decisions. The concept of the *metabolic rift* is strengthened by the reality of negative externalities. Despite being the provider of all resources for the functioning of capitalism, the environment is outside of economic considerations and treated as an infinite resource: a reality we know is far from true. I need not explore the fact that the world’s poor, many of whom are small-scale food producers, are often the first peoples to experience the detrimental effects of climate change. Food producers are necessarily close to the environment by virtue of their livelihood and so environmentalism is integral to FSM.

Although this is not an immediate consequence of current agricultural practices, it is a long-term reality that needs to be addressed. Nutrients in soil are, as Marx explains, depleted in the capitalist food production regime, a fact that we are becoming increasingly aware of today. For example, new studies have shown that climate change is having a negative effect on the vitamin and nutrient composition of rice. As one of the most heavily consumed grains, for around 2 billion people, the absence of nutritive properties threatens the health and wellbeing, and indeed the futures of a significant portion of the

⁹⁶ Kepkiewicz and Dale, “Keeping ‘our’ land,” 992.

⁹⁷ Kepkiewicz and Dale, “Keeping ‘our’ land,” 992.

global population. According to a four-year study on eighteen rice crops across Japan and China,

“The results reveal that crops that were exposed to higher levels of carbon dioxide were on average less nutritious, regardless of the country they were grown in, containing about 10% less protein, 8% less iron and 5% less zinc than rice grown under current levels of carbon dioxide. What’s more, levels of vitamins B1, B2, B5 and B9 also fell, with the latter dropping on average by more than 30%.”⁹⁸

If we ignore the kind of environmental degradation that the current agricultural regime encourages and facilitates, producing food at all will become a futile endeavour, even more so than it already has become.

As has been alluded to in the previous two chapters, the continuous disregard of the natural environment and the small-scale food producer can only descend so far before the system inevitably collapses. Small-scale food producers are the poorest of the poor and therefore also feel the effects of climate change and economic downturn first - the first to suffer and the last to get relief. And yet, their importance is of such a caliber that it is shameful that capitalism has blinded the benefactors of their suffering and perpetuated a cycle of injustice that looks as if it cannot be broken. It is worth mentioning that the prediction that capitalism will inevitably collapse upon itself by virtue of its nature, discussed extensively by Marx, has yet to happen - at least in a concrete fashion. However, I would argue that the increasingly unjust circumstances faced by food

⁹⁸ Nicola Davis, “Climate Change 'Will Make Rice Less Nutritious',” The Guardian (Guardian News and Media, May 23, 2018), <https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2018/may/23/climate-change-will-make-rice-less-nutritious>.

producers is, in fact, a hallmark of systemic collapse because the promises of capitalism have not been realized for arguably the most important contributor to a given society.

Just like food, the environment affects everyone. Although environmental degradation and the resulting effects of climate change tend to hit small-scale food producers first, everyone is directly and indirectly affected by environmental negligence. The *metabolic rift* highlights the interconnectedness of environmentalism, land sovereignty, and food sovereignty. It is clear, therefore that the connection between humans and the natural environment (particularly for food production) is an integral part of human rights realization.

In being driven increasingly farther away from the food producer and food production more generally, the consumer has also been victimized by the current agricultural regime. It is important to note that even when discussing “consumers,” food producers are also included within this category as they also buy and consume agricultural products.

Local food production, that is, food produced, sold, and consumed within the same state, is the norm (established in Chapter 2). However, the current agricultural regime increasingly encourages the globalization of food production thereby gradually eliminating local food production in certain places. In Canada, for example, the number of farms decreased by 10% within a five year gap, between 2006 and 2011. After signing a free trade agreement with the United States in 1988, farm debt more than doubled until 2007.⁹⁹ These shifts came as a result of government policies focused on the

⁹⁹ Robbins, “Exploring the ‘localisation’ of food sovereignty,” 461.

mechanisation of food production (and decreasing the number of farmers) in order to encourage growth in the agricultural sector and increase exports due to the new free trade agreement.¹⁰⁰ Our current agricultural regime encourages a highly machine-oriented process which neglects the small-scale food producer and their contribution to society at large (as discussed in Chapter 1).

In high-income countries, there is a growing demand for organic foods which are, in their being, contrary to the hyper-chemicalized agricultural practices of the current regime.¹⁰¹ Implicitly, it seems that consumers who can afford it want to support localized food production which can provide the kinds of organic goods that are being demanded. In simple economic terms, therefore, one can easily see that with increased demand and a decreased supply of the kinds of localized, small-scale farms that can meet these demands, food prices will inevitably increase. Therefore, the food sovereignty of everyone is threatened because even those who wish to, or are able to, purchase the foods that they deem appropriate for personal consumption, are facing increasing barriers to doing so successfully. Moving the consumer away from the food producer prevents the consumer from access to choices regarding their food and ultimately forces compliance with the hyper-industrialized agricultural regime that is hurting both people and the planet.

¹⁰⁰ Kepkiewicz and Dale, "Keeping 'our' land," 997.

¹⁰¹ One need not look further than the emergence and success of Whole Foods Market Inc. across North America. Although marketed as ethical and natural, it is worth noting that Whole Foods Market Inc. is a subsidiary of Amazon.com, Inc. As the parent company of Whole Foods Market Inc., Amazon.com, Inc owns a sufficient proportion of its subsidiary to determine its management. The dubious ethical standing of Amazon has, more recently, come to the fore. See "How Ethical Is Amazon.com Inc?" *Ethical Consumer*, December 5, 2019.

Food sovereignty highlights the specific features of capitalism that are instrumental in oppression. The *metabolic rift* observes the deeply paradoxical nature of capitalism which relies on a planet that is finite in resources but treats it with infinite potential. While it is apparent that we have commodified the earth, particularly land, we have not commodified consequences. The tendency to focus on growth as a hallmark of success prohibits a complete look at the bigger picture which is latent with examples of injustice.

The *metabolic rift* illustrates not only the reality of capitalism as an (anti-)ecological regime but, also the ways in which colonization has disrupted food production. Consistent production for the purposes of selling outside of the borders within which a good is produced echoes the colonizer's project of encouraging mass production for the benefit of those outside of production. Moving away from localized, small-scale production with reduced chemical-inputs is evidently a desire becoming more prevalent amongst the highest socio-economic classes but, given the current agricultural regime, accepting the status quo appears to be the norm.

Robbins argues that the *metabolic rift* exists because of the commodification of food which, “‘creates an abstract and disembodied notion of food’ through standardisation, processing, production and consumption, and global distribution.”¹⁰² While the consumer is physically distanced from the food producer, the result is being mentally far away from the food producer as well. Where one's food comes from and who it comes from are not necessarily primary thoughts of the consumer. Although food can

¹⁰² Robbins, “Exploring the ‘localisation’ of food sovereignty,” 259.

clearly be seen as an instrument of emancipation, its value is consistently eclipsed under the neoliberal agricultural regime.

The standards and regulations pertaining to food are not created by the small-scale food producer. Instead, the system forces their compliance to the agricultural standards demanded by capitalism. In the same way that one does not consult a mechanic for health advice, one would not ask a physician for help with their car. Expertise is valued, in part, because there is both accountability and trust built into it. There is also trust between the consumer and bodies creating standards and regulations. To be clear, I am not arguing that this trust should not exist in regards to food. However, if the system is actively preventing food producers from engaging in the decisions, policies, and institutions that play a role in the food system, it is incumbent upon the consumer to ask ‘why?’ The perspective presented by small-scale food producers is a necessary lens within which to understand the agricultural system because their contribution and position in the system was not willing. If there is an issue with the system, who better to consult with than the population upon which the system relies for the majority of its production?

Complacency is as much a tool of the colonizer as it is the capitalist. When the narrative has been construed such that there is no choice but to participate in the current system, searching for an alternative appears to be a futile endeavour. Food sovereignty shifts control into the hands of the food producer thus enabling an alternative food system.

The Lesson

The *metabolic rift* reflects the interconnectedness between people and the environment which has ultimately been disjointed due to capitalist practices. Given the connection between people and the environment, there is, as a result, also an overlap between the environment and rights. Food is perhaps the deepest connection that people have to the environment. Food producers have a bilateral relationship with the environment which directly bears on the realization of the RtAF. Due to the toll that capitalist practices have taken on the environment, inside and outside of agricultural production, food producers inevitably feel the effects of those practices. The disconnect between food consumers and food producers reflects the divide between people and the environment.

When looking at food sovereignty in conjunction with the concept of the *metabolic rift*, the link between them is undoubtedly an axiom predicated on the relationship between people and the environment. Further, both account for the consequences of the capitalist approach to ecology on food and food producers. If the capitalist approach to ecology is destructive, then, why would it not also be harmful to people? Ignoring ecological considerations when it comes to rights realization, and particularly the RtAF, is characteristic of the dismissal of the environment by colonial and capitalist ideologies. Bridging the gap between people and the environment evidently involves the dismantling of both colonialism and capitalism. The intrinsic and instrumental values of food, the realization of the RtAF, and food producers were established in Chapter 1, and given that food is not separate from the system in which it is

produced, the environment is a critical consideration in the realization of “the most fundamental right.”

It appears that the (anti-)ecological approach of the current globalized neoliberal economy is predominantly responsible for the oppressive relations that prohibit the realization of the RtAF. If it is the case, as had been argued in Chapter 2, that the RtAF is particularly salient in the realization of other rights, then one can reasonably conclude that ecological considerations also have a direct bearing on the realization of human rights more broadly. Thus, the goal of universal rights realization entails a shift away from the current ecological approach. Given that capitalism is in itself an (anti-)ecological approach, which was established in the previous chapter, it follows that universal rights realization entails a shift from capitalism. The *metabolic rift* pinpoints one of the foundational errors in the notion that the current human rights regime can be successful operating within a capitalist context.

3.4 Conclusion

Food sovereignty exists in the absence of oppressive relationships which prohibit the realization of human rights. It notes the necessity of consistently working towards dismantling the institutions which encourage the conditions under which violations occur. The solution is not simply one in number nor static in nature but ongoing and in conjunction with other agendas focused on equalization of oppressive relations. Given that it is under capitalism that the current human rights regime exists and that it is because of capitalism that the human rights regime is inevitably failing, every individual that is part of the capitalist system takes part also in the regime that is failing. Neither capitalism

nor the human rights regime operates without people and therefore, one is confronted with their role in both. The intersectional lens with which one should view oppressive relationships calls for the examination of not just the system under which these relationships exist but, also how the system *itself* prohibits the rectification of those relationships.

Between 2007 and 2009, three notable “crisis” years emerged. The food crisis of 2007 was followed by the financial crisis of 2008, and the climate crisis necessitated the climate change negotiations of 2009.¹⁰³ Naturally, these crises had been ruminating within their respective contextual backgrounds leading up to these years but the connection between food, the economy, and climate change is undeniable. Is this the promise of the capitalist system actualized? In just over a decade, none of these crises have truly been fully managed let alone resolved but, I digress.

The current globalized neoliberal regime has tangible flaws and while it may be tempting to put forth the argument that every system is imperfect, is the current one worth it? I argue that the answer is, overwhelmingly, no. With a foundation in colonialism, which capitalism continues in its own way, the current system is in direct contradiction to the human rights framework. Is it acceptable that the human rights framework is operating within a system that is inherently opposed to it? Again, I argue that the answer is no because the human rights framework represents the commitments of states to people. No such commitment exists between states and neoliberalism, or any other body for that matter. The available evidence strongly suggests the incompatibility of capitalism

¹⁰³ Edelman and James, “Peasants’ rights and the UN system,” 101.

with the realization of human rights. Capitalism is incapable of encouraging or realizing universal human rights and no clearer example illustrates this like the persistence of hunger despite sufficient food. Although able to produce, capitalism does not provide access and so, we have come full circle back to Arendt's right to have rights. Capital provides access to rights given that being human is evidently a necessary but not sufficient reason to have one's rights realized under the current regime.

The availability of the resources necessary for human rights realization exists and so, while one may, by virtue of being human, have the RtAF in theory, the right cannot be realized without access to food. Chapter 2 argued that the right to have rights is one belonging to those who are able to afford it. The commodification of resources, as a result of the capitalist system, necessitates the purchase of access to rights and therefore the possibility of those rights being realized. When paired with colonialism, the inequality built into capitalism is amplified. With two systems that are foundationally unequal, the insertion of institutions premised on equality, at least superficially, appears to be a potential solution. However, as was discussed throughout Chapter 2, there are systemic barriers to the institutions' abilities to fulfill their purposes.

Can we de-commodify rights? A systemic shift would be necessary given that capitalism necessitates commodification. The prevalence of hunger is, no doubt, a complex issue that must be examined through a multitude of lenses. The members of LVC offer not just a singular lens but a variety of perspectives that have necessarily been excluded or otherwise ignored when institutions make decisions affecting their lives.

A salient part of food sovereignty is its focus on food producers as agents of change when the usual protagonist of the human rights system is the state. Although the state is still a duty-bearer in the process of decolonization, food sovereignty highlights those relationships outside of the state-producer narrative because the food system involves other players. Given that other bodies affect the realization of the RtAF, they will necessarily play some role in the realization of food sovereignty. In being part of the system of agriculture, current institutions will either need to be dismantled or changed in some way. Capitalist institutions necessarily require dismantling in a post-capitalist economy. Shifting oppressive social relations requires an examination of a body's role in perpetuating capitalist ideals because, as has been argued, it is the result of our agricultural regime operating within a capitalist system that oppressive social relations prohibit the realization of the RtAF.

Conclusion

The kinds of trends described throughout this paper are true of all the necessities of life. We are not facing an institutional issue but a foundational one. The FSM specifically addresses those foundational features which hinder the conditions necessary for both food and indeed, universal human rights realization. In this paper, I aimed to prove that the RtAF has not been, and cannot be, guaranteed by the current agricultural regime because the economic system within which the human rights framework operates is fundamentally in conflict with the conditions necessary for the realization of human rights. Food sovereignty, conceptually, and in practice, identifies those conditions which promote the realization of human rights, particularly the RtAF, and puts forth an emancipatory right that guarantees the right-holder being in control of the rights which they hold.

I established the deep connections between colonialism and capitalism through a comparative analysis while food sovereignty does so through its very existence. As a process of decolonization, the concept recognizes the remnants of the colonial-era and the ties that the system has with capitalism. Part of the decolonization process is effectively grappling with capitalism and overcoming the obstacles to the realization of the rights that the economic system inspires. The disconnect between capitalism and the current human rights framework is met with a prescriptive solution through food sovereignty. Given that it relies on a set of preconditions that have to do with the kind of radical egalitarianism that Marx discusses, it assumes a starting position where there are no oppressive social relations and in that way, it does what the current framework fails to do.

It starts people on the same playing field and then guarantees rights but, in our current system, we are not all on an equal footing. If we are going to start from a place of inequality, we cannot adhere to a system that is fundamentally centred on equality. Food sovereignty, as a concept, and in practice, highlights that capitalism and colonialism are the issues, not the current rights framework itself.

Food sovereignty understands the centrality of food in our social, political, and economic realms. It highlights the possible avenues that do not adhere to capitalism or colonial ideologies and in doing so provides a way forward as a solution to human rights violations. One of the critiques towards food sovereignty, that I wish to address, is the idea that it is perhaps unrealistic to have a right that necessarily shifts away from capitalism. Part of the colonial narrative is believing that capitalism is the only way forward and that all other alternatives are incapable of providing when it is this system that is actually incapable. It cannot and does not guarantee the basic necessities of everyone. As we have seen in this thesis, there is a lot that must be unpacked in order for food sovereignty to be realized.

The people who benefit the most from the capitalist system would be the most hesitant to shift away from it. "Losing wealth," even if it means sharing it, is something that the colonial, and indeed the capitalist, narratives have labelled as something to be avoided. The individual is not expected to and is actively discouraged from engaging in a just and fair distribution of wealth, as a general sentiment. Although the fear of what it will take, the redistribution necessary, for the kind of egalitarianism which food sovereignty operates under, is a source of hesitation in accepting it as a viable solution,

this only highlights the need for several degrees of separation from the narrative told by the current economic system. The pitfalls of the capitalist system are notable and a willingness to address the individual issues is emerging but, addressing the system itself as problematic is likely to be met with resistance. It is not just the wealthy who pose an obstacle to the realization of food sovereignty and it is not only small-scale food producers who are to carry it forward. Everyone has just as much to gain and are an integral part of the decolonization process because, as individuals, we maintain and take part in the systems which are inherently oppressive.

Establishing the preconditions for food sovereignty is necessarily the goal as the right is inevitably self-fulfilling through conceptualizing an emancipatory process from within the bodies that are oppressed. The emancipatory process is not uniform in nature because the starting point from a geographical, political, social, and economic nature of states and people differs across the globe. While food sovereignty can only operate under a democratic system, not every state is democratic in nature and therefore, there may be more or fewer steps towards guaranteeing the universal realization of human rights within each state individually depending on its current adherence to the preconditions of food sovereignty.

In terms of next steps, or at least one in the right direction, is the recognition that we are living in a neocolonial narrative that perpetuates capitalism and ultimately prevents human rights realization. It is the entire system upon which social relations that are being built that need to be scrutinized and not solely a single body. The oppressive

social relations that prevent human rights realization are the product of systemic issues and not simply institutional ones.

The methodology employed throughout this thesis was an examination of the current agricultural system and the ways in which the FSM addresses it. Food sovereignty calls for an on-going process of decolonization because it is characteristically transformative. Just as rights access and realization are not static, the violation of rights is also part of a process. In highlighting the dynamic nature of both rights violations and rights realization, food sovereignty aligns with Marxist theory and praxis as it can only be realized if its preconditions are met: the absence of oppressive social relations.

“Unless someone like you cares a whole awful lot, nothing is going to get better. It’s not.”

- Dr. Seuss, *The Lorax*

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