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Food Sovereignty on the Ground:
Export Agriculture, Peasant Communities, and the Indigenous Movement in Ecuador

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the requirements for the degree Doctor
of Philosophy

in

Sociology

by

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2016

The Dissertation of Rachel Starflower Soper is approved, and it is acceptable in quality
and form for publication on microfilm and electronically:

Chair

University of California, San Diego

2016

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Soper, Rachel. 2015. "Globalization and the Agrarian Question: Divergent Development of Two Export-Oriented Farming Communities." *Current Perspectives in Social Theory* 34(1): 235-260.

Soper, Rachel. 2015. "Local is Not Fair: Indigenous Peasant Farmer Preference for Export Markets." *Agriculture and Human Values*. Online First: DOI 10.1007/s10460-015-9620-0

Soper, Rachel. 2013. "Reclaiming Development: Indigenous Community Organizations and the Flower Export Industry in the Ecuadorian Highlands." Pp 128-149 in *Indigenous and Afro-Ecuadorians Facing the Twenty-First Century*, edited by M. Becker. Newcastle, UK: Cambridge Scholars Publishing.

ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

Food Sovereignty on the Ground:
Export Agriculture, Peasant Communities, and the Indigenous Movement in Ecuador

by

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Doctor of Philosophy in Sociology

University of California, San Diego, 2016

Professor Jeffrey M. Haydu, Chair

Food sovereignty is an alternative development model that values local, sustainable food systems. The national and international social movements that promote food sovereignty do so on behalf of small peasant farmers, whom they claim practice sustainable production for local consumption. Scholarly and activist discourse associates peasant and indigenous groups with environmental protection and resistance to globalization. Yet, doing so creates an essentialist image of this historically marginalized ethno-class that obscures contemporary market integration. Drawing on six months of field research with indigenous peasants in the highlands of Ecuador, this dissertation argues that the environmentalist goals of the food sovereignty movement do not reflect the lived realities of small farmers. Comparing quinoa, broccoli and dairy farmers with heterogeneous production practices and market links, this study finds that indigenous

peasants want to supply the global market. Based on their negative experiences with local market intermediaries and positive experiences with export organizations, feeding fellow Ecuadorians is not a widespread ideal. In addition, respondents defend their reliance on agro-chemicals and imported inputs as necessary for their livelihood. Those who practice sustainable production methods do so in order to access a certified organic and Fair Trade export market that offers a better price. For these indigenous peasant farmers, on the ground, livelihood security is more important than environmental ideals. The food sovereignty tenets that resonate most with community members are the redistribution of resources and government investment in the small farm sector. As a continuation of the classic struggle for agrarian reform with a new environmentalist cloak, the food sovereignty movement must not lose sight of its economic justice roots. Initiatives to improve the global industrial food system through local, sustainable agriculture must also create viable livelihood options for poor communities of color.

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

For the livelihoods of billions of small producers around the world
For people's health and the planet's survival
We demand food sovereignty
(Via Campesina 2009: 75)

In the last two decades, there has been heightening pushback against the neoliberal globalization of food and agriculture. All situated under the umbrella term “alternative food” activism, these movements are commonly known as food localism in the global North and food sovereignty in the global South. Both movements work towards a similar goal of ending corporate control over the food system and creating viable space for local, sustainable alternatives. Yet they originated in different geographic and class contexts.

Food localism in the North came about largely as a consumer movement among middle-class white Europeans and Americans who want to return to natural roots and change their relationship with the food they eat. Food sovereignty, on the other hand, is a subaltern movement. It began with non-white peasant producers in Latin America and has since spread to other continents, with a large presence in west Africa and southeast Asia. Whether phrased as agro-ecological or organic, these two movements work towards similar goals of creating sustainable local food systems.

Indeed, in mainstream media today in the United States, “local, organic” is highly valued. Whether motivated by environmental consciousness, health concerns, or social distinction, consumer demand for these ideals is on the rise and companies are cashing in on the trend. Local and sustainable have also gained traction in international governance bodies, like the United Nations (UN). International political receptivity toward food

sovereignty principles has come about as a result of advocacy on the part of the international peasant movement, Via Campesina.

The secretary general of the UN Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) has stated that developing countries should be enabled to achieve food self-sufficiency (Via Campesina 2009: 90). In October 2013, Via Campesina and UN FAO formalized an agreement of cooperation acknowledging the role of smallholder food producers in the eradication of world hunger (Via Campesina 2014: 5). They also have a joint partnership with the UN Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) to advance agro-ecology and peasant farming as alternatives to industrial farming. A UNCTAD (2013) report titled “Wake up before it is too late: make agriculture truly sustainable now for food security in a changing climate” states that farming should shift from monoculture toward greater crop variety, reduced use of fertilizers and other inputs, greater support for small-scale farmers, and more locally-focused production and consumption of food.

This discourse has even been adopted in the national constitutions of Venezuela, Ecuador, Bolivia, Mali, Nepal and Senegal. The 2008 Constitution of Ecuador asserts *soberanía alimentaria* (food sovereignty) as a strategic goal and governmental obligation to ensure that people, communities, pueblos and nationalities reach self-sufficiency of healthy and culturally appropriate food (Article 281). It states that “Individuals and communities have the right to safe and permanent access to healthy, sufficient and nutritious food, in accordance with their different identities and cultural traditions, preferably locally produced” (Article 13). This is similar to Via Campesina’s most cited definition: “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 agricultural systems. It puts the aspirations and needs of those who produce, distribute and consume food at the heart of food systems and policies rather than the demands of markets and corporations” (Via Campesina 2009: 147-148).

Food sovereignty was included in the 2008 constitution largely through the involvement of indigenous movement actors in the constitutional reform process (Becker 2013; Giunta 2014; Clark 2015; Peña 2015). In the years leading up to the election of leftist president Rafael Correa and his *revolución ciudadana* (citizens' revolution) to write a new constitution, the Ecuadorian indigenous peasant movement marched against neoliberal agriculture and trade policies. In fact, “the new Constitution established radical changes in the agri-food sector and embraced...many of the proposals claimed by the federations and organizations linked to Via Campesina” (Giunta 2014: 1202). Through a series of mobilizations around the issues of free trade and water rights, the indigenous movement introduced the vocabulary of food sovereignty into the national political arena.

A network of national indigenous and peasant federations in Ecuador, led by the national confederation CONAIE,¹ has pursued the food sovereignty platform since the early 2000s. These organizations talk about the benefits of peasant agriculture in similar ways as Via Campesina. They advocate for agro-ecological and localized food systems through claims that indigenous peasants respect and protect the mother earth. For example, Luis Andrango² has said “For us, the best option is the peasant agro-ecology model that prioritizes life, food, health and above all, better life conditions for peasants.

¹ *Confederación de Nacionalidades Indígenas del Ecuador*; Confederation of Indigenous Nationalities of Ecuador

² President of FENOCIN (*Federación Nacional de Organizaciones Campesinas, Indígenas, y Negras*; National Federation of Peasant, Indigenous, and Afro-Ecuadorian Organizations)

We cannot continue poisoning people with all these chemical products. We cannot go on killing mother earth...Being peasant implies this relation of harmony between mother nature, land, water, and seeds” (2010 World Social Forum of the Americas).

Food sovereignty discourse links peasant farmers with food production for local consumption and with a cultural tradition of respecting and protecting the environment. National and international activists draw this discursive link. But what about the small peasant farmers, on the ground, who actually work in the fields as food producers? Do they share this concern for sustainable production for local consumption? Do they practice and/or value food sovereignty principles?

I selected indigenous peasants in the Ecuadorian highlands as the research subjects for this case study because of their rich recent history with food sovereignty protests. They constitute the base of both national and international indigenous peasant movements. Via Campesina routinely emphasizes the importance of peasant voice in the formation of food policies. Against this backdrop, we should pay greater attention to the preferences, perspectives, and lived realities of peasant farmers themselves.

Through six months of field research with indigenous peasant farming communities in the highlands of Ecuador, collecting data through interviews and participant observation, I argue that orientation towards food sovereignty principles varies by livelihood base. Comparing three case communities that each grow different crops for different markets, I found that support for the food sovereignty agenda differs depending on whether they specialize in certified organic Fair Trade quinoa, conventional broccoli for export, or milk for the national market. Current practices and future visions

differ by community; yet, not one of the indigenous peasants farmers I interviewed held up sustainable production for local consumption as an ideal.

Among my case communities, broccoli and dairy farmers engage in modern industrial production methods, characterized by the use of agrochemicals, fossil fuels, monoculture, and imported inputs. Quinoa farmers practice low-input, sustainable agriculture; yet they do so in order to access a high-value niche market of wealthy consumers in the global North. In fact, all three communities desire to export their products abroad. Although the ideals of sustainable production for local consumption do not resonate with these indigenous peasant farmers, they do support food sovereignty policies of agrarian reform, including redistribution of resources and government support for the small farm sector. For them, a fair food system is one that works towards economic justice for small producers, even if that means making a living for themselves through un-ecological, non-localized means.

In the following introductory chapter, I detail the food sovereignty discourse of international and national organizations that claim to represent indigenous peasant farmers. I then show how similar portrayals of peasants as opposed to globalization and indigenous groups as protectors of the environment can be found in scholarly literature. Next, I outline the conceptual framework I use to explain my findings. Drawing on environmental justice notions that subaltern populations experience the environment through their marginalized positions in society, I introduce the concept of environment-livelihood tension to explain the disconnect between movement discourse and the lived realities of indigenous peasant farmers. I then propose that the food sovereignty

movement has used local sustainability as an environmental frame to struggle for re-distributive economic justice.

Food Sovereignty

Food sovereignty is an alternative development model that came about in response to the neoliberal development paradigm. The food sovereignty narrative put forward by scholars (McMichael 2009), policy-makers (De Schutter 2014), and activists (Via Campesina 2009) presents it as a rejection of the neoliberal globalization of food and agriculture. The term has been adopted more widely, but it is most closely associated with the international peasant movement, Via Campesina.

The concept of food sovereignty was coined by Via Campesina in 1996 at World Food Summit in Rome. This took place in direct response to the 1994 Agreement on Agriculture. The World Trade Organization (WTO) had been liberalizing the rules of international trade for years. Yet prior to the Uruguay round of trade talks, these free trade rules applied to garments, electronics, etc. With the Agreement on Agriculture, free trade was extended to the sphere of food and agriculture. These rules backed up the free trade principles promoted to indebted developing nations as part of their loan agreements with the International Monetary Fund. Under this model, countries are encouraged to specialize in exports for the global economy and compensate for the decline in national food self-sufficiency by deepening their reliance on food imports. Governments are encouraged to invest in their large agro-export sectors and reduce state support for the 'inefficient' small farm sector. Via Campesina activists thus distinguished food

sovereignty from the current food security model that followed neoliberal objectives of comparative advantage (Jarosz 2011; Lawrence and McMichael 2012).

According to food sovereignty proponents like Olivier De Schutter, the UN Special Rapporteur on the right to food, “the food systems we have inherited from the twentieth century have failed” (De Schutter 2014: 4). Through regional specialization in a narrow range of products to trade in the international market, the global food system intends to maximize efficiency and produce large volumes of commodities, but has failed to take into account distributional concerns. As such, “significant progress has been achieved in boosting agricultural production over the past fifty years. But this has hardly reduced the number of hungry people” (De Schutter 2014: 4). The distinction between food sovereignty and market-led food security is key in scholarly and policy debates. Food security “generally connotes simply adequacy of supplies and nutritional content, with the food itself produced and delivered under any conditions, including far-off, chemical-intensive industrial agriculture” (Edelman et al 2014: 914). In other words, it is concerned with the overall quantity of food, but not the quality of where or how it was produced. Thus, to increase real food security and feed the poor people of the planet, it is argued, greater food sovereignty is needed.

In addition to concerns over the distribution of food, opposition to the existing development model has to do with the increased dependence on food imports; government investment in large-scale farming over small-scale farming; corporate control over commodity chains; the environmental and human health consequences of high-input industrial modes of farming; and the environmental impacts of transporting food long distances. Opposition to the WTO and corporate-controlled global food system

also has to do with voice. In policy debates at the international level, small farmers lack representation. Via Campesina thus sees itself as an organization to represent the peasant voice.

In response to the lack of representation of peasant groups in global discussions about agriculture and trade policy, Via Campesina claims to be “filling that space with peasant voices, articulating peasant demands and peasant alternatives in efforts to resist the imposition of a corporate model of agriculture” (2009: 44). As the peasant voice, Via Campesina sees itself as “a key social actor, strongly rooted in local communities while at the same time being increasingly engaged and more skillful in the international stage” (2009: 42).

Via Campesina boldly claims that “we represent almost half of the world population” (2009: 57). This population is made up of small farmers, fisherfolk, landless peasants and indigenous groups. They see themselves as representing a cultural way of life. Henry Saragih, the General Coordinator of Via Campesina, wrote in the introduction to their 2009 policy document that “more than just representing an economic sector, we are defending certain values and a way of life in society based on justice, simplicity and sustainability” (2009: 4).

This way of life needs defending, it is argued, because it is under attack by neoliberal globalization. Put bluntly, the “liberalization of agriculture is a war on peasants” (Via Campesina 2009: 42). According to Via Campesina, they formed around these common objectives: “an explicit rejection of the neoliberal model of rural development, an outright refusal to be excluded from agricultural policy development, and a fierce determination not to be ‘disappeared’” (2009: 41). This right to exist and not

be driven out by neoliberal policies is fundamental. Peasant activists state that “together with fisher folk, indigenous people, pastoralists and others who live in the rural areas, we have the right to exist, to be respected and to live a dignified life!” (Via Campesina 2009: 57). Via Campesina defends peasant way of life *through* promoting food sovereignty, which is first and foremost a rejection of neoliberal globalization. In the same breath, Via Campesina calls to “realize food sovereignty and to stop the destructive neoliberal process” (2009: 57). Via Campesina documents always begin with a critique of the current global food system and then present peasant family agriculture as the model that will correct these injustices. For example, “We believe that sustainable small-scale farming and local food consumption will reverse the current devastation” (Via Campesina 2009: 70).

In many ways, food sovereignty is a continuation and extension of the longstanding peasant struggle for agrarian reform in the countryside. Via Campesina calls for “a true agrarian reform, that strengthens small-scale farming, promotes the production of food as the primary use of land, and regards food as a basic human right” (2009: 73). Their agrarian reform agenda is more than land redistribution. It includes various measures to put resources in the hands of small farmers, increase the local production of food, and improve the sustainability of agricultural production.

According to the introductory article of a recent special issue publication on food sovereignty in the *Journal of Peasant Studies*, co-authored by numerous scholarly experts on the topic, two of the most prominent pillars of food sovereignty are agro-ecology and a movement towards greater national food self-sufficiency (Edelman et al 2014). Indeed, this Via Campesina quote encompasses that point: “Food sovereignty prioritizes local and

national economies and markets, empowers peasant and family farmer-driven agriculture, artisan-style fishing, pastoralist-led grazing, and protects food production, distribution and consumption based on environmental, social and economic sustainability” (2009: 74). I will talk about each of these, in turn.

Trade, Ecology, and Livelihoods

Trade

The original definition put forth by Via Campesina conceptualized food sovereignty as national self-sufficiency (Clark 2015). It focused on the rights of nations to develop their capacities to produce their own food. Towards this goal, Via Campesina contends that Free Trade Agreements “undermine national sovereignty” (2009: 143). The focus on national self-sufficiency has since shifted toward local production for local consumption. Yet, protecting local consumption entails agricultural policies at the national level. A Via Campesina leaflet from 2006 states: “Food sovereignty organizes food production and consumption according to the needs of local communities, giving priority to production for local consumption. Food sovereignty includes the right to protect and regulate national agricultural and livestock production and to shield the domestic market from the dumping of agricultural surpluses and low-price imports from other countries.”

Therefore, food sovereignty “has tended to view long-distance or foreign trade of agricultural products in a negative light” (Edelman et al 2014: 915). This critique has to do with the ecological impact of greenhouse gas emissions, and it is also rooted in colonial history: “the reconfiguration of land and social relations to produce commodities

for export obviously has old roots in European colonialism” (ibid). The export of natural resource-based commodities from the global South to the global North has a long legacy that pre-dates national independence and then continued under dependent, unequal trade ties upheld in the interest of elite actors.

On the topic of small farmer participation in long-distance export trade, Via Campesina has written: “Some small peasant farmers get lured into producing cash crops instead of basic food. This change in cash crops has clearly worsened access to local food for the whole population. The promised profits from export production do not materialize or cannot make up for the loss of home-grown staple foods. The nutritional situation of farming families worsens” (2009: 142).

Edelman et al (2014) refer to trade and distance as a “sticky issue for food sovereignty” (916). Burnett and Murphy (2014) claim the movement has become more open to international trade under certain circumstances, yet their position on the issue is “ambiguous, unclear and sometimes contradictory” (6). And even if they have become more open to international trade over time, food sovereignty clearly prioritizes local market exchange.

Ecology

According to Via Campesina, the global industrial model of agriculture has had disastrous environmental consequences. In turn, peasant production is presented as the answer to ecological crisis. The negative impacts of one mode of production, and the benefits of the other mode, have to do with production practices and also long-distance transportation. In this way, ecology and trade are related.

Via Campesina policy documents point to the role of high-input industrial agricultural production – including the “use of fertilizers, pesticides, long transport lines and high levels of mechanization” – in increasing greenhouse gas emissions (2009: 61). These agricultural technologies perpetuate energy extraction, use up limited fossil fuel supplies, and contribute to greenhouse gas emissions. It is estimated that agricultural production represents 15 percent of total greenhouse gas emissions; in addition, upstream and downstream activities such as the production of pesticides and fertilizers, plus the packaging and transport of agricultural commodities, contributes another 15-17 percent of total emissions (De Schutter 2014: 5).

Via Campesina makes a clear connection between agricultural production and the current climate crisis. Policy documents include repeated references to global warming: “Current global modes of production, consumption and trade have caused massive environmental destruction, including global warming, that is putting our planet’s ecosystems at risk and pushing human communities into disasters. Global warming shows the effects of a development model based on capital concentration, high fossil energy consumption, overproduction, consumerism and trade liberalization” (2009: 68). Moreover, “Corporate food production and consumption are significantly contributing to global warming and to the destruction of rural communities” (2009: 69).

As a solution to the current climate crisis, Via Campesina repeatedly asserts that peasants can cool the world. Under the subheading ‘Peasants and small farmers are cooling down the planet,’ Via Campesina says “Low input agriculture based on local resources primarily for domestic consumption is one of the solutions to global warming. Peasant and small farmers are a crucial part of the solution of this global problem” (2014:

62). In addition, they say “Sustainable small-scale farming, which is labor-intensive and requires little energy use, can actually contribute to stop and reverse the effects of climate change” (2009: 188). The sixth international conference agenda makes clear “We will continue to promote and defend peasant-based, agro-ecological production as a real answer to the climate crisis” (Via Campesina 2014: 32).

Ecological sustainability is implied within the peasant model: “this model of agriculture plays an important social function while at the same time being economically viable and ecologically sustainable” (Via Campesina 2009: 43). Peasants are credited with practicing and promoting ecological sustainability: “Indeed, peasants and farmers are using three traditional weapons of the weak...to redefine ‘development’ and build an alternative model of agriculture based on the principles of social justice, ecological sustainability and respect for peasant cultures and peasant economies” (Via Campesina 2009: 43).

Even scholars support Via Campesina’s claim that small farmers cool the planet. In contrast to industrialized agriculture, Edelman et al (2014: 915) state that “labor-intensive and biodiverse small farms tend to reduce greenhouse gas emissions in production, enhance the capacity for carbon sequestration within landscapes and reduce the distance that food is transported.” Again, an integral part of peasant sustainability – in addition to low-input agriculture – is the shorter distance their food travels between production and consumption.

Livelihoods

Both of the above two issues are related to improving the capacities of small farmers. Generating small farm livelihoods for the rural poor is a central concern for Via Campesina and the food sovereignty movement. Much of their policy agenda is related to the redistribution of resources toward the small farm sector. To improve the global food system, Via Campesina states, “the movement believes that this kind of change can occur only when local communities gain greater access to and control over local productive resources” (2009: 41). Moreover, “Peasants and rural communities should be able to control the use of the land, enabled to reproduce their own seeds, control the use of water, and have access to sufficient credits... A genuine agrarian reform is crucial” (Via Campesina 2009: 184).

According to Via Campesina, countries “should give priority to their domestic food production in order to become less dependent on the world market. This means increased investment in peasant and farmer-based food production for the domestic market” (2009: 90). They have also said that “The goal of La Via Campesina is to bring about change in the countryside – change that improves livelihoods, enhances local food production for local consumption, and opens up democratic spaces that empower the people of the land” (2009: 41).

Improving livelihoods, empowering people, and generating equality are important justifications for redistributive agrarian reform. Yet these policy recommendations are often paired with either concerns for local consumption (as above) or with concerns for ecological sustainability. “The defense of the peasant-based model of sustainable agriculture is a basic issue for us,” asserts Via Campesina (2009: 182). They promote

“food sovereignty as the key to provide livelihoods to millions and protect life on earth” (Via Campesina 2009: 73).

The three goals of reversing globalization, protecting the planet, and supporting peasants are often conflated in food sovereignty discourse. In doing so, it is argued that peasants themselves and the peasant model of agricultural production is inherently pro-environment and anti-globalization. These two assumptions must be problematized.

Problematizing Food Sovereignty Discourse

Food sovereignty discourse puts forth a dichotomy between peasants and global industrial agriculture. Peasants are associated with local and sustainable; they are presented as the antidote to long-distance, un-sustainable food systems. Via Campesina oversimplifies the dynamic between global industrial agriculture and peasant agriculture by presenting them as opposing binaries. For example, in a 2009 policy document based on their 2008 conference, they state:

The struggle is over two competing – and in many ways diametrically opposed – models of social and economic development. On the one hand, a globalized, neoliberal, corporate-driven model where agriculture is seen exclusively as a profit-making venture and productive resources are increasingly concentrated into the hands of agro-industry. La Via Campesina, on the other hand, envisions a very different, more human, rural world; a world based on food sovereignty. Here, agriculture is peasant-driven, based on peasant production, uses local resources and is geared to domestic markets (Via Campesina 2009: 43).

Following this dichotomy, peasants are organized into “vibrant communities that have longstanding experience in managing natural resources and producing food that is healthy, nutritious, culturally appropriate and produced in a sustainable way based on local resources” (Via Campesina 2009: 57).

Policy proposals are based off of this oversimplified notion of how peasants interact with natural resources. For example, water. Via Campesina discourse on water rights is similar to proposals put forth by the Ecuador indigenous movement. They say “It is the right of the peasantry and of indigenous and local people to have their knowledge and culture in the use and control of water acknowledged” (Via Campesina 2009: 126). They then go on to state that “Over the course of the history of peasant agriculture, peasants have been using water wisely. They have always understood that problems would arise if they exploited the water beyond their capacity to conserve it” (Via Campesina 2009: 126). It is not enough to say that peasants deserve water rights or that indigenous peasant knowledge should be acknowledged; they take it one step further to the reify essentialized notions of peasant culture as always using water wisely and conserving it.

This essentialized vision of cultural practices has been applied to both peasant and indigenous groups. Via Campesina documents assert that “indigenous peoples devote a great deal of importance to food sovereignty” and call for the adoption of indigenous cosmovision (worldview) that demonstrates “respect for its own culture as much as the right to spaces for its own methods of production, distribution and consumption in harmony with nature” (2009: 116). Indigenous groups are portrayed as protecting mother nature against capitalism: “indigenous culture suggests a sustainable world which preserves the mother earth against natural disasters, global warming and the ecological crisis provoked by unabated unrestrained capitalism” (Via Campesina 2009: 115).

It is clear that both peasant and indigenous groups are portrayed as distinct from and in opposition to global industrial capitalism. They are identified as possessing

cultural characteristics that respect and defend mother nature against environmental exploitation. In their food sovereignty discourse, Via Campesina has fallen into the trap of cultural essentialism that permeates alternative globalization movements, activists and scholars.

Food Sovereignty Discourse of the Ecuador Indigenous Movement

The three issues of trade, ecology and livelihoods are also central to indigenous movement organizing in Ecuador. In addition, many of the same discursive connections – between indigeneity and environmental protection on the one hand, and the opposition of peasants to globalization on the other – are utilized by the movement in their protest campaign against neoliberal development policies.

Food sovereignty entered the discourse of the Ecuador indigenous movement during anti-free trade protests in the early 2000s. In 2002, after a large-scale and widespread protest campaign against the Free Trade Area of the Americas, the movement presented a *Plan Agrario*. One of the objectives of this agrarian plan was *soberania alimentaria*, or food sovereignty. It asserted that food security should not be dependent on the free market or international trade. Rather, the government of Ecuador should ensure the food producing sector is bolstered so the nation can depend on food grown within its own borders.

Between 2004 and 2006, the indigenous movement underwent another round of protests against free trade – this time against a bilateral free trade agreement with the U.S. They titled their largest march the ‘Marcha por la soberanía en contra del modelo neoliberal’ [March for sovereignty, against the neoliberal model]. Movement leaders

argued that the treaty would undermine national sovereignty. CONAIE called for Ecuadorians to “defend national sovereignty and avoid the colonial imposition” that would be carried out by signing a free trade agreement with the U.S. (El Universo 2006). On numerous occasions, trade agreements and colonialism were discursively linked. Indigenous movement leaders referred to the Free Trade Agreement of the Americas as the newest stage of colonization by the west (El Comercio 2002), and they compared their resistance to globalization to their resistance to the conquest (El Universo 2005).

President of CONAIE, Luis Macas, referred to free trade with the U.S. as a submission that would destroy the small farm sector. “It is not a treaty, but a submission that will practically erase the production process of small and medium producers” (Hoy 2005). During the anti-free trade campaign, indigenous movement protesters blocked roads to demand a reactivation of the rural farm sector. During marches, protesters even served traditional dishes to emphasize that “traditional products will disappear” if they sign the agreement (El Universo 2005).

The indigenous movement also framed opposition to trade liberalization in terms of indigenous heritage as caretakers of nature. Leonidas Iza, president of CONAIE during the 2002 protests, explained that “the environment will be strained in order to make money, and the indigenous people will be poorer, despite the fact that we are allied with mother earth and know how to take care of her” (El Comercio 2002).

Indigenous movement leaders also point to their knowledge of how to take care of nature in order to secure their collective rights to natural resources. They combined anti-free trade protests with marches to demand that the government respect their rights to use and protect the natural resources within their communities (El Universo 2005b).

Water is one of the natural resources over which the movement demands collective rights. In their water rights protest campaign in the late 2000s, CONAIE interlinks the goals of water rights, food sovereignty, and protection of nature. They propose water legislation that guarantees access to users that promote food sovereignty – and that means prioritizing small farm access to water over industrial users. They claim to protect the environment from industrial exploitation by pointing to the legacy of indigenous heritage living harmoniously with and safeguarding nature.

For example, announcing that the indigenous movement will take to the streets in defense of water, CONAIE president Delfín Tenesaca exclaimed “We will not permit Mother Earth to be pillaged anymore” (El Comercio 2010). Moreover, in the introduction to CONAIE’s proposed water law, president Marlon Santí wrote “Communities, pueblos, and nationalities, conscious of the heritage of our ancestors...knowing that our Mother Earth is fundamental for the life of all beings...our primary consideration is the respect of nature” (CONAIE 2008).

In these ways, the discourse of the Ecuador indigenous movement is as problematic as Via Campesina’s food sovereignty discourse. It employs a similar strategy of linking indigenous peoples to respect for nature and positioning trade liberalization as the enemy of small farmers. Just like Via Campesina, the actual policies put forth by the movement aim to redistribute resources to peasant farmers. Yet the language in which these agrarian reform policies are couched strategically draws on well-established narratives within the alternative development tradition.

Literature Review

In the literature on Latin American development and post-development, scholars perpetuate overlapping narratives that connect peasants to globalization and indigeneity to the environment. Critical development scholars reject the modernization tradition that began with classical theorists and continues to influence policy-making today. They reject the notion that global market integration will improve the living conditions of people within developing countries, and the notion that peasant and indigenous groups are inefficient, backwards, and in need of modern production technologies and markets. Instead, critical development scholars argue that neoliberal globalization hurts, rather than helps, peasant communities. Not only do global market processes negatively impact the rural poor, they threaten local ecologies. And thus, it is up to these rural communities, especially indigenous ones, to defend their natural environments and way of life by rejecting globalization.

This overall narrative has been substantiated by empirical research in numerous contexts across Latin America. Indeed, global economic forces have been destructive to peasant and indigenous communities; and peasant and indigenous groups have organized in resistance to certain projects, many times through environmentalist discourse. Yet, the relationship between indigenous peasants, globalization and the environment is not so simple, not so uniform, not so cut and dry. Nuanced empirical case studies are needed to call these prominent scholarly narratives into question. My research aims to complexify this process.

Peasants and Globalization

In development studies, the Marxist approach holds that capitalist globalization negatively impacts local environments and the rural poor. A large body of literature ties globalization to the destruction of the peasantry (Araghi 1995; Akram-Lodhi and Kay 2009; Araghi and Karides 2012). Araghi and Karides (2012) view globalization as the latest historical installment of primitive accumulation. Under globalization, control of land has been concentrated into the hands of fewer capitalist actors. This process takes place at the expense of small farmers: evicting local producers and leading to a “massive contraction of land rights for the world’s agrarian populations and absolute depeasantization on a world-scale” (Araghi and Karides 2012: 3).

The type of globalization most relevant to the fate of peasant populations is the globalization of food. In the history of “food regimes,” as McMichael (2009) calls them, agricultural trade liberalization on a global scale is the most recent development paradigm. According to McMichael (2009), this paradigm does not value smallholders, but rather thinks of them as vestiges of the past. In fact, McMichael goes as far as to assert that “instituting the full-scale dispossession of an alternative agriculture is licensed by the globalization project” (152). It thus “poses a fundamental threat to the survival of a substantial proportion of the inhabitants of the planet and to the ecology of the planet” (151). All in all, asserts Araghi (1995), the transition to export-oriented production has accelerated the pace of depeasantization.

Indeed, many scholars point to the negative impact of agri-food globalization on local communities and ecologies (Barham et al 1992; Thrupp et al 1995; Carter et al 1996; White 1997; Andreatta 1998; Singh 2002; Hamilton and Fischer 2005; Ciccantell

and Smith 2009; Bair 2009; Bonano and Cavalcanti 2012). They point to depeasantization through land dispossession when non-traditional agricultural export production is relocated to the countryside, such as fruit in Chile (Kay 2002; W. Murray 2006), citrus in Argentina (Ortiz and Aparicio 2007), and grapes in Brazil (Selwyn 2010).

Smallholders are historically excluded from capital-intensive export production; yet even when they are integrated into global commodity chains, depeasantization has been shown to occur. Scholars point to ecological and economic degradation through the chemical-dependence, land concentration and proletarianization of peasant producers of strawberries in Mexico (Feder 1977), grapes in Chile (Korovkin 1992), snow peas in Guatemala (D. Murray and Hoppin 1992), melons in the Dominican Republic (D. Murray and Hoppin 1992), melons in Mexico (Barros 2000), and chayote in Costa Rica (Mannon 2005).

There are also plenty of empirical studies that point to increased earnings among smallholders engaged in export agriculture (Key and Runsten 1999; Goldín and de Barrios 2001; Masakure and Henson 2005; Finan 2007; Challies and W. Murray 2011) and top-down environmental standards improving local ecologies (Galt 2008; Hughes 2011), but those findings are marginalized within the overall alternative development narrative of globalization as destructive to peasants and the environments upon which they rely.

Global transformations might have consolidated the peasantry during the 1945-1990 phase, as Araghi (1995) details, but since then, for the peasants who continue to live on the land as small farmers, has globalization really been that disastrous for their wellbeing and very existence? I argue no, not necessarily. Agri-food globalization is not

necessarily or exclusively negative for small peasant farmers. Some peasants are able to hold on to their positions as farmers *because* they are tied to global trading networks that offer more stable on-farm income and reduce their need to find work through the labor market. It is important that we disaggregate overarching trends from the particularities of empirical cases. In some instances, global integration can facilitate a process of re-peasantization.

Development scholars perpetuate the representation of peasants and global industrial agriculture as mutually opposing forces. In fact, scholars see recent food sovereignty and indigenous peasant movements in Latin America as just the latest incarnation of the longstanding phenomenon of peasant opposition. They present peasant and indigenous groups as leading the resistance against globalization (Edelman 1999; Desmarais 2008; McMichael 2009; Borras, Edelman, Kay 2009; Vergara-Camus 2014).

Peasant mobilization, according to McMichael (2009), is an acknowledgement of the human and ecological wake created by globalization (148). The food sovereignty movement, he asserts, has arisen in response to the global industrial food system in order “to reverse the modernist narrative of smallholder obsolescence” (141). Thus, from a doom narrative of peasant destruction in the face of globalization comes a parallel glorification narrative about peasant and indigenous resistance to global development; one which relies on similar simplifications of the relationship between indigenous peasants, nature, capitalism, and the global market.

McMichael (2009) refers to the food sovereignty movement as a “transnational movement of smallholders intent on asserting the critical importance of biodiverse and sustainable agriculture for human survival” (147). Escobar (1995) contends that rural

peasant agrarian groups, along with ethnic minority groups like indigenous and Afro-descendent populations, are at the cutting edge of critical development, leading the opposition against development. He points specifically to the indigenous people of Ecuador, Bolivia, Chiapas and Oaxaca, whose mobilizations call for an alternative mode of existence. Hand-in-hand with the assertion that indigenous peasant groups oppose globalization and development is the assumption that indigenous peasant groups do so in order to protect biodiversity and sustainable ecologies. This feeds off of long-held notions that indigenous groups are protectors of the natural environment.

Indigeneity and the Environment

Much scholarly work highlights the affinity between indigeneity and the natural environment. For example, Escobar (1995) says that “Indigenous ontologies do not entail a linear notion of development, nor a state of ‘underdevelopment’ to be overcome. They have a different philosophy of life, or ethics of development, that subordinates economic objectives to ecological criteria, human dignity and social justice” (xxvi).

This discourse is embedded not only within literature on alternative globalization, but more widely in academia. In her work, Norgaard (2014) represents Native Americans as ecological and having a unique relation to and treatment of nature that follows “a cosmological equation that involves intricate practices of tending to and caring for the natural world” (80). About the cultural resource management of Native Americans, Stoffle (2005) asserts that “For tens of thousands of years, the people of the New World sustainably used and managed these very old human ecosystems ... Conservation ethics

based on traditional ecological knowledge went hand in hand with the ecosystem being culturally central to the people” (139).

This discourse is applied to native peoples across the Americas. According to Stearman (1994: 2), “uncritical generalization” has become “highly seductive.” She remarks that:

In the last several years, professional publications and popular media sources have increasingly depicted native peoples of Amazonia as ‘natural’ conservationists or as members of societies that possess an ‘innate’ conservation ethic. Indigenous peoples are commonly generalized as defenders or ‘keepers’ of the forest, as existing harmoniously with nature, or as demonstrating concern for maintaining ecological processes. A few classic examples, repeatedly cited to advance this argument, created an often inflated rhetoric that tends to be indiscriminately applied to all indigenous peoples.

Scholars continue to depict indigenous peoples as environmental despite findings by anthropologists and archeologists that resource use has not always been ecologically oriented (Redford 1991; Krech 1999; Smith and Wishnie 2000). Examinations of the resource use practices of indigenous peoples are used as evidence on either side of the ‘noble savage’ debate (Hames 2007). Indeed, post-development scholars, with their “uncritical, romantic celebration of the local” (Keily 1999) have been considered the last refuge of the noble savage concept. They have used indigenous cosmovision as the trope through which to oppose global capitalist development.

In the second thread of literature on the ‘noble savage,’ scholars discuss how ecological nobility has been used as a political tool by native peoples and environmental groups (Hames 2007). For example, Conklin (1997) explains how Amazonian Indians are represented as natural conservationists whose cultural traditions and spiritual values predispose them to live in harmony with the earth. This image essentializes indigenous

peoples as homogenous entities fixed in time; yet it also lends them credibility as guardians of the forest. And so some indigenous leaders welcome the image and draw upon it at times when they face natural resources struggles over rights to their land (713).

This point has been made by others who identify the discursive opportunity structure open to indigenous groups to frame indigenous rights to natural resources in terms of their role in upholding sustainable environments (Hammer 2002; Hogue and Rau 2008; Horton 2010). In her work on indigenous peoples in Panama, Horton (2010) describes how claims to being “defenders of nature” have been used by these groups to gain legitimacy in the international political sphere. Indigenous groups have been re-conceptualized from obstacles to “environmental caretakers” (Horton 2010: 68). The institutionalization of this discourse of indigenous sustainability, she argues, has functioned as a transnational framing opportunity. Indigenous groups are able to frame their resistance to development projects (such as dams) and promote policies of differential treatment (such as collective land rights) “on the basis of perceived group-specific cultural relationships with the natural environment” (68).

Escobar (1995) calls for a return of local cultures to the discussion and critical analysis of development. In doing so, we must be careful not to romanticize or reify those local cultures which post-development scholars wish to use as ammunition against global power structures. He draws on Foucaultian notions of discourse and power, in which certain representations become dominant and, in turn, shape the ways in which reality is imagined and acted upon. While Escobar (1995) does so to critique modernist notions of teleological development, the same concept can be applied to the discourse of indigenous groups as environmental safeguards, living in harmony with nature.

The discursive association between indigeneity and protecting mother earth may be leveraged by groups facing environmental struggles, but it originated among, and continues to be legitimated by, powerful actors. In 1987, the Brundtland Report recognized the important role of indigenous people in sustainable development. The UN Conference on Environment and Development convention on biodiversity reiterated the important role of indigenous people in achieving a sustainable resource management.

Indeed, literature attends to how indigenous peoples have been used by international conservation NGOs to advance their own agendas (Chapin 2004; Hames 2007). NGOs “created an image of native peoples that does not correspond to their past and certainly does not accurately represent native peoples as a whole” (Hames 2007: 185). During the 1992 Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro, NGOs used native peoples as exemplars of cultures with strong conservation ethics. Native representatives were paraded before major environmental conferences as authentic noble savages who know the secrets of effective conservation (Hames 2007: 185).

It is clear that protection of the natural environment and protection of indigenous life and culture are intricately tied discourses in international activism, policy-making, and academia alike. The trouble with this depiction of all indigenous groups as living harmonious with mother nature is that it misrepresents many indigenous people of today as essentialized remnants of a romanticized past. Surely, indigenous groups have fought back against destruction in their territories. What these indigenous groups are defending, however, is not just the environment for the environment’s sake, but their right to access the environment as a resource for own livelihood survival.

Critiquing the False Dichotomy

My critique of the discourse of development scholars and food sovereignty activists for presenting peasants as the opposite of capitalist globalization and indigenous groups as inherently ecological complements the conclusions of other scholars. A few other scholars have been similarly critical of perpetuating false dichotomies. This includes the work of Henry Bernstein (2014), Burnett and Murphy (2014), Elizabeth Fitting (2011), and Wendy Wolford (2010).

Agrarian scholar Henry Bernstein has recently problematized the food sovereignty movement for their portrayal of peasant agriculture. He critiques the false binary between industrial agriculture and virtuous peasant, insisting that peasants are not, in fact, capital's "other." Even though movement discourse presents peasants "as capital's other by virtue of an ensemble of qualities attributed to them, which include their sustainable farming principles and practices, their capacity for collective stewardship of the environments they inhabit...and their vision of autonomy, diversity and cooperation" (1041), Bernstein problematizes this notion of peasants as noble, moral and ecologically superior. Instead, peasant class differentiation has taken place throughout agrarian history, and some peasants practice conventional production methods. This reality should be recognized within the "overarching framework of the vicious and virtuous" (1031) that is put forth by activists.

Burnett and Murphy (2014) take their critique of the food sovereignty movement from the false assumption that peasants are anti-capitalist to the false assumption that peasants are anti-global. Peasants may, indeed, be networked into the global industrial food system. In its rejection of international trade, the food sovereignty movement

therefore ignores the interests of the tens of millions of peasant farmers that produce for global commodity chains (7). These peasants, Burnett and Murphy (2014) assert, likely want to improve their position within the chains they supply rather than resist the system entirely.

Another critique of the false dichotomy between peasants and global capitalism has been made by Elizabeth Fitting (2011) in her work on genetically modified corn debates in Mexico. She problematizes the discourse utilized by activists in their anti-GM corn campaign. In *Defense of Maize*, a member organization of Via Campesina, “can slip into peasant essentialism and a bounded, reified conception of culture” (114), she argues. In this way, Fitting (2011) warns of the oversimplification of peasant agriculture that characterizes movement discourse: “Peasant communities have been romanticized as being predisposed to simple reproduction, averse to profit, or constituted by egalitarian relations” (22). Another characteristic of this essentialism is the portrayal of peasant and indigenous agriculture as “eco-friendly” (115). When Via Campesina activists claim that Mexican indigenous peasant producers have always existed in harmony with nature, they misrepresent those groups as part of a millennial culture, distinct from the capitalist economy of modern Mexico.

Yet, indigenous peasants are not distinct from the capitalist economy of Mexico; nor are they as concerned with genetically modified corn as the activists that claim to represent them. Fitting (2011) points to a disjuncture between urban activists and the rural countryside: “what is under debate in the Mexican Senate, in national newspapers, at academic conferences, and at urban rallies may not be a topic of conversation or debate in the countryside” (5). In fact, not one corn farmer whom she interviewed had ever heard

of genetically modified corn or *maíz transgenico* (119). Rural indigenous peasants “were unfamiliar with the GM controversy brewing just next door in Oaxaca, in Mexico City, and in transnational media and NGO networks” (233).

In advocating for seed sovereignty, *In Defense of Maize* draws on the alternative development tradition of valuing peasant culture and, in doing so, challenges the narrative of peasant inefficiency put forth by the Mexican government. However, the government narrative qualifies peasant agriculture as inefficient because it is viewed as subsistence-oriented and untouched by the values of capitalist markets. In this sense, both narratives rely on a conceptual binary between modern and traditional, and between market and community (Fitting 2010: 13). “A bounded view of culture manages to creep back into representations of rural Mexico, obscuring the ways peasant labor and peasant agriculture interact with larger processes” asserts Fitting (2010: 115).

Thus, arguments about culture are used by both sides to either defend or reject policies of trade liberalization. The same depiction of static peasant culture that portrayed these groups as backwards and in need of modernization is now being used by activists to defend their way of life and advocate for sustainable alternatives to the globalization of food.

Misrepresenting the interests of these peasants might be intentional or unintentional on the part of the food sovereignty movement. Writing about the MST (Landless Workers Movement) in Brazil, which is the largest member organization of Via Campesina, Wendy Wolford (2010) points to “strategic essentialism.” That is, movement leadership claims to represent the heterogeneous peasant bases, and in doing so, relies on intentional simplification. This essentialism is strategic in order to capture

the attention and gain the support of outside actors. “To win the hearts and minds of those outside the movement, [movement leadership] has relied on a fairly simplistic representation,” Woldford (2010: 14) explains. This is similar to the point made by Lynn Horton about Panamanian indigenous organizations employing environmental caretaker rhetoric to outside audiences: “movement leaders generate and adapt frames according to their knowledge and interpretations of extant discursive opportunity structures” (Horton 2010: 65).

Nonetheless, according to Woldford (2010), “the essentialisms the leaders are forced to employ for political purposes have material and discursive effects on the ground” (8). Leaders might have the best intentions in mind, but their representation of movement bases inevitably affect the socio-political milieu within which those peasant bases act. In sum, “Academics and activists often champion social movements in ways that unintentionally exoticize the very subaltern they hope to support” (10).

Her colleague at Cornell University’s Development Sociology department, Phillip McMichael, is one of the academics that, in my view, unintentionally exoticizes the subaltern he hopes to support. McMichael says that food sovereignty “offers a palpable rejoinder to those who fetishize agro-exporting as the solution to global hunger” (2014: 951), yet it could also be argued that it is actually the anti-globalization scholars that fetishize peasants to fit their own critiques of the system. They hold peasants up on a pedestal as embodying all of the positive characteristics that globalization does not. Scholars praise the supposed way of life and cultural values of peasants as proof that a viable alternative exists.

Cultural essentialism is a problematic. The cultural characteristics used to define this group, such as subsistence-oriented agriculture and sustainable production methods, are actually a product of their marginalization. Natural rather than input-intensive production methods can be seen as a consequence of their exclusion from Green Revolution technologies rather than an affinity for ecological sustainability. Subsistence production can be seen in the light of the marginality of peasant producers who lack a viable market for their goods and/or cannot afford to buy food.

In arguing this, I am not only critiquing the discourse of the food sovereignty movement, but an entire body of literature on peasants and globalization within the sociology of development. Not all peasants oppose global trade, and not all peasants value local and agro-ecological production. Some peasants practice conventional methods and export their products into the global market. The heterogeneity among peasant farmers – even indigenous peasant farmers from the same locale – must be accounted for in scholarly and social movement discussions rather than oversimplified in order to present a unified opposition to globalization.

Conceptual Framework

Environment-Livelihood Tension

The dominant narrative in development studies holds that globalization is bad for peasants and bad for the environment. In turn, peasant and indigenous groups mobilize to defend themselves and the environment against globalization. In this triangle, rather than seeing an inherent affinity between indigenous peasants and the environment, I

acknowledge that there can also exist environment-livelihood tensions. In some instances, protecting the environment and securing rural livelihoods complement one another. In other instances, protecting the environment and securing rural livelihoods are at odds with each other.

Examples of environment-livelihood complementarity include large-scale mining, oil extraction, land grabs, and large, mechanized, non-labor-intensive plantations like soybeans or palm oil. Chevron extracting oil in the Amazon and Canadian gold mining in El Salvador are prime examples.³ The displacement of people from their land, from access to natural resources like irrigation water, and from their source of livelihood prompts these groups to resist the destructive activity. Thus, a top-down, often global, capitalist, corporate force threatens both environmental sustainability and the lives and livelihoods of the rural poor living in the area.

In these instances, both livelihoods and the environment are threatened, and these two entities work together to resist the threat. Oftentimes the rural peasant or indigenous group works alongside environmental organizations to frame their resistance to the threat and their rights to the land in terms of their roles as caretakers of the environment. The two bottom corners of the triangle work together in that indigenous peasant groups leverage the environment as a tool and weapon in order to gain strength against powerful actors.

On the other hand, examples of environment-livelihood tension take place when the global capitalist force is destructive towards the environment but offers livelihood security to the rural poor. This can be seen in instances where plantations are labor-

³ See The Nation 2014: The Fight to Keep Toxic Mining Out of El Salvador (Sept 23)

intensive and offer employment to the local residents, or when peasants engage in input-intensive export agriculture. A contradiction between environmental protection and indigenous peasant livelihoods can also be seen when environmental groups attempt to preserve land that subaltern groups rely on for their livelihood. For example, REDD+ carbon transfers in the name of combating global warming displace indigenous peoples from accessing forestland.

Drawing attention to environment-livelihood tensions blurs the base of the globalization-environment-peasant triangle. The interests of indigenous peasants and the interests of environmental sustainability do not necessarily correspond. Indigenous groups frame themselves as protectors of mother nature during instances when they face threats from the outside. These threats are multifaceted, in the sense that they are environmental, cultural, political, *and* economic. They threaten access to the natural habitat upon which lives and livelihoods are based. In these situations, protecting one's source of income is simultaneously protecting the natural ecology, leading therefore to a successful frame alignment. Other indigenous populations, however – indigenous farmers for example – do not necessarily benefit from or see their interests reflected in that discursive association. Some do, such as certified organic quinoa farmers who successfully insert themselves into the global economy through sustainable production methods. But others, such as conventional broccoli farmers, face an environment-livelihood tension, where securing income and supporting their families is at odds with environmental protection: where they must exploit to survive.

This observation is based off of research on indigenous peasant farmers in the highlands of Ecuador. Yet the concept of environment-livelihood tension applies more

widely. Marginalized poor populations are likely to support environmental movements when it benefits their livelihood to do so and fail to join such movements when it jeopardizes their livelihood, even if the movement aims to improve their health or quality of life. For example, if a factory pollutes the surrounding area, community residents whose livelihoods depend on employment from the factory will be less likely to join a social movement against the factory than other residents. Likewise, those surrounding residents whose livelihood depends on agriculture will be most likely to struggle against the factory that pollutes their irrigation water (Chiu 2011). Marginalized populations do not necessarily think of the environment in and of itself as abstracted from their everyday livelihood concerns. Oftentimes they are complementary; yet in instances in which they are contradictory, livelihood concerns weigh out more than ecological ones.

The concept of environment-livelihood tension calls into question fundamental assumptions about the relationship between environmental sustainability and social justice. In this way, it builds off of insights established within the study of environmental justice. The environmental justice framework posits that poor communities of color experience the environment from their position of being poor and marginalized. They do not have the privilege to be environmental for the environment's sake like Lorax "I speak for the trees" type of environmentalism. My concept of environment-livelihood tension builds off of the work of critical race scholar and geographer Laura Pulido. I therefore use an environmental justice framework to critique development scholars.

Environmental Justice

I use the framework in Laura Pulido's (1996) book *Environmentalism and Economic Justice* to explain my findings. Pulido argues that subaltern environmental struggles are about both social justice and the environment. Subaltern groups – poor communities of color (in my case indigenous peasants) – experience the environment from their disadvantaged position in society. Environmental inequality is intertwined with other forms of social inequality. In fact, they encounter environmental problems *through* their unequal position. Environmental relations are systematically structured by existing power relations. Their unequal relation to the environment – whether it be unequal access to natural resources or unequal exposure to environmental hazards – is intricately tied to their subaltern status in society. For subaltern groups, environmental struggles are a question of survival and not just enhancing quality of life. Since concern for the environment is intricately tied to their own survival and livelihood security, environmental issues cannot be abstracted as leisure or lifestyle issues the way they are in mainstream environmentalism.

One of the key differences between subaltern and mainstream environmentalism is distance to the environmental issue. According to Pulido (1996), subaltern groups exist as a spatial entity. They are people who live in the same neighborhood or community, or work together on the same farm or factory. They cannot remove the environmental concern from their everyday reality. On the other hand, mainstream environmentalists are typically white, middle class actors who hold an elite relationship to the natural environment based on their privileged standing in society. For them, the environment is a quality-of-life issue removed from their day-to-day reality. Disparate individuals come

together to express concern for a cause, such as wilderness preservation or endangered species. The outcome of that cause is important for their passion and identity, but does not impact their everyday lives. They have the ability to remove themselves from the cause and carry on with their comfortable lives whenever they please.

When subaltern groups face environmental justice struggles, they oftentimes lack the resources and support to address the issue. In order to combat a specific environmental struggle, it is necessary to target the root cause of that problem: their limited power and disadvantaged position vis-à-vis other ethno-racial and class groups in society (Pulido 1996). Yet, after unsuccessful attempts at framing the struggle as an issue of power inequality, subaltern groups align with mainstream organizations and adopt dominant frames. Rather than framing the unequal distribution of natural resources or unequal distribution of environmental toxins as an issue of justice, subaltern movements shift from economic justice to mainstream environmental frames in order to resonate with wider audiences and gain support from actors and organizations with more resources.

Environmental frames align subaltern movements with a resource-rich network of movement organizations that are able to push for public policy or consumer behavior to benefit their cause. Often, mainstream groups do not support subaltern causes when they are framed terms of social or economic injustice. In fact, Pulido argues that economic justice is left out of mainstream environmentalism: “This tendency to disaggregate environmental concerns is a reflection of mainstream environmentalism’s propensity to deny that its own environmental interactions are couched within a context of political economic privilege” (1996: 193). When class-based arguments about how the poor, racialized, and historically marginalized should receive greater access to resources do no

resonate, other, more socially acceptable, discourses take its place. In order to gain support among powerful actors and organizations, they must frame their political goals in a way that is not too threatening to the existing power structure.

Food Sovereignty as an Environmental Frame for Economic Justice

I apply this wider framework, applicable to various historical and geographic contexts, to the case of food sovereignty. The food sovereignty movement is an economic justice movement in that it is concerned with access to resources among peasant and indigenous groups. Yet it also adopts mainstream environmentalist discourse.

In this sense, food sovereignty is in part an environmental movement. It seeks to reduce the depletion and pollution of the planet's resources. Its commitment to agro-ecological production and local consumption is framed in terms of ameliorating global climate change and reversing the destruction of the planet. On the other hand, food sovereignty is also a social justice movement. It represents poor, rural, communities of color of the global South. The food sovereignty platform advocates for redistributive land reform, so that the rural poor have more access to resources. Via Campesina has written about their concern for "social justice in fair economic relations", saying that "Landless people, peasants, and small farmers must get access to land, water, and seed as well as productive resources and adequate public services" (2006). These economic and social justice objectives exist parallel to, not necessarily complementary or contradictory to environmental concerns.

Even though Via Campesina frames the issue of food sovereignty in terms of climate change and cultural relationships with nature, their policy recommendations are

still rooted in rural livelihood survival, economic and political justice. In this way, the food sovereignty movement can be seen as utilizing an environmental frame to justify economic justice. The movement garners recognition externally from international audiences through environmental claims about how their model of small-scale agriculture will combat climate change and biodiversity loss. Yet, in doing so, the movement falls into the trap of cultural essentialism – oversimplifying the interests and identities of indigenous peasants. A movement framed entirely as redistributive agrarian reform for small farmers would not resonate as much with the international power structure. Therefore, movement leaders adopt the frames that resonate most with global governance, even if they do not entirely represent the people at the base of the movement.

My empirical findings give insight into the motivations of the agrarian-based poor. Peasant farmers, on-the-ground, who make up the base of the food sovereignty movement, and whom the movement seeks to represent, are not as concerned with the environmental objectives of the movement as they are with the economic justice objectives. Among food sovereignty principles, they are more concerned with redistribution of resources, control over natural resources, and government-supported technical assistance and price controls than they are with agro-ecological production for local consumption.

It is useful to apply Laura Pulido's environmental justice framework to the question of the food sovereignty movement's representation of indigenous peasants because it allows for an examination of power and social hierarchy. I use this lens to view indigenous peasants not as romanticized cultural heirlooms, but as shaped by long legacies of racial and economic subordination leaving them as some of the most

marginalized actors in society, struggling to stay afloat. In this light, it becomes clearer why livelihood concerns are forefront, even if that means applying pesticides or desiring to export their products in order to get ahead and make a little more for themselves.

Even though existing theory informs us that poor people of color are more concerned with economic justice than mainstream environmentalism, readers may still be surprised that some indigenous peasants might prefer agrochemicals and long distance trade. This is because of deeply engrained assumptions about indigenous peasants as ecological and anti-global. My findings suggest that livelihood concerns filter receptivity to food sovereignty principles. Whether or not sustainable production or localized trade resonates with the interests of small farmers at the base of the movement, access to resources through agrarian reform does. In this regard, I propose we think of food sovereignty as an economic justice issue dressed in an environmental cloak.

Overview

This dissertation argues that livelihood is more important for indigenous peasant farmers than the environmental objectives of the food sovereignty movement. As such, the discourse of the movement does not always match up to the practical reality of indigenous peasant farmers, on the ground. Instead of practicing agro-ecological production of food for self-consumption and sale in the local market, many of the indigenous peasants in this study depend on agrochemicals or export trade to support their families. The degree to which the practices and perspectives of these small farmers reflect movement rhetoric depends on their livelihood base: the crops they grow and markets they supply.

According to the introductory article of a recent special issue publication, two of the most prominent pillars of food sovereignty are agro-ecology and national food self-sufficiency (Edelman et al 2014). These are the topics of the first two empirical chapters of this dissertation. These chapters analyze the discourse and practice of indigenous peasant farmers on the topics of production methods and market trade. Both agricultural production and trade are environmental issues. This allows me to compare indigenous peasant farmer perspectives with the discourse of the food sovereignty movement. It also allows me to understand how these actors talk about and engage with the environment.

The third empirical chapter moves from the realm of agricultural production and trade to the realm of political protest. It asks not just whether indigenous peasants on the ground hold the same ideals as food sovereignty movement leaders, but whether they join movement leadership in large-scale protests to promote food sovereignty policies. Sandwiching these three chapters are background and conclusion, both of which reflect on the generalizability of my findings.

Preview of Chapters

Before diving into my findings, I give historical background information about the population of indigenous peasants in highland Ecuador. Chapter 2 outlines the political and economic history of agrarian reform. It also introduces the research methods employed in the field. The purpose of this chapter is to provide historical context about the Andean region, including the legacy of racial subordination leading to marginalized political and economic realities for indigenous peasants. I review scholarly debates about the causes and consequences of agrarian reform legislation and about the primacy of class

or ethnicity in indigenous peasant organizing. I then justify my case selection, give detail on the localities of field research, and explain the methods I used to collect data.

In Chapter 3, I compare the agricultural production practices of indigenous peasant farmers in the three case communities. While all communities grew the same five staple foodcrops thirty years ago, they have each had a distinct path of agrarian development that has led to different production methods: chemical-intensive, monoculture, and organic. These differences are tied to the history of outside intervention and the requirements of the commodity chains they supply. The three communities vary in their adoption of modern industrial practices, yet agrarian modernization is not necessarily linear or inevitable. Top-down market standards can reintroduce and incentivize traditional ecological practices.

In Chapter 4, I compare indigenous peasant farmer discourse on market trade. While each community differs in the process of commercializing their crop, they surprisingly converge on their preference for export over local trade. They desire to continue exporting, export more products, and export through more direct market links. In this sense, these indigenous peasants aim to better integrate themselves into, rather than resist, the global market. Globalization is not always destructive to local communities and ecologies. Rather, global market links can improve both peasant livelihood and their environmental practices.

In Chapter 5, I compare participation in indigenous movement protests across communities. Protest participation is guided by livelihood interests, but also by cultural obligation and the politics of affiliation. Community members who march in mobilizations are not necessarily knowledgeable about or in favor of the issue. There is

more variation within communities with regard to protest participation than either production practices or market preference. For example, opinion of indigenous movement politics is gendered: across communities, women feel more taken advantage of by indigenous politicians on their rise to political careers. As a whole, respondents are more in favor of redistributive rights and government investment in the small farm sector than they are of anti-free trade initiatives.

Chapter 6 concludes the dissertation. In it, I outline the specific policies that the Ecuadorian government has taken to support small farmers in recent years and how the experiences of the peasant farmers in my study can and should inform the food sovereignty agenda of national and international indigenous and peasant organizations. I reflect on how the concept of environment-livelihood tension can be applied more widely to the alternative food movement, predicting contradictions that may arise within food localism in the global North.

Weaving these chapters together, the overall narrative of this work comes together. Whether it is about production, markets or protests, their preferences and practices are rooted in what they believe to be better for their livelihoods. With regard to food sovereignty principles, some communities more closely align with the vision put forward in movement discourse than others, but none of the three communities overlap entirely. When overlap does occur, it is because the ecological principles of the movement complement rather than contradict the economic justice goals of the community members. In sum, livelihood base matters in accounting for indigenous peasant orientation toward food sovereignty principles.

CHAPTER TWO: BACKGROUND

The purpose of this chapter is to situate indigenous peasant communities in Ecuador as historically marginalized, economically and politically subordinated, and racially discriminated against by mainstream white-mestizo society. In this way, the environmental justice framework, which understands how subaltern groups interact with the environment as a product of their marginalized position, can be applied to this case study. The agricultural practices and perspectives of the indigenous peasant farmers in this study have been shaped by histories of unequal access to natural resources and weak state support of the rural poor.

To give relevant socio-cultural, political, and economic background, I begin by describing the historical trajectory of the sector. From *huasipungo* landlord-tenant relations to agrarian reform, seasonal migration, and community development projects, the indigenous peasant sector has long struggled for its continued existence. The Ecuador indigenous movement is a key actor in this struggle. This chapter thus details the emergence and trajectory of the movement from class to ethnic-based organizing as indigeneity was revalorized from an obstacle to modernization to a strategic resource for rural development. This chapter then concludes with a discussion of case selection and methods of collecting data in the field.

Despite debate about whether class or ethnic identities best characterize the indigenous peasant population, what is clear is that this population has faced centuries of discrimination based on their racial classification that has in turn marginalized them economically within the class structure of society. More recent efforts to reclaim their

racialized status into positive ethnic identification may be contrasted to classic forms of class-based organizing. Nevertheless, even as ethnic actors, indigenous peasants have continued to struggle for material conditions that secure their livelihood well being.

Indigenous Peasants as Subordinated within Ecuadorian Society

Colonial Legacy and the Huasipungo System

Structural inequality has long characterized the lives of indigenous peoples in Ecuador. Indigenous groups have been racialized as subordinate to the Spanish colonizers and their white and mestizo descendants. State policies before and after national independence kept indigenous Ecuadorians marginalized and excluded from political power and economic wealth. Centuries of expropriation and exploitation have left a legacy of poverty and inequality among indigenous Ecuadorians: they continue to be the poorest and most marginalized members of their societies (Postero and Zamosc 2004: 18).

Contemporary inequality between indigenous and white-mestizo Ecuadorians must be seen as socially and historically constructed. As stated by Postero (2007: 10), “Race and ethnicity are not natural categories of difference that precede social relations. Rather, they are formed precisely by and in contested and historically contingent relations of power.” There have been different racial classification systems over the years, based on blood purity, phenotypical appearance, etc. Thus, indigeneity is not static; it has evolved over time.

During the Spanish colonial period and during post-colonial independence, the native, original inhabitant, indigenous population of “Indians” was viewed as racially inferior. They were looked upon as filthy, drunken, servile and backwards: as “a fallen race without culture or reason” (Larson 2004: 115). Indians were de-humanized; they were thought of as animals incapable of human reason. They were viewed as “natural slaves” and “of the nature to serve” (Robins 2011). This discourse was used to justify and perpetuate discriminatory policies against the population.

In the Andean region, indigenous subordination during the Spanish colonial period took multiple forms, including the *encomienda* and *mita* systems. Under the *encomienda* system, European settlers had the right to levy tribute on the indigenous population. Original inhabitants were permitted to live on their lands in exchange for tribute, either monetary or through labor. The *mita* system was a forced labor draft of men from indigenous communities who worked for a fixed term in dangerous, grueling industries such as mining. During the 16th and 17th centuries, this colonial labor system took the health, dignity and often the lives of those dragged from their homes in chains by armed guards, physically abused, and forced to live and work in deplorable conditions (Robins 2011).

In the 18th century, after independence from Spain, the Ecuadorian state continued many of the same practices in their treatment of the indigenous population. In this way, it aimed “to restore elements of the colonial system of caste” (Larson 2004: 106). It continued to rely on Indian tribute to finance itself, although without granting juridical rights to Indian communities as had been done in the previous epoch. Even though they owed tribute, they were denied legal rights to their landholdings. The post-independence

period maintained “colonial institutions in modern guise” (Larson 2004: 107), such as state-run labor drafts to staff state modernization projects. Even though tribute was abolished in 1857, the colonial practice of compulsory Indian labor was restored and redirected to serve the nation’s developmental goals. In the 1860s, laborers were rounded up from their communities to build the nation’s infrastructure as “Indian ditchdiggers” (Larson 2004: 118). This discriminatory tax “reinforced local customs of coercing Indians into providing gratuitous services” (Larson 2004: 117). Essentially, it was a modernized version of the colonial *mita* system. But the pool of Indian labor drafts became smaller as more and more Indian communities lost control of their land to Spanish and mestizo Ecuadorians. Over the 19th century, there was a gradual loss of indigenous lands to encroaching estates, or *haciendas*.

The *hacienda* system involved a more direct form of labor control than the previous *encomienda* system. The landlord-Indian tenant relationship of indentured labor servitude was known as *huasipungo* in Ecuador. Similar systems were known under different names elsewhere: *yanacono* in Peru and *inquilino* in Chile.

Under the *huasipungo* system, the indigenous population worked as agricultural laborers for large landholders. *Huasipungueros* contributed permanent quotas of labor in exchange for small subsistence plots (Zamosc 1989). At this time, the haciendas of the highlands produced primarily crops for domestic consumption while the large landholdings on the coast produced mainly tropical crops for export. Many viewed the highland haciendas as “one of the last bastions of feudalism in the Americas” (Zamosc 1994: 42). In political debates, the highland Indian population was portrayed as “poor, ignorant, and helpless creatures in need of paternal protection by benign landlords”

(Larson 2004: 112). This discourse of moral paternalism legitimated the indentured servitude perpetuated by highland landed elites.

This history of racial subordination in highland society, legitimized and perpetuated by state policies, has had long-term and far-reaching implications for the indigenous population. Even after the end of formal domination through labor coercion under semi-feudal ties, indigenous highlanders still held politically and economically marginal roles in society. Although 'freed' by agrarian reform, their ability to sustain livelihoods for themselves under de-shackled conditions was considerably dampened by the inherently unequal forces of the capitalist economy. Existing status inequalities were for the most part extended during the new era of reformed state-elite-indigenous relations.

Agrarian Reform

The 1964 Agrarian Reform Law ended the *huasipungo* system and converted *huasipungueros* into owners of their small plots of land. There are various explanations for agrarian reform. Scholars point to shifting class power of coastal elites over highland elites; the modernizing influence U.S. foreign policy; urbanization and changes in domestic demand for food; and rural unrest. These causes are not mutually exclusive; they are interrelated and constitutive. Nevertheless, debate ensues over which group was primarily responsible for catalyzing the reform.

On one end, there was pressure from agribusiness on the coast to break up the landlord-tenant labor relations so that they could attract wage labor to the coast. Coastal elite faced a chronic shortage of labor and looked to stimulate the flow of labor from the

highlands to the coast through loosening traditional labor ties in the highlands (Clark 2005). Even though haciendas on both the coast and the highlands had operated under pre-capitalist labor relations, the coast underwent a transition to capitalist agriculture before the highlands did. In 1954, over half of workers on the coast were landless wage laborers, while only 2% of workers in the highlands were (Zevallos 1989: 42). In the highlands, wage laborers with no ties to the land were virtually nonexistent (Zamosc 1989: 9). Up through the early 1960s, even the most modern haciendas had huasipungueros. The end of the huasipungo system, according to Clark (2005), was a result of the struggle between two dominant groups, rather than between indigenous peasants and the elite group that dominated them.

The highland elite were in a position of political dominance during the 19th century, but in the liberal period of the early 20th century, the coastal elite rose to power (Clark 2005). There was an atmosphere of competition, tension and ongoing conflict between the two groups. According to Clark (2005), coastal export elite looked to “undermine the power of highland elites in order to stimulate labor migrations” and did so through “new legal provisions made available to indigenous peasants to combat local abuses that tied them to the highlands” (56). Thus, the ‘freeing’ of indigenous peasant labor was made possible by legal regulations which took place *despite* the “established elite trying strenuously to hold on to indigenous labor” in the highlands (56). According to this line of argument, agrarian reform was not in the best interests of highland elite. They would have continued the semi-feudal labor dynamic if not for the political pressure of coastal elite competing for the same labor supply.

Another explanation for agrarian reform, however, is the modernizing interest of highland elite. According to this line of argument, highland landowners modernized production to meet the changing urban demand for food (Barsky 1988; Korovkin 1997b). Urbanization triggered the capitalist modernization of highland haciendas. In this sense, agrarian reform took place as part of the larger industrialization project, along with other pro-industrial development policies like Import Substitution Industrialization (ISI). Urban industrialization policies increased the population living in urban centers, and the rising income of urbanites increased domestic demand for dairy and meat. Highland haciendas followed suit, modernizing from staple grains to livestock production.

For these scholars, agrarian reform is attributed to the will of the highland landholding class to follow market incentives in response to changing urban consumption patterns, while peasant struggles played a marginal role in the process. This argument is backed up by the fact some highland hacienda owners began to eliminate the *huasipungo* system prior to the 1964 reform. Zevallos (1989: 53) argues that the 1964 reform merely accelerated an existing trend and forced more landowners to follow suit. Fifteen percent of all *huasipungo* relationships were dissolved voluntarily by landlords (Forster 1989: 96). They reduced their landholdings and specialized in mechanized production, selling the remaining portions of land to their *huasipungueros* before it could be appropriated (Llambi 1989: 760).

Other scholars explain agrarian reform as a product of U.S. foreign policy (De Janvry 1981; Zevallos 1989; Forster 1989; Lucero 2003). In some ways, this is an extension of the previous argument about hacienda modernization. Landlord decisions to end their *huasipungo* labor relations are explained as a reaction to the modernizing

discourse of U.S. foreign policy as well as fear of radical agrarian reform in a post-Cuban Revolution context.

The U.S. State Department's Alliance for Progress spread the belief that neofeudal relationships were not as profitable as capitalist ones; this convinced some modernizing landlords to terminate labor arrangements in the five years leading up to the 1964 Agrarian Reform Law (Forster 1989). This decision can be seen both in terms of profit seeking and a defensive action in the face of fear of appropriation. In response to the Cuban Revolution, land reform programs were legislated across Latin America to eradicate feudal forms of land tenure. The 1959 Cuban Revolution thus played an important role in stimulating waves of agrarian reform in the Andes (Lucero 2003: 30). Indeed, the 1964 Agrarian Reform Law in Ecuador followed the objectives promoted by the Alliance for Progress (Zevallos 1989; Forster 1989).

Lastly, scholars emphasize the role of the indigenous people themselves in resisting direct servitude and organizing against the poor working conditions and domination of their landlords (Zamosc 1989; Korovkin 1997b; Becker 2008). This is not to negate that U.S. foreign policy, urbanization, highland and coastal elite all played a role; however, these forces are typically given disproportionate weight and the agency of the indigenous peasants themselves is often overlooked in explanations of agrarian reform.

Zamosc (1989) emphasizes the incidences of political crisis leading up to agrarian reform legislation that were marked by a high degree of popular agitation. Korovkin (1997b) also emphasizes the role of peasant unrest, including explicit challenges to the hacienda system made by huasipunguero political mobilizations. In the 1950s and 1960s,

indigenous workers signed petitions to end the huasipungo system, divide up haciendas, and give the land to peasants (Becker 2008: 128). 1961 was a key year in the public debate around agrarian reform, and this same year witnessed several major peasant mobilizations: 12,000 indigenous peasants marched to Quito demanding agrarian reform and an end to the huasipungo system (Zamosc 1989; Becker 2008: 131).

These mobilizations were organized by FEI, the Ecuadorian Federation of Indians. This organization was influenced by the communist ideology of leftist intellectuals. According to Becker (2008: 12), “Leftist influences helped trigger a shift in Indigenous strategies from reacting to local and immediate forms of exploitation to addressing larger structural issues.” Early organizing among indigenous peasant huasipungueros took the form of labor strikes. They were largely reformist, calling for higher pay and better working conditions. At that time, there was no fight to own the means of production. However, under the direction of FEI, which formed in 1944, highland indigenous peasants began to organize around agrarian reform and land redistribution (Becker 2008).

Becker (2008) argues that agrarian reform legislation sought to placate the indigenous peasants and eliminate leftist influences in rural organizing efforts. In this light, the Agrarian Reform Law can be seen as a means to calm unrest and avoid revolution. Although the impetuses behind agrarian reform are debated, the consequences of the reform are clear: limited economic redistribution alongside strengthened social and political capital.

Aftermath of 1964 Reform

Through the 1964 Agrarian Reform Law, huasipungueros received formal title over their plots of land. These averaged 3.5 hectares, which is well below the 5 hectares of land considered to be the minimum amount necessary for sustaining a family in the highlands (Zamosc 1989: 20). In addition, the plots of land that were allocated to huasipungueros tended to be lower quality, located on steep and eroded hillsides.⁴ These lands were the “highest, driest, and least fertile tracts” (Zamosc 1994: 43). They were insufficient to sustain the majority of rural indigenous peasants, especially with population growth of new generations.

Thus, many scholars point to the limited redistributive impact and lack of true land reform that resulted from the 1964 Agrarian Reform Law (Zevallos 1989; Zamosc 1989; Becker 2008). Although legislation ended the huasipungo system, it did not end great inequalities in land ownership. Instead, “The agrarian reform law made little progress in addressing the underlying structural problems that rural peoples faced. Despite the rhetoric of improving peasants’ lives, the law fostered capitalist penetration in the countryside” (Becker 2008: 138).

On one hand, agrarian reform can be viewed as freeing a semi-feudal, servile class of labor. On the other hand, reform can be viewed as creating an ever more marginalized and insecure class of wage laborers. Zevallos (1989) contends that “the most important impact of the reform, then, was its contribution to the spread of impersonal wage relations in highland agriculture” (43). It mandated capitalist wage labor

⁴ Although access to land was typically better under state-owned haciendas than under privately-owned haciendas.

relations in the countryside, but did not significantly redistribute land into the hands of indigenous highlanders. Their limited access to land redefined them as smallholders who lacked conditions for a self-sufficient domestic economy. Agrarian reform thus created a reliable reserve of labor-power from the peasant sector to fuel capitalist national development (De Janvry 1981). In this sense, there was no real redistribution of wealth or power, only “reorganized and entrenched economic and racial subordination” (Becker 2008: 139).

Indeed, another agrarian reform law was needed in order to redistribute more land. The 1973 Land Reform required large, inefficient, underutilized landholdings to be divided up and distributed to the peasant population. However, even this reform was viewed as ineffective in the actual redistribution of land because large landowner organizations were able to fend off land expropriation by the state. Most land transfers happened as a result of invasions, where groups of peasants directly claimed un-utilized land. The organizing efforts of indigenous peasant communities secured more land for the sector even though large landowners were able to hold on to much of their wealth.

After this second phase of agrarian reform, argues Zamosc (1989: 63), the peasant sector was able to reinforce their position, consolidate their subsistence base, and integrate into the market as agricultural producers. Most were able to escape complete proletarianization. They remained tied to the land as semi-proletariat wageworkers and petty commodity producers (De Zaldívar 2008). Ultimately, mid-century reforms increased the dependence of indigenous peasants on market relations: in terms of markets for their commodity goods as well as the wage labor market.

However, the highland wage labor market reduced in size as large landholders mechanized their production. Large haciendas were transformed into smaller, mechanized estates with fewer workers. This took place through the massive conversion of cropland into pastureland. Large landholders shifted from grain cultivation to mechanized dairy farming, which requires considerably less manual labor (Korovkin 1997b; Clark 2005). This shift happened in response to the rising urban demand for meat and dairy products; its was also a consequence of state credit programs in the 1970s which made a special line of credit and tax incentives available to large landowners for improving pasture land (Forster 1989: 97).

The conversion of haciendas from traditional food crops to livestock and dairy production was arguably the most notable consequence of the 1973 reform (Korovkin 1997b). Cultivation of wheat, barley, corn and other grains fell dramatically. For example, the cultivation of wheat dropped 60% from 1970 to 1980 (Zevallos 1989: 55). This shift is related not only to increased demand for dairy and promotion by the state through favorable tax and credit policies, but also to the influx of wheat and other grains from the U.S. as part of their food aid program for developing countries (see Friedmann 1982).

This transformation accelerated outmigration. At the same time that indigenous peasants were in search of wage income to supplement their on-farm production, large landholders (and former huasipungo landlords) in the highlands required less labor. As demand for labor decreased, indigenous peasant community members were forced to seek employment elsewhere. The mechanization of hacienda production had a devastating impact on rural employment and increased the importance of seasonal migration. The net

result of state reforms, according to Forster (1989), was an increased reliance of indigenous peasants on off-farm income through seasonal migration to cities and the coast. These migrants typically worked as agricultural laborers on coastal plantations, unskilled laborers in construction projects, or in the urban informal sector as street vendors and domestic servants (Korovkin 1997b: 34).

Seasonal migration was also propelled by declining economic opportunities on peasant farms. As Forster (1989) notes, survival in the *minifundio* (small landholding) context requires some success in the market: whether selling labor, crafts, or agricultural products. Subsistence farming alone does not support livelihoods when landholdings are so small. And reliance on the market is only exacerbated as the number of family members living on the farm increases. With population growth from one generation to the next, the already limited landholdings of indigenous peasants became fragmented through inheritance. Thus, demographic pressure on the land – combined with declining farm yields due to poor quality, eroded soil – caused communities to depend more and more on seasonal migration (Korovkin 1997a).

The poor quality of land held by indigenous peasant communities was perpetuated by limited access to resources that would help stimulate their peasant economy, like credit and irrigation. The land that was acquired by indigenous peasants often lacked irrigation; yet, state irrigation projects that expanded during the 1970s⁵ built primary and secondary irrigation systems rather than tertiary water distribution systems to bring water

⁵ Due to the oil boom and consequent increase in state revenue and expenditures under the military-run government

to more rural areas (Zevallos 1989: 47). Any communities that were able to secure access to irrigation water relied on their own communal labor to build their own canals.

The peasant farmers who received better quality land and were able to market their crops were more likely to be mestizo peasants, while indigenous peasants were more likely to combine household food production with outside wages as semi-proletarian peasants (Zamosc 1994). Of the two types of peasants defined by De Janvry (1981) – petty commodity producers and semi-proletarian wage earners – Zevallos (1989) asserts that the former huasipungueros of the Ecuadorian countryside fell into the second category because their plots were small and low quality and they lacked access to credit, technology and irrigation. Thus, racial stratification in economic opportunities was reinforced through state policies.

Overall, scholars like Zevallos (1989) are critical of the aftermath of agrarian reforms. Actual land re-distribution was modest and state development policies mostly benefited large landowners. Facing limited income-earning opportunities in the highlands, indigenous peasants were forced to migrate seasonally as “semi-proletarian consequences” of the capitalist transformation of agriculture on the countryside.

Yet, not all scholars view the consequences of agrarian reform in such a bleak light. Agrarian reform and seasonal migration also impacted the social and political capital of indigenous peasant communities. These two processes worked together to facilitate and spread the politicization of the indigenous population, thus setting the framework for future indigenous movement organizing.

Korovkin (1997b) affirms that “although land reform was a defeat in terms of real redistribution of land, it was a victory in political-organizational terms” (28). After land

reform, there was a rapid growth of indigenous community organizations. Agrarian reform created an “organizational explosion” in both the number of communities and community associations, as well as the number of municipal and provincial federations (Korovkin 1997b: 29). These community organizations are the “institutional means” of rural collective action (Korovkin 1997b: 27). In this way, indigenous communities became the building blocks of the Ecuador indigenous movement.

Agrarian reform legislation created spaces for local political autonomy (Postero and Zamosc 2004). In order to receive titles to hacienda land after the 1964 reform, former huasipungueros organized together as communities. They only received legal rights to landholdings if they registered as communities following the 1937 *Ley de Comunas* (Lucero 2003; Glidden 2011). There was also increased community organizing for the purpose of securing land through land invasions after 1973 reform (Forster 1989).

Seasonal migration is also frequently pointed to as a mechanism for facilitating the politicization of indigenous peasant communities. For one, the comings and goings of seasonal migration allowed migrants to retain ties with their communities of origin (De Zaldivar 2008). Migrants were able to return to their communities of origin and invest their earnings in the purchase of hacienda land (Korovkin 1997a).

Seasonal migration also led to politicization because of the way they were treated in comparison to urban mestizo workers. In this way, the experiences of semi-proletariat migrant workers facilitated the construction of a collective indigenous identity (Pallares 2002; De Zaldivar 2008). The experience of work in urban industries and coastal plantations brought indigenous migrants into contact with new forms of racism and discrimination as well as struggles to maintain cultural identity in the face of

homogenizing pressure. Korovkin (2000) argues that exposure to racial discrimination in the workplace fostered a heightened ethnic consciousness. For example, indigenous migrants were discriminated against through a labor-partitioning system that excluded Indians from certain employment opportunities and assigned them the most menial and low wage positions in the labor force (Pallares 2002: 43). Pallares (2002) points to the solidarity fostered by common experiences of racialization in the work force among indigenous people from different local backgrounds as causal to the formation of a cross-regional Indian identity.

Therefore, another outcome of agrarian reform and seasonal migration was the politicization of indigenous peasant communities in the Ecuadorian highlands. The capitalist transformation of the countryside brought indigenous consciousness to the surface, influencing collective action by providing both “culturally defined goals and institutional means” (Korovkin 1997b: 27). The rise of indigenous community organizing is indisputable, but the mechanism through which it occurred – as bottom-up or top-down ethnic consciousness – is discussed in the following section.

Ethnic Identity as a Resource

From Class to Ethnic-Based Organizing

Scholars of the Ecuador indigenous movement point to a shift from class-based to ethnic-based organizing during the 1970s and 1980s. Some scholars explain this shift as a product of structural conditions that facilitated bottom-up identity formation (Korovkin 2000; Pallares 2002). They point to agrarian reform as a causal factor – through the

processes described above – leading to the formation of indigenous federations with ethnic agendas of anti-discrimination and cultural valorization. This complements Slater's (1985) theory that structural conditions shape the formation of a collective identity with which to organize autonomously from traditional political actors such as unions and parties. Rhetoric of ethnic valorization resonated with urban migrants and “provided a powerful glue for the progressively proletarianized indigenous communities” (Korovkin 2000: 23). In this way, the white-mestizo ethnic hierarchy of society replaced the owner-worker divide as the most acute inequality facing indigenous community members (Pallares 2002: 16).

In addition to the workplace racism faced by seasonal migrants, rural indigenous peasants came into contact with local racial discrimination during a period when they had recently gained political freedom from landlord-tenant domination. This discrimination took place at local markets, school, and public offices (Pallares 2002). Indigenous leaders faced subordination in local politics as mestizos dominated local political offices. Not only were they left out of local positions of power, they held few leadership positions in regional peasant federations (Pallares 2002). Indigenous activists were “disillusioned by the subordinate status they occupied in the political hierarchy” of class-based struggles (Pallares 2002: 181-2). Pallares (2002: 146) explains that the “politicization of racial consciousness in the Ecuadorian highlands occurred as activists became involved in class politics and aware of their subordination.” According to Pallares (2002), ethnic-based organizing arose as an autonomous space in reaction to their marginalization within current peasant organizations. Indigenous leaders wanted to hold positions of power and speak for themselves.

This shift from class to ethnic-based organizing is thus seen as a shift from externally-influenced to autonomous organizing. Cultural recovery became central to the agenda of the indigenous movement even though it had not previously received attention by “leftist organizers” who exclusively emphasized land and labor rights (Pallares 2002: 5). The class-based organizing that indigenous leaders were reacting to was FEI, the federation that led strikes against the *huasipungo* system and advocated for agrarian reform during the mid 20th century. FEI was run by urban leftists who were influenced by communist ideology and looking to foster class-consciousness. FEI eventually lost strength and was replaced by new ethnic-based federations (Becker 2008: 91). In that light, liberating the peasantry from the oppressive power of semi-feudal landlords did not create a proletarian class-consciousness but rather facilitated their organization on the basis of their ethnic identity (Korovkin 1997b).

During the 1960s and 1970s struggle for land reform, FEI and FENOC,⁶ another indigenous peasant federation, adopted the discourse of leftist organizers. The first highland federation to adopt an ethnic discourse and assert an indigenous rather than peasant identity was Ecuarrunari, which formed in 1972. Ecuarrunari stands for the 'Ecuadorian Indian Awakens' in Kichwa. This highland regional federation joined with indigenous federations from the Amazon and the coast to form one umbrella organization to represent indigenous populations in Ecuador.

⁶ *Federación Nacional de Organizaciones Campesinas* (National Federation of Peasant Organizations). FENOC later changed its name to FENOCIN (*Federación Nacional de Organizaciones Campesinas, Indígenas y Negros*; National Federation of Peasant, Indigenous, and Afro-Ecuadorian Organizations)

This umbrella organization, CONAIE (*Confederación de Nacionalidades Indígenas del Ecuador*; Confederation of Indigenous Nationalities of Ecuador) formed in 1986. CONAIE criticized FEI for being under the control of external, non-indigenous, communist actors, and for emphasizing class issues to the exclusion of ethnic identities (Becker 2008: 152). Lucero (2003: 32) has referred to CONAIE as the first organization in a long history of indigenous organizing to “step out of the shadows of leftist and Church organizational efforts and speak as an independent and representative indigenous actor.”

Other scholars problematize this portrayal of indigenous identity as bottom-up and autonomous, however; they perceive the shift from class to ethnic-based organizing as strategic (Zamosc 1994; Lucero 2003; Schaefer 2009; Glidden 2011). Rather than emerging as a result of new forms of subordination heightening affiliation with one identity over another, ethnic-based indigenous discourse was strategically deployed by movement leaders to take advantage of new political opportunity structures. According to Zamosc (1994), a “new Indian identity was socially constructed” (57). Indigenous leaders actively constructed the identity of the movement from above in order to achieve their political goals.

With regard to the institutionalized discursive opportunity structure at the time of the formation of CONAIE, Lucero (2003) explains that “internationally, indigenous people were becoming increasingly important to bodies such as the International Labor Organization and the United Nations” (34). This process of class to ethnic-based organizing, using a discourse of indigenous rights rather than peasant unions, was shaped in part by international NGOs that opened up discursive opportunities for indigenous

rights in the 1980s. Schaefer (2009: 404) contends that “strategic considerations made it advisable” for CONAIE to adopt the ethnic discourse of lowland indigenous groups since it attracted the attention and support of international environmental NGOs. While Lucero (2003), Schaefer (2009) and Glidden (2011) point to the international institutional context within which indigenous frames resonate, Zamosc (1994) points to national political opportunities. During the 1980s, the Ecuadorian government showed receptivity to the indigenous goals of bilingual education and territorial autonomy, “reinforc[ing] the idea that ethnicity is a viable channel for advancing demands” (59-60).

In fact, originally the discourse of indigenous federations was largely class-based. They increasingly adopted ethnic frames to justify and orient their efforts. When Ecuvarunari first formed, they had a class-based agenda similar to the other peasant federations: “for all the emphasis on ECUARUNARI’s distinctiveness as an Indian organization, its discourse scarcely differed from that of FENOC in that it espoused a class-based ideology focused on the struggle for land, linking that struggle to the socialist ideals of worker-peasant alliance and paying little attention to ethnicity as an issue in itself” (Zamosc 1994: 47). The indigenous federation then entered a second phase, a 'dual strategy' (Pallares 2002), balancing calls for land reform with new demands against ethnic discrimination and in defense of indigenous language and culture (Zamosc 1994: 48).

Ecuvarunari wavered back and forth between ethnic and class-based conceptions of the indigenous peasant movement (Yashar 2005). Pallares (2002) points to the active negotiation among indigenous activists in shaping the direction of the movement. In the 1970s and 1980s, Ecuvarunari debated whether to organize around the notion of class or

ethnicity (146). They debated whether to follow a peasant agenda and ally with other highland class-based organizations, or to focus on cultural and racial issues and ally with lowland indigenous groups. Ultimately, they adopted an ethnic identity that “did not naturally exist” (Yashar 2005: 109). As Glidden (2011: 33) explains, “A shift to privileging ethnic identity in Ecuador occurred because the indigenous population believed that privileging ‘Indigenusness’ ... would increase their life chances.”

Despite this framing strategy, forged through the efforts of indigenous leaders, to the indigenous peasant bases, material rather cultural demands remained most salient. The grassroots demands of the people remain the same, asserts Becker (2008), whether the movement is lead by peasant unions or indigenous activists. He argues that most indigenous people do not care about symbolic demands, that land reform is the only glue that holds the indigenous movement together (Becker 2008: 177). As such, the struggle for land during this period was viewed as an ethnic rather than class-based struggle (Yashar 2005; Glidden 2011). Land became an issue of cultural recognition, reframed as territorial autonomy. The same struggle emerged under a different frame.

It is clear that some scholars see the rhetoric of indigenous rights as a strategic guise for longstanding peasant-based struggles for material resources. The rural countryside might be organizing as indigenous, but their concerns revolve around issues of livelihood security. At the same time, others see the rise of ethnic-based organizing as a bottom-up process in which ethnic identity became more salient as a result of overt racial discrimination in the workforce and in existing political organizations. For example, Korovkin (1997b: 45) notes that “even though communities’ quest for land and infrastructure may be seen as an economic struggle, it is essentially a political one – a

struggle for the right to organize local development in accordance with their needs and their cultural values.” Indeed, whether the livelihood issues around which indigenous peasant communities organize are ethnic/cultural or class/economic has long been debated.

Eschewing the dichotomy, Becker (2008) argues that both class and ethnicity have been critical to the success of the indigenous movement. The indigenous movement has succeeded inasmuch as they have been able to blend class and ethnic elements. Rather than the triumph of one discourse over another, he argues that CONAIE has been most successful when it embraces the class nature of indigenous oppression. Class and ethnicity are mutually reinforcing. The two cannot be separated, as indigenous peasants face double exploitation. Class and ethnicity are two faces of the same coin (Postero and Zamosc 2004).

From Land Reform to Integrated Rural Development

Strategic employment of indigenous identity occurred throughout the 1980s not only in national political organizing, but also as a means to access rural development projects in a context of declining state support.

1979 was a significant year for Ecuador’s political economy. After 20 years of military rule, a new president was democratically elected. This transition took place alongside the rise of neoliberal ideology in global governance. The Ecuadorian government’s simultaneous transition to democracy and neoliberalism had political and economic influences on the countryside. The 1979 Agricultural Development Law put an end to land re-distribution in favor of a new era of integrated rural development. It

marked the end of agrarian reform as land re-distribution and the beginning of agrarian reform as rural development projects (Haney and Haney 1989; Yashar 2005).

The 1979 Agricultural Development Law imposed significant constraints on the land reform process by relaxing the criterion of 'efficient use' as a basis of expropriation, and it also excluded participants in land invasions from receiving state benefits. Police force was increasingly used to protect capitalist farmers' rights to property and shut down land seizures (Korovkin 1997b; Yashar 2005). The 1979 law gave rise to a series of neoliberal policies, including the National Development Plan of 1980-1984. Land re-concentration began after the 1979 law and continued to accelerate as neoliberalism intensified.

The shift from class-based to ethnic-based discourse within the indigenous movement took place at the same time as the end the state project of land re-distribution. De Zaldivar (2008: 610) points to the parallel between land re-concentration and the "ethnicization of the indigenous movement." He criticizes indigenous political leadership for failing to address structural inequality in the countryside and claims the struggle for ethnic rights has taken place at the expense of structural change.

In the 1980s, a new paradigm in favor of integrated rural development began (Escobar 1995; De Zaldivar 2008). Coinciding with a retreat of the state in rural development, there was a simultaneous rise in non-governmental development programs. Integrated rural development has been seen as a pacifier to distract from structural inequality in the distribution of land. It is argued that rural development programs were designed to appease indigenous peasant unrest around land reform and maintain existing status quo in the countryside (Korovkin 1997b). Development NGOs prioritized certain

populations, like women and indigenous groups (Escobar 1995). Identification with indigenous ethnicity was thus reinforced as a strategic resource.

Rural development programs introduced new production technologies and marketing opportunities to indigenous peasant communities. They intended to aid the rural poor, especially women and indigenous groups, to establish sustainable rural livelihoods. These programs aimed to develop indigenous peasant communities through a variety of strategies, including the commercialization of *artesanía* crafts and agricultural commodities. Green Revolution technologies were diffused to small peasant farmers, bringing tractors, pesticides, and new seed varieties into communities to increase yields (Escobar 1995).

Rural development projects have taken different forms and led to different livelihood specializations (Bebbington et al 1993; Bebbington 2000; Colloredo-Mansfeld 2009). For that reason, when we talk about indigenous peasants in Ecuadorian highlands, we cannot think of them as a homogenous population. We must specify what activity they depend on to derive their livelihood, and then empirically measure whether differences in their livelihood base parallel differences in their orientation toward indigenous movement policies.

Case Selection and Methods

The diversity among indigenous peasant communities with regard to livelihood specialization justifies why it is important to compare several cases. How the historically marginalized ethno-class of indigenous peasant farmers perceives issues of agrarian reform and food sovereignty – and how that may vary by livelihood base – is the central

question of my research. Food sovereignty can be seen as the revival and latest phase of longstanding peasant struggles for true agrarian reform. It calls for land reform, water rights, and government investment in the small-farm sector alongside a more ecologically conscious development model that stops the spread of agrochemicals, imported seeds, monocropping and export-oriented production in the countryside. In comparing indigenous peasant communities in the rural highlands that grow different cash crops and supply different markets, we can see if their agricultural practices and perspectives differ from each other and from the food sovereignty discourse of national and international indigenous peasant organizations.

Cases

The three communities I selected to conduct research in are similar in many regards, but differ in one important way – livelihood specialization. They share a common history and current livelihood as small farmers, yet they each specialize in different products. These communities make good comparison cases because they are similar in terms of ethnicity, class, landholdings, age and gender composition, yet differ in the cash crops they grow and commodity chains they supply.

Brocano, Lacava, and Quiloa⁷ are all indigenous peasant communities in the rural highlands of Ecuador. Community members self-identify as *indígenas y campesinos*. They also refer to themselves as *gente del campo* (people of the countryside) and

⁷ These are pseudonyms. Not only do pseudonyms help protect the anonymity of these communities, they also help the reader remember which one is which since they are based on the crop each community specializes in: Brocano for broccoli, Quiloa for quinoa, and Lacava for *vaca* (cow).

pequeños productores (small producers). All three communities are of Quechua descent and bilingual in Spanish and Kichwa. Lacava is affiliated with *pueblo* Kayambi, and Quiloa and Brocano are affiliated with *pueblo* Puruhá. They share a particular style of dress that differs from urban mestizo Ecuadorians and even fellow rural, yet mestizo, peasants. This includes bowler hat with feather for both men and women, ponchos and pants for men, and long skirt, shawl, colorful belt and hair wrap for women. The long skirt, or *anaco*, looks different for women in different pueblos throughout the Andean countryside. The Puruhá women of Quiloa and Brocano wear full-length, narrow, black or dark blue skirts at all times, while the Kayambi women of Lacava wear more decorative, colorful, pleated, flared, calf-length skirts (when they go to town or church; for working in the fields they wear a shawl wrapped around their waste over sweatpants).

Thus, the participants in this study all come from the same historically marginalized ethno-class. They share similar histories of access to collective land titles through agrarian reform. Each community has since subdivided communal land into individual family household plots. The family plots have been further sub-divided through inheritance. Parents give both sons and daughters a small plot of land when they marry. For that reason, landholding size is difficult to measure because some respondents report their own individual holdings while others report the total family land which they all cultivate together. This number is further complicated by ownership of *páramo* forest land that is not for cultivation. Landholding size ranges from half an hectare to seven hectares, placing these indigenous peasants squarely in the category of small farmers.

Peasants are defined as (1) belonging to a subordinate class in society, (2) residing in rural communities, (3) carrying out agricultural production alongside any other income

generating activities, and (4) exploiting their own, family labor, rather than hiring workers (Bryceson 2000). By this definition, all three communities are made up of peasants. The income generating activities that peasants engage in can be wage work, sale of *artesanía* crafts, or sale of agricultural commodities. While some family members in these three communities do engage in wage work (through daily commute to the city, regional migration to larger cities, or international migration to Spain or the U.S.) or the sale of *artesanía*, all families also engage in the sale of agricultural commodities and most of their income is derived from agriculture.

According to the typology in De Janvry (1981), these small farmers are middle-peasants rather than lower-peasants. They are petty commodity producers instead of semi-proletarian wage laborers. One reason why these communities have been able to derive their livelihood from the sale of agriculture is their location in proximity to urban areas. Each community is located near a main road with easy bus access to town. According to Korovkin (1997a: 98), communities with better land, closer to urban centers, relied less on seasonal migration and were able to commercialize farm enterprises through small-scale family agriculture and livestock production.

While some members of the families in these communities have permanently migrated to the city, the community members who participated in this study remain stationed in the rural countryside with agrarian-based livelihoods. They sustain their livelihoods through subsistence and commercial agriculture and supply both local and export markets. Thirty years ago, all three communities looked the same: they engaged in the collective production of staple foodcrops. The communities then developed along

different paths; and now all three communities sell agricultural products in the market, but the cash crops they grow and the markets they supply vary.

Brocano farmers specialize in broccoli, Quiloa farmers specialize in quinoa, and Lacava farmers specialize in milk. In each, the small farmers grow the same commercial crops as their fellow community members. Besides broccoli, Brocano farmers grow other *hortalizas* (vegetables) like cauliflower, lettuce, carrots, onions, beets and cilantro. Besides quinoa, Quiloa farmers grow other grains like barley, wheat and habas (fava beans). Lacava farmers produce only milk for sale.

Quiloa farmers sell quinoa, barley, and wheat to local market intermediaries at the weekly plaza. They also export certified organic and Fair Trade quinoa to the U.S. and Europe through several non-profit development NGOs. Brocano farmers sell their vegetables to merchants who truck the produce directly to the wholesale market in Guayaquil, the largest city in Ecuador. Brocano farmers also export their broccoli through a national agribusiness firm that processes frozen broccoli florets for export to the U.S., Turkey, and Japan alongside other non-traditional export agriculture crops, like mangos. Dairy farmers in Lacava sell their milk to a national agribusiness firm that processes powdered milk, yogurt and cheese for domestic supermarket retail stores and export to Venezuela.

These three cases represent a variety of means by which small farming communities make their living off of agriculture. One grows a non-traditional crop that was introduced to the country during the neoliberal emphasis on export-oriented development; one grows a native grain that was recently revived because of changing consumer demand in the global North; and one grows a basic food necessity that had

previously been produced by large landowners before they turned their pastures into flower plantations to take advantage of high-value export agriculture. Brocano and Lacava supply national agribusiness firms while Quiloa supplies sustainable development NGOs. Broccoli and quinoa are primarily for export while milk is primarily for the domestic market. Milk is a staple food item consumed by most Ecuadorians, broccoli is a recently introduced specialty food item, and quinoa is an ancestral food staple that was marginalized, forgotten, and then recently revived.

These communities are not necessarily representative of all indigenous peasant communities in the highlands of Ecuador, but they represent the heterogeneity among indigenous peasant farmers who are small commodity producers and make their living off agriculture. To the extent that I can generalize about indigenous peasants in Ecuador, I am generalizing about those indigenous peasants who have become petty commodity producers and derive their livelihood from the sale of agriculture: middle peasants rather than semi-proletarian lower peasants. Reoccurring findings with regard to issues of food sovereignty throughout these three cases – by sake of their heterogeneity – are likely to be generalizable to the population of middle peasant indigenous farmers in the Ecuadorian highlands.

These indigenous peasant farmers are not located in only one area of Ecuador; I selected case communities from two different highland regions. Quiloa and Brocano are both located in the central highlands, in the province Chimborazo. They are both located in the same canton of Colta, within a half hour bus ride to the town Cajabamba and an hour bus ride to the city Riobamba. Lacava is located in the northern highland canton Cayambe in the province Pichincha. It is an hour bus ride away from the small city

Cayambe and three hours bus ride away from both Quito, the nation's capital, and Ibarra, the largest city in the northern highlands.

Chimborazo and Cayambe are good regions from which to select cases because they are densely populated with indigenous peasant communities. Two recent presidents of CONAIE have come from these two areas. Humberto Cholango is from Cayambe, from a *parroquia* neighboring Lacava. And Delfín Tenesaca is from Guamote, Chimborazo, the *parroquia* bordering Colta, where both Quiloa and Brocano are located. Moreover, Chimborazo is the province with the highest concentration of rural indigenous Ecuadorians (Cruz 1999). Rather than selecting three communities within this same province, I chose to compare indigenous peasants across two regions to increase generalizability and make sure that my findings were not just a product of regionally specific political economy.

My sampling strategy aimed to account for representativeness within and between communities. I established contact with Quiloa and Brocano through their producer cooperatives. After selecting quinoa and broccoli as two of my cases, I searched for producer communities through the internet and newspaper articles. Once I found the largest quinoa producer organization, I went to their office in Riobamba and asked the secretary to put me in touch with a farmer. She asked around that day and one member was willing to take me home and host me. After initial contact with Quiloa, I stayed in several other quinoa growing communities to make sure that Quiloa was representative of a typical quinoa growing community in Chimborazo. The broccoli producer cooperative is located inside the community of Brocano. I walked into the office, talked with the secretary and told her why I was there, and she took me right to the house of her cousin

who had extra space for me to stay. While others have followed suit, Brocano was the first community in the area to specialize in broccoli. Lacava is the largest dairy farming community in canton Cayambe. I was already familiar with the community from previous volunteer work in 2008 and field research in 2011. Even though phone numbers change, I took a bus to the community, knocked on the door, and my former host mom welcomed me with open arms. Although larger than neighboring communities, Lacava is representative of the local dynamic of combining dairy farming with wage employment in the nearby flower industry.

Within each community, I sought representativeness through convenience sampling. I chose not to employ snowball sampling because asking research subjects to put me in touch to other community members would limit the range of viewpoints. I did not ask my host families to connect me with interview respondents so that I could branch out from the tight-knit family networks. Instead, I approached any and all community members who were willing to talk to me.

Methods

To understand the practices and perspectives of indigenous peasant farmers, I conducted six months of field research in the rural highlands of Ecuador during the spring and summer of 2013. Field research consisted of participant observation and interviews in the communities; participant observation and informal conversation on bus rides; participant observation and informal conversations at local marketplaces during the weekly plaza; participant observation at *mercados mayoristas* (wholesale markets) in a number of cities; observation at producer cooperative offices inside and outside the

communities; participant observation at producer cooperative workshops and events; interviews with employees of organizations along commodity chains, such as CEOs, marketing directors, processing plant operators, technical assistance field operators, and secretaries; interviews with regional indigenous movement organization leadership; observation at indigenous movement political rallies; and observation at government festivals, such as the International Year of Quinoa celebration.

This dissertation draws mostly from interviews with community members in Brocano, Lacava and Quiloa. I collected 85 interviews with members of these communities: 21 residents of Brocano, 26 residents of Lacava and 38 residents of Quiloa. In each of these cases, I resided inside the community for a minimum of one month, living with families in their homes and shadowing community members in their daily activities. I asked them about what they grow, how they grow, what they eat, what they buy, where they sell, what they think of the markets they supply, agrochemicals, international trade, food sovereignty and the indigenous movement.

Many of these interviews took place alongside daily chores, such as washing clothes, peeling potatoes, plucking corn off the cob to feed chickens, or collecting tall grass to feed *cuyes* (guinea pigs). They also took place in the fields while harvesting quinoa, fumigating broccoli, milking cows, weeding vegetable gardens, or shoveling manure. Interviews were semi-structured and averaged 45 minutes in length; I went through an interview guide of questions but did not necessarily ask the questions in the same order every time. Specific questions varied depending on the community. Half, but not all interviews were tape-recorded. For those interviews I did not record, I sat down

and hand wrote detailed notes in my notebook immediately afterward. Sometimes I jotted down phrases and direct quotes in my notebook during conversations.

The age of respondents ranged from 20 to 75 years old. The most common respondents were 40-year-old women. This is partly due to my sampling strategy. To recruit people to be interviewed for my study, I walked through the community, greeting people as we passed each other on the road, and introducing myself as a researcher. Respondents skew female and middle-aged because young people and men were more likely to be in city for work or school during the day.

Under the gendered division of labor, women are responsible for most household chores, including agricultural production. Women work in the fields just as much as their male family members. Although women are primarily responsible for household domestic labor, they also participate in male-dominated activities such as inheriting land, planting commercial crops, and selling goods at the market. While it was more common to come across women, I nevertheless was able to interview a good number of men. Thirty-two interviewees were men, making up 34% of respondents in Quiloa, 38% in Brocano and 42% in Lacava.

In addition to interviews and participant observation inside the communities, I accompanied farmers to markets when they went to sell their products. I also spent hours on my own each week observing market interactions between farmers and intermediaries. Interviews and observations complemented each other because I was able to contextualize what farmers told me about their practices in the fields and at markets. I was able to experience first hand how difficult harvesting quinoa is; I smelled the strong

scents of the agrochemicals broccoli farmers apply; I saw local market intermediaries subtract a few pounds from the scale before they calculated how much to pay the farmer.

In addition to interviews with farmers in the three case communities, I interviewed 14 other indigenous peasant farmers that were members of other communities in the rural highlands. Sometimes this entailed coming across people as I walked through neighboring communities during the day to observe; sometimes I was invited to other communities by people I met through producer cooperatives or the elementary school I volunteered at; and in some cases I lived in other communities with family homestays for a few days. I did this to compare the practices and perspectives of indigenous peasants in other communities to the ones in my case communities.

I also interviewed 13 employees of organizations that work with indigenous peasant producers. These interviews gave me more information about the commodity chains that the farmers supply and the government programs that have assisted these producers in recent years. They also allowed me to contextualize some of the things farmers told me about their concerns with the urban, middle-class, white-mestizo composition of these organizations.

My positionality as a white, female American granted me easy access to people outside the communities. The urban, white-mestizo professionals that worked at producer organizations were willing and open to talk to me. Even though they knew I was living with indigenous peasant communities, they did not hesitate to reveal their biases and stereotypes about that population and the producers that supply their organizations.

My status as a *gringa* (white female Northerner) also helped me gain access to communities. It is not uncommon for foreigners to stay in rural communities for

volunteer work or cultural tourism. I was not the first foreigner to stay in any of the three case communities. Because of that, community members had pre-conceived notions of what it means to be a *gringa* in an indigenous community. Many people I talked to thought I could help them or expected something from me. Community leaders associated *gringas* with international development organizations and hoped I might be able to help secure them funding for their cooperative or connect them to a buyer in the U.S. Other respondents hinted – jokingly and otherwise – that I might be able to bring them back to the United States with me. They were very interested in my life in the U.S., and besides asking about my family, the most common question I received was how much my plane ticket between Ecuador and the U.S. cost.

To avoid deception, I was very clear that I was only there to gather information to write my dissertation and that I do not have connections with an importer or development agency. I assured them I had limited resources and no means to bring over anybody from there. Nevertheless, the different economic situation between myself and my research subjects was apparent. I was open and forthcoming, yet when asked about my income I felt compelled to minimize or contextualize the number given the fact that the average yearly income for some of my respondents was under one thousand dollars.

Observing their reactions to information I revealed about myself was useful to corroborate data I gathered during interviews. For example, I commonly received a look of surprise or even pity when I told them I live in an apartment complex without any access to land, and that I have to buy all of the food that I eat. My comparatively privileged position in global society no doubt filtered my interpretation of the practices and perspectives of my research subjects. In the following chapters, through detailed and

specific examples, I aim to back up my assertions with evidence that readers finds convincing as they form their own interpretations of the data and draw their own conclusions.

Throughout my career, I hope to counteract the power imbalance that occurred between myself and my research subjects, in which I gathered information that is useful to my professional trajectory without offering anything in return. I may do this through academia or activism; or at the very least, inspire others to make changes in the world that benefit indigenous peasants. In the meantime, I hope my debt to these communities was counterbalanced, in part, through the companionship and intercultural exchange my presence contributed.

CHAPTER THREE: PRODUCTION

Introduction

Peasant production has long been contrasted to capitalist farms. The former is associated with subsistence and family reproduction while the latter is associated with profit-maximizing behavior. This dichotomy pre-supposes that peasant farmers possess an array of attributes that identify them as a bounded, homogenous group, at risk of fading away in the face of modern, capitalist forces. These characteristics include simple, low-input technology, small ecological impact, and staple food production intended primarily for household consumption. The peasant-capitalist dichotomy maps on to traditional-modern binary in that peasants are a vestige of the traditional past while capitalist farmers are the modern present and future.

This chapter explores the production methods of indigenous peasant farmers in the three communities. Far from a simple, homogenous group, I describe the heterogeneity of production practices and interests. Despite a shared starting point, each group of peasants moved along a distinct trajectory and currently differ in their composition of “modern” and “traditional” features. All three communities transitioned away from subsistence-oriented production toward growing a cash crop; however, in doing so, their current production methods differ, as do their food self-sufficiency and perspectives on chemicals. Although their production practices differ, none of the peasant communities can be described as entirely traditional peasant or entirely modern capitalist. They each hold a mixture of features characteristic of each agrarian class category.

These distinct trajectories blur the supposedly straight line of agrarian modernization and call into question common assumptions in both sides of the peasant theory debate. First, I review the literature on peasant persistence and peasant disappearance, arguing that disappearance scholars must take consideration of the desire for peasant communities to hold onto traditional aspects of life, even as they modernize, while persistence scholars must acknowledge the effect of top-down forces enabling peasants to continue their agrarian way of life. Next, I describe the agricultural production practices and perspectives of each community. At the end of the chapter, I reconcile the useful aspects of each theory to speculate on the future of peasants in Latin America.

Food sovereignty discourse promotes agrarian reform under the justification that if peasants had more access to land and water, they would grow more food under sustainable practices. The findings of this chapter illustrate that comprehensive training in agro-ecological methods is necessary as well. It cannot be assumed that peasants will produce sustainably; agrochemicals are often necessary in order to secure a reliable yield and guarantee income. Peasants who are already dependent on chemical inputs will need training to learn sustainable methods and access to a market that values those methods. It cannot be assumed that peasants, even indigenous ones, value environmental sustainability over their livelihoods.

Facing a tension between the two, peasants in this study continue to apply chemicals despite known harm to themselves and their local ecologies. The one community that does practice sustainable methods was trained to do so in order to access a higher value organic-certified market. In order to achieve the environmental goals of

the food sovereignty movement, and lessen the environmental impact of the global food system, sustainable methods must be incentivized. To make meaningful change, peasants must see how agro-ecology works toward, not in tension with, their livelihood security.

Peasant Theory

The “Agrarian Question” asks what will happen when capitalism reaches the rural countryside: will peasants become modern capitalist farmers or maintain an alternative economic logic? This question debates the future of the peasantry in an era of capitalist development. Will peasants disappear into differentiated classes of capitalist farmers and proletariat wage laborers? Or will peasants persist as non-maximizing actors oriented towards social reproduction? Approaches to this question fall in two camps, referred to as peasant disappearance theory and peasant persistence theory (Araghi 1995).

Peasant disappearance theory, also known as de-peasantization or *decampesinistas*, provides a Marxist interpretation of the capitalist transformation. Since the nineteenth century, scholars like Karl Kautsky have argued that capitalism’s hold on agriculture is “smashing the old forms of production” (Akram-Lodhi and Kay 2009: 5). The new era of global capitalism, it has been argued in recent publications, “is contributing to processes that will ultimately undermine the livelihoods of the global peasantry and bring about, in Hobsbawm’s words, ‘the death of the peasantry’” (Akram-Lodhi and Kay 2009: 5).

Peasant disappearance theory portrays a crisis narrative in which the peasantry will disappear under the domination of the capitalist mode of production. Unable to compete with large, capitalist farmers, the peasant sector will come to serve as a cheap

reserve labor force (Bartra 1993). One way this disappearance takes place is through vertical integration with agro-industry (Feder 1977). With regard to contract farming with agribusiness, the literature overwhelmingly points to outcomes of land concentration and proletarianization (D. Murray and Hoppin 1992; White 1997; Singh 2002; Mannon 2005). For example, Murray and Hoppin (1992) describe a process by which smallholders lose land to debt. This happens when smallholders fail to meet import regulations because of the excessive application of agrochemicals recommended by the agribusiness exporters they contract with; and it has resulted in land concentration at the hands of largeholders and agribusiness firms in both Costa Rica and the Dominican Republic's fresh fruit and vegetable sectors.

Peasant disappearance through exploitation, debt, displacement, and proletarianization thus takes place in response to external forces. This account portrays smallholders as victims of the global market, giving agency to agribusiness firms and top-down standards. Peasant persistence theorists, by contrast, give more agency to smallholders' ability to adapt to and resist changes in the global economic structure, and piece together rural livelihoods through communal cooperation.

Peasant persistence theory extends from A.V. Chayanov's work on 1920s Russia. Peasants are argued to act under a distinct economic logic – not individual, profit-oriented, rational actors who seek to maximize production, but rather subsistence-oriented family labor farms. Chayanov's ([1925] 1986) translation inspired a wave of Latin American scholars, *campesinistas*, to interpret the persistence of peasant forms of organization despite the capitalist modernization of the countryside (Edelman 2005). “In spite of erudite affirmations of their disappearance, peasants are still a significant

segment of the population and today they are playing an important role in shaping the future of their societies and the process of integration into the globalized economy” argues Barkin (2004: 271).

Peasant persistence theorists describe peasants as “constantly adjusting to surrounding conditions” (Bryceson 2000: 2) in order to maintain rural agrarian way of life. The key to this process is adaptation and diversification. Income diversification through wage income or market integration is thus seen as an adaptive strategy in response to the economic hardships of rural livelihood security, rather than submission to capitalist domination.

Thus, peasant persistence theorists believe that peasants can exist alongside capitalist development. “Far from passive victims of capitalist expansion,” asserts Korovkin (1997b: 92), “indigenous peasants have been able to preserve and sometimes expand their household economies, blending their centuries-old agricultural practices with new market logic.” Although blending with market logic, a distinct “peasant logic” remains intact. These scholars argue that the alternative economic mode of peasants will continue to exist despite their increased integration into capitalist markets. Even if they derive income from wage labor and the sale of their products in the capitalist market, peasants will simultaneously carry on traditional production practices (Warman 1975).

Empirically, peasant persistence scholars point to behavior such as continued subsistence production and reciprocal labor exchange as evidence that small farming communities maintain traditional modes of production as peasants, not capitalist farmers or proletariat workers. According to Korovkin (1997b), indigenous peasants participate in the market without abandoning subsistence agriculture or communal institutions. Overall,

“increasingly diversified and anchored in family and community networks, peasant agriculture is displaying a remarkable resilience in the face of capitalist expansion” (Korovkin 1997b: 107).

For some peasant persistence scholars, this resilience is intentional resistance. Ryan Isakson (2009) asks the Agrarian Question about the effects of market expansion on the viability of peasant agriculture, and finds that income from market activities enables rural Guatemalans to reproduce the necessary conditions for peasant agriculture. Even though subsistence farming is not “economically rational,” explains Isakson, families continue to engage in the practice as valoration of peasant tradition and expression of “cultural distinction” (752). He argues that subsistence production of corn and beans is an intentional display of cultural resistance to market capitalism.

This resistance happens through bottom-up agency. In her study of melon export farmers in Mexico, Magdalena Borras (2000) argues against the top-down economic determinism of peasant disappearance theory by accounting for the role of human agency in the development process. She identifies local actors that initiated small farm links with export agribusiness from the bottom-up. At the same time, however, she critiques peasant persistence theory too, stating that it treats traditional peasant strategies “as remnants of the past and not as tools that are changing and adapting to new circumstances” (18).

Marygold Walsh-Dilley (2013) meets this call to acknowledge traditional techniques as strategic tools. In her study of quinoa export farmers in Bolivia, she shows that global capitalist market integration does not necessarily lead to complete modernization. She demonstrates how global market relations and traditional reciprocity can overlap. Traditional practices still exist as the *agentic* strategy through which farmers

carve out their insertion into the global economy. She argues that indigenous farmers *utilize* tradition, not as cultural resistance to markets, but to better insert themselves into export markets and improve their economic returns.

Under certain conditions, argues Walsh-Dilley, “rural people may turn to traditional and cooperative forms of exchange in order to access and exploit the opportunities afforded by global markets” (2013: 678). Her case study suggests that increasing integration into global capitalist systems “need not, as is often supposed, undermine the moral economy and can potentially invigorate it” (678). As a traditional production technology and alternative to mechanized planting, hand-planting through reciprocal labor exchange is utilized as a strategy to decrease input costs and increase yields (by retaining moisture in the soil).

These peasant theories present two alternative paths of agrarian development: (1) agentic, bottom-up, ecological, peasant persistence, and (2) a powerless, top-down, unsustainable peasant disappearance. The peasant persistence path is depicted as low-input, agro-ecological production for subsistence and market ends, through reciprocal labor exchange within a system of social solidarity and communal cooperation. The peasant disappearance path is depicted as maximizing output through modern agricultural technologies (hybrid seeds, irrigation, pesticides, chemical fertilizers, tractors) that deplete the soil, intensify the pesticide treadmill, and result in debt, land concentration, and class differentiation.

Rather than top-down exploitation and class differentiation leading peasants to turn into capitalist farmers or proletariat workers unless they assert their agency to reject modernization, I argue that agrarian development is not always a linear process. I build

off Walsh-Dilley's (2013) assertion that traditional forms of production or exchange can better insert smallholding peasants into the global economy. My findings demonstrate that market forces can indeed facilitate a reinvigoration of traditional production practices. This does not, however, necessarily take place as a bottom-up or communal effort. Utilizing traditional methods to secure global capitalist integration can be instigated by outside actors, through top-down processes. Thus, I identify a third, non-linear route that is top-down and ecological.

On the one hand, Marxist scholars point to the negative impact of agrarian capitalism on rural livelihoods and the environment. On the other hand, Altieri and Toledo (2011) and other *campesinistas* and food sovereignty scholars are optimistic about the potential of traditional peasant agriculture that has been able to hold onto sustainability despite global capitalism. In my cases it is not as simple as either portrayal: agrarian modernization is not as disastrous to peasant traditions as one side predicts, but at the same time, traditional agro-ecology hardly exists. All of the peasants in this study fall somewhere in the middle. They vary from each other along the spectrum of traditional agro-ecology to modern industrial capitalism, but at the same time these dichotomies are problematic because agro-ecology can be top-down from global market while what has come to be known as "traditional" involves modern methods such as industrial inputs.

To peasant disappearance scholars, I argue that capitalism's entry to the countryside does not always lead to differentiation within the peasant class to capitalist farmers on one side and rural proletariat on the other. Instead, relative equality in a community of family farmers continuing peasant agrarian traditions has been enabled in

large part by capitalist commodity chains that led each community to specialize in a cash crop. To pro-peasant scholars who romanticize the peasant traditions of the past, I urge them to consider the present reality of agrarian livelihoods as long influenced by agrarian modernization. In order to re-instate low-input subsistence-friendly production, it may be necessary to use external actors as a tool: to embrace rather than resist global economic forces.

The following three cases reveal that cash crop specializations can take different forms. Agricultural exports do not always lead to modern, intensive production methods – they can also stimulate more sustainable methods. In that sense, non-traditional exports can even be more ecological and ‘traditional’ than domestic cash crops. Even when cash crop specialization does entail unsustainable input-dependence, peasant producers hold onto a lifestyle that is distinct from capitalist farming because of their use of family labor, home gardens, food sharing, and communal traditions. Peasants persist even as notions of what it means to be peasant evolve over time.

Lacava

In the dairy community, families use almost all of their land for commercial dairy cow grazing. Only the small plots around their houses are used to farm vegetables and staple grains for home consumption. Families use up to 6.5 hectares of flat, irrigated land in the valley for grazing, while the un-irrigated gardens on their household lots in *centro civico* average one thousand square meters. In the last 20 years there has been an increase in cow pastures at the expense of other uses for land, such as growing staple food items like potatoes and barley.

The cows they use in Lacava are *vacas mejoradas* – artificially inseminated to increase milk production. The male sperm comes from Europe: from Barcelona or Holland. They then inject the sperm into the female cows. *Vacas mejoradas* have the capacity to produce 15-20 liters of milk a day. In Lacava, they also have an advanced system of irrigation. Water from rivers and streams running down the Cayambe volcano is funneled into irrigation ditches that feed sprinklers. On a rotation system, households take turns watering their pastures with sprinklers. This irrigation system does not extend to their food gardens, which rely on rainwater or occasionally *agua potable*, potable water from the spout.

Due to *herencia*, or the practice of inheriting land from one's parents at the time of marriage, individual household plots of farmland vary in size. However, as an extended unit, each family in the community owns 6.5 hectares of farmland. This land was allocated to community members in 1992 when they decided to sub-divide the communal land. Lacava used to be part of a church-owned hacienda. For that reason, land redistribution was more substantial than in other parts of the highlands, where haciendas were privately owned (Ramón Valarezo 1990).

According to local scholar, Luis Chicaísa, the director of IEDECA (*Instituto de Ecología y Desarrollo de las Comunidades Andinas*; Andean Community Ecology and Development Institute), the land in the community of Lacava has an aptitude for *ganadería*, dairy farming, because it is flat and they have access to water. Even though dairy farming has increased in recent years, they always had cows in the community. More than milk, cows were used for manure to fertilize foodcrops and as *yunta* to plow the land. According to Chicaísa, cows gradually replaced foodcrops because they require

less labor and little risk. By comparison, potatoes and other staple foodcrops are more labor intensive and high risk because they are susceptible to frost. Another reason for the decline in staple foodcrops, Chicaísa explains, is that the market price for grains dropped below the cost of production. So farmers did not even break even; they would lose money selling their harvest.

Recently, the price farmers receive for milk has increased dramatically. After the price of milk fell to 14 cents a liter in the late 1990s, the government stepped in to stabilize the price and establish *centros de acopio* for communities to sell milk collectively rather than individually. Right away, the price rose to 25 cents a liter. The *centros de acopio* shorten the supply chain, as communities sell collectively through the AGSO (*Asociación de Ganaderos de la Sierra y Oriente*; Highland and Amazonian Dairy Farming Association) rather than individually to middlemen. Eight years prior to my fieldwork, in 2005, the association of dairy farmers installed *tanques de enfriamiento*, refrigerated tanks, at the Lacava *centro de acopio* to increase the volume of milk sold. When Rafael Correa became president, he raised the minimum price of milk to 35 cents a liter. At that time, Chicaísa explains, everybody in the community went to the bank to take out loans to buy more cows and to build an irrigation system to reach their land from the main canal. Currently, the price of milk is 42 cents a liter.

From Foodcrops to Dairy Cows

As I sat with her in the front yard, next to a tarp of corn kernels drying in the sun, Gladís, a 55 year old mother of nine children, described what farming in the community was like 20 years ago: “There were less cows and more agriculture.” Now, she still grows

staple foodcrops but on a smaller scale than before. Every year she plants corn, beans, habas, barley, potatoes, quinoa, oca, and melloco on one hectare of land. She doesn't sell foodcrops anymore, she saves all the harvest for household consumption. "Corn for example, if I harvest a lot, I go on saving it. For *tostado*, for *moté*, for whatever. Nowadays we save all the grains: habas, corn, wheat, barley, all of them." In addition, she has a vegetable garden in her yard, where she plants chard, lettuce, cabbage, beets, spinach and cauliflower. However, the vast majority of her land is pasture. Of her 6.5 hectares, 5.5 are grass to feed her 16 cows.

While Gladís still dedicates one hectare of land to staple grains to eat and share with her children's families, others dedicate all of their land to dairy farming. "Before, I worked with cows, potatoes, barley and wheat. But now I dedicate myself mostly to the cows," says Sonia, a 44-year-old woman suffering from arthritis. She lives with her husband and 13-year-old adopted orphan daughter, and takes care of her two-year-old grandson while her eldest daughter works in the flower industry. In response to how much land she dedicates to cows versus foodcrops, she says "*Puro pastos tengo yo, ahorita* [Right now I only have pasture land]." For her 10 cows, she has 4 hectares of pastures, although not all in one place, but in several different lots around the community. Octavio also has 4 hectares of land – and all of it is pastures. A 33-year-old father of two young children, he dedicates all his land to cows because they are profitable: "For the profitability...at least for the time being. Obviously, just like the price rose, equally it can fall." Before, when he was a kid, and even as recent as 8 years ago, they grew a lot more foodcrops, but then the price of milk shot up. "*De pronto dejamos la agricultura cuando*

el precio de la leche subió [Immediately we left agriculture when the price of milk rose up].”

Hilario is a 62-year-old man who waved to me as he was herding sheep one afternoon, so we sat down on a cement block in his front porch to have a conversation. He explains the way it always works with farming in their village. “If one person plants it, everybody plants it. For example, now with milk: everybody dedicates themselves to milk.” He has worked with cows for as long as he can remember, but before they would plant wheat and barley in large quantities to sell and only had one or two cows to produce milk for household consumption. Now the roles are reversed and the entire community is dedicated to “cows, cows, cows.”

Cost of Production

Farmers in Lacava explain the transition from foodcrops to dairy in terms of the cost of production: both labor and inputs. It is less labor-intensive and requires fewer expensive inputs to produce milk than it does to produce foodcrops. Paired with the prices they receive for each, cows are much more profitable.

Why did everyone transition to more and more cows? I followed up with Hilario. “Because it is easier,” he explains. “You go in the morning to milk them, and that’s it. You leave them alone all day to eat and then you go again in the evening to deliver the milk to the tank by 6pm.” Octavio agrees. Everybody here dedicates themselves to milk because of the high prices and also because it only requires a few hours of work a day: “One-and-a-half hours in the morning, one-and-a-half in the afternoon. It is very mild

work.” Even for ailing Sonia, “it’s not much work. I’m with the cows in the morning and afternoon. I milk then during the day, give them water, and that’s it!”

One of the reasons Sonia doesn’t grow food on her land anymore is because the cultural practice of reciprocal labor exchange has changed. *Why don’t you plant food on the land you have for cows?* “*Porque ya no hay gente que ayude,*” she responded:

Because now there aren’t people to help out. It is only my husband and me. Before, neighbors would come, they would lend a hand, they would help us out. Now they don’t want to. If I pay \$8 dollars a day, \$5 dollars a day, *then* they want to help. But then we don’t make a profit. There used to be people who would lend a hand. During harvest, we would give them half a sack of barley or potatoes, and they would be content with that. But not now.

The reason Gladís doesn’t plant food in the land currently used as pastures is because foodcrops are more expensive to grow. “Other products are expensive to take care of. For example, planting potatoes, the fertilizer is expensive, the pesticides are expensive. One quintal of fertilizer is at least \$40.”

Sonia also points to the cost of inputs, including machinery. “The inputs became more expensive and so we stopped making a profit. The inputs for fumigating are very expensive. Same with tractors, and we don’t profit.” The tractor costs \$25 or \$30 per hour. One man in Lacava owns a tractor; otherwise it comes from the neighboring towns. She has trouble accessing the *trillador* to thresh the barley because the owner of the machine doesn’t want to drive all the way out there for a small quantity. Because of that, she stopped growing barley completely. “From then on, we continued planting only pasture, pasture, pasture.”

With dairy production, farmers do face some risk and high input costs, but on the whole, it is not as costly or labor-intensive as foodcrops. According to Sonia, it can be

expensive when cows get sick, or during the summer months when the cost of water goes up because of the drought. They also have to invest in the cost of fertilizer and *balanceado*, animal feed. Cows eat *balanceado* twice a day. They buy 6 *quintales* (100 pound sacks) of *balanceado* every two weeks, and each sack is \$24, so they spend \$300 a month on animal feed. However, her 10 cows bring in 120 liters of milk a day and \$8,000 liters a month. At 42 cents a liter, she brings in \$3,360 a month from the sale of milk – which more than covers the cost of animal feed.

Comparing the production costs of agriculture and dairy farming, Gladís explains that *balanceado* is a major cost, plus the medicine you have to give them when they get sick, “*pero no es tanto como la agricultura* [But it is not as much as agriculture].” Despite being more profitable and less risky than foodcrops, dairy production does not always make a profit, explains Sara. She says that if one of the cows gets sick, it is very expensive to treat, and she won’t make a profit that month.

The costs of dairy production include chemicals, *balanceado*, and vitamins for the cows, but the cost of agriculture is more, Gina assures me. She reflects on why there is less agriculture in the community nowadays: “People don’t plant much here anymore. It is because the tractors cost so much, and the fertilizers, and the chemicals, and because of climate change – because sometimes it rains too much and we can’t harvest, and it harms the plant.” Alviña also points to changes in the climate: because of unpredictable harvests and low market prices, people have moved away from agriculture, towards dairy cows.

Low market prices for foodcrops prompted many families to abandon them in favor of dairy cows. Sara’s response to why her family uses their 6.5 hectares to grow pastures instead of foodcrops is because “It is very difficult to go to the market and sell

because there is a lot of competition nowadays.” Miguel explains why foodcrops are not profitable: “When the market is very low, it doesn’t result in anything. Not from my labor, not from the fungicide...it doesn’t result.” “Here, when it is time for harvest, the price at the plaza drops. Right now, the price of potatoes is so low and the chemicals that we have to buy are so expensive. The fertilizer, the fungicides, all of it is expensive. The price we sell it for doesn’t cover it all: not the cost of tractors, nothing. For that reason, the people have decided it is better to dedicate ourselves to cows, cows, cows,” Hilario tells me.

Another reason Lacava community members prefer dairy farming is because it is a source of constant rather than seasonal income. They receive payment every two weeks, all year long. “Dairy farming is better because you milk daily and get paid every 15 days,” explains Victoria. Whereas, if she plants potatoes, she doesn’t get paid for 7 months – and that’s only *if* there is a good market price. Fertilizer always costs \$50 a quintal, whereas the price of a quintal of potatoes can drop to \$1. She has even sold a quintal of potatoes for as low as 50 cents! “Before, we planted agriculture, but the prices didn’t improve and the cost of inputs never went down. I planted potatoes but...it didn’t make sense to keep planting it. To buy one quintal of fertilizer, we would have to sell so many quintals of potatoes. We wouldn’t make a profit, so I let it go. Now I don’t plant potatoes, now we only dedicate ourselves to dairy farming.”

The combination of high production costs and low market price for foodcrops with comparatively low production costs and high market price milk explains the transformation of community landscape from tall stalks of corn, wheat, barley, habas and potatoes to terrain after terrain of flat green pastures. Foodcrops are currently relegated to

small garden plots whose harvest is for household consumption, not commercial sale. Many, but not all, of the households in Lacava continue to grow food for self-consumption.

Household Gardens

While some Lacava community members have stopped growing food altogether because of time, labor and expenses, the majority continue household food production in one form or another. Among those who grow, two distinct narratives of tradition and taste emerged from respondents. Growing food for self-consumption is a way to protect against pricey and unpalatable food from the market; plus, it is a practice they have always done and continue to do to carry out tradition. Others justify the small amount of land they dedicate to food by emphasizing the importance of commercial production.

Miguel is a 30-year-old community leader who lives with his wife and two kids. He justifies not using more land to grow food in terms of the amount of land necessary to raise dairy cows. “Look, the problem is this: in order to produce more milk, the cows need to be well-fed, that is how they produce milk. With less food, they produce less milk. So we need space for the cows. If I planted a hectare of vegetables, then there wouldn’t be space for the 10 cows that I have.” Nevertheless, they do still grow vegetables at the house. They have 2 hectares of pasture land and 2 *mil metros cuadrados* (2,000 square meters) of a garden plot, where they plant potatoes, corn, habas, melloco, oca, carrots, cilantro, and beets. But their food harvest is very small, only about 30 pounds of food, he adds.

42-year-old Carmen lives with her husband and teenage son (her other son attends university in Quito). They raise 12 cows on 3 hectares of pasture land. At the house, they have a very small vegetable garden. Their yard is sizable, but four-fifths of it was grass on which a *vacuna* [baby cow] was grazing. Why don't they use more land to grow food? "Because cows are more profitable." Plus, she adds, "es duro y trabajoso [it is difficult and labor-intensive]" to grow agriculture, even a small garden plot.

Embra hardly grows any food anymore. She only has *mil metros cuadrados* (1000 square meters) around the house, and she currently uses it all to grow tall grass to feed her *cuyes* (guinea pigs). Sometimes she will plant a little food – 10 pounds of potatoes, 2 pounds of corn – but she mostly dedicates her land to grass because she sells the cuy to people inside and outside the community to eat during *fiestas*. She used to grow more food – corn, potatoes and habas to fill the entire plot – but switched to cuy because agriculture is too labor-intensive and does not get a good price. "To plant, it is necessary to work *a lot*. It is labor-intensive to fumigate, to apply manure, to water with *agua potable* (tap water)." Therefore she raises cuy because it is less work and they get a good price.

Juan also dedicates his entire yard to tall grass, but does not intend to sell the cuy he raises. It is only for family purposes during festival time. He runs the main store in the center of the community with his wife and two little kids and says the reason he doesn't cultivate his yard with anything other than grass to feed his cuy is because he has no time. If he had the time, however, he would like to grow carrots and onions "because that is what we use most in all of our meals."

70-year-old Soila and I sat on a pile of rocks, watching a soccer game across the street on a Sunday afternoon. Her family has 3 hectares of land, which they use for cows not crops. Why don't they grow more food on the land they have? "Because cows need a lot of grass," she replies matter-of-factly. And also, "the cows give us more money." There is very little money in agriculture: "sometimes the barley is cheap, the potatoes are cheap, and we don't get any money." Income from the cows is more important than using that same land to grow food, because with the money they receive they can buy enough food to feed themselves. This rationale is not expected from indigenous peasants in general. It is even less expected from an elderly woman because women, especially older ones, are gendered to be more traditional.

Tradition

Others value homegrown food more than food that can be purchased in the market. Hilario continues to grow a substantial amount of food to feed himself and his family. "*Sembramos choclitos, habitas, papitas, ocitas – todo lo que es de aqui*" [We plant all the crops from here: corn, habas, potatoes, ocas]. Instead of selling the surplus, he saves it for his children. "But I don't sell them. I can't sell them. Right now the market price for potatoes is \$5 a quintal. Why would I sell my potatoes for \$5? It is better to eat them with my family. I only plant for family consumption." By family consumption, Hilario is referring to he and his wife, but also to his children that live in the community with families of their own, and his children that have moved out of the community. "I have 8 kids. I divide the harvest up for everyone, even the ones that live in Quito. They live only off purchased food, so we always send them with food." In this statement,

Hilario reveals a bias that most rural community members in the Andean countryside have towards living in the city: the absence of land to grow your own food and the dependence on purchasing food at the market.

Gina continues to value household food production – a tradition she carries on to honor the memory of her deceased father. Gina lives with her elderly mom and young daughter. As we sat in her kitchen peeling potatoes, she explained to me that she still plants foodcrops on half of her 6.5 hectares of land. Only 3 hectares are dedicated to pastures for her 7 cows. She does this in memory of her father, who taught her how to farm as well as the importance of growing food for the family. Because of that, nearly all of the food they eat they grow themselves; very little is purchased. “If I dedicated all my land to one thing, I would have to buy more food, and that is not good. In contrast, if I plant a little of everything, I can consume what I produce myself.”

Even though foodcrops are important to Gina, she wouldn't go as far as giving up dairy farming to grow only foodcrops on all her land. “Because it is too risky. Sometimes it rains, sometimes it doesn't. Sometimes it hails. The weather is very unpredictable these days. Before, when we wanted it (during planting season), it would rain. When we didn't want it (during harvest season), it wouldn't rain. The climate is changing. Just yesterday, yesterday morning, it hailed substantially. And so we lost some of the crops – barley and potatoes too, we lost a lot. Whereas with milk, we didn't lose any. But even so we always plant.”

Flavio emphasizes the importance of growing food for household consumption in terms of custom and cost. “We grew up working in the fields, trying to get our own food from our own land. That has been the custom my whole life.” He also mentions it is

cheaper to grow your own food. “\$2 only buys you 8 or 10 *choclos* [ears of corn].

Whereas, for two weeks after harvest there is “*bastante bastante comer* [lots and lots to eat]. Even though there are production costs, it is still cheaper to grow your own than to buy food, Flavio assures me.

Carlos is a young 25-year-old man who recently moved back to the community from Quito after his mom died. He took over her garden and grows carrots, beets, cauliflower, lettuce, chard and radishes. He speaks of the importance of growing food for a variety of reasons. For one, he enjoys doing it; he likes to be outside and active during the day. But also, his late mother taught him the value in doing so, and he is carrying on the land in her memory. In addition, Carlos talks about homegrown food as being healthier and cheaper.

Other people in the community who continue to grow food are not as sure why they do it. After initial hesitation, others point to obligation and tradition. Rubia’s property is only 1000 meters, but she still cultivates food behind the house in a 600 meter garden, where she plants potatoes, habas, corn, a variety of *hortalizas*, and herbs for tea. She does this during her limited free time in the evenings and on Sundays, after she returns home from her job at a flower plantation. Why is it important for her to grow food? “I don’t know, it is an obligation to have a garden. If you have the space to grow, don’t leave it abandoned.”

Gerónimo and his wife have a beautiful 800 meter garden next to their house, cultivated with carrots, cabbage, chard, potatoes, habas and corn. When I asked them why it is important for them to plant food, they both looked at me blankly as if the question is obvious. So I described how in the U.S. most yards are just grass, not planted with food.

Finally the wife elaborates that they grow food so they don't have to buy it, and also for their health. Then she simply shrugs and says "we are *accustomed* to planting food."

Taste

A number of farmers in Lacava stress the importance of growing at least some of your own food because of taste and also the use of chemicals. "Buying food isn't the same, especially with barley rice." While most respondents told me they buy barley rice now, Gina continues to make her own: planting, harvesting, and milling the barley. The barley rice they make is better than what they can buy in the market because "my mom cleans it really well, and dries it. Then she toasts it and grinds it herself. By contrast, what they sell in the market isn't toasted first, it is raw, and it doesn't taste the same."

Gina also states that it is better to grow your own vegetables than buy them at the market "because it is healthier. Because nowadays what you consume from the market comes with *chemicals* (she says in a voice of disgust). And it is not the same – the flavor is different." *And what you grow yourself doesn't have chemicals?* "Not as much as in the market. Yes, but not in excess."

A similar discourse of chemicals and taste is put forth by others in Lacava (and other communities). Sonia thinks it would be better to use more land to grow food because "it is our own land, it is our own grain that we cultivate, and we don't put many chemical inputs. Sometimes we let the seed grow without fumigating at all, and it is more tasty. When we don't have potatoes of our own, we'll buy some. But then they are not as tasty as the ones from our own land. That's how it is for potatoes, habas, peas, all of it. Planting and harvesting it myself, it is tastier." Sara responds that "it is better to use land

to eat because it is from here and we know that it doesn't have chemicals. And the food is more flavorful that way. Whereas if I bring it home from the market, and I'm already accustomed to eating from here, it is unappetizing, it doesn't taste good."

Ofelia says her vegetables are better than the ones sold in the market. "In the market they come fumigated, they are treated, more inputs are applied. That's how they enlarge them. But mine come from manure, a little irrigation, and weeding by hand, that's all." That is why it is a shame some people in the community leave their yards uncultivated, she adds. "In my opinion, it's bad that they go to the market to buy all their food because it is fumigated, treated."

Elva concurs that it is better to cultivate on one's own land because "in other places they fumigate the carrots, the onions are fumigated, and cabbage is the same. By contrast, when one plants their own, they don't fumigate. It grows like this, with only a little water. Carrots, when they are cultivated this way, are so sweet. Whereas purchased carrots come with a lot of chemicals and they are not as sweet. It is totally different." Like others, she articulates the comparison between purchased and homegrown vegetables in terms of taste and chemicals.

The Question of Chemicals

While Lacava community members are critical of chemicals that are applied to the food available at the local market, they still use chemicals in dairy production and some even continue to apply fertilizers and pesticides to their household gardens. Chemicals are not a black and white issue; there are gradations. It is okay sometimes but not others. A little is okay, "but not in excess," as Gina said above.

Even though chemical inputs are used in dairy production, their application is infrequent. They fumigate twice a year: once every six months. Comparatively, dairy production is not as chemical-intensive as other cash crops, especially vegetables.

Nevertheless, dairy farming is “*puro químico*” according to Hilario. They use chemicals “for the grass and also for the cows, so they produce more milk,” he says, referring to injections for artificial insemination and vaccinations. “With all of this, how is the milk not going to be contaminated?,” he asks. In his eyes, milk production is very different from how it was when he was a kid. Before, when he was a kid, they would spray milk right into a cup and drink it straight from the cow. Now they always boil it before consuming it.

Not just with dairy production but also with agriculture, the application of chemical inputs has increased from the past. Hilario told me about how him and his friends talk about the dependency on agrochemicals and how different it is from when they were growing up. “In our days, we produced without anything. And now, if you don’t apply chemicals to the potato, it won’t produce. Now it is accustomed [Ya se acostumbró].”

Many other community members talk about the use of agrochemicals similarly in terms of dependence. *Do you use chemicals on your foodcrops?* “Yes, because if I don’t treat them the worms come. You have to treat them. Potatoes are what I treat the most” says Gladís. She compares this to the past: “We hardly treated anything with chemicals. And we produced great potatoes. Now, if you don’t treat them, they won’t produce. I don’t know why. Right there behind my house I planted a few potatoes and I didn’t treat

them, not once. And now they are worthless, they are full of worms!” [*Ahorita no vale para nada. Está llenito de gusanos!*].

“Before, from what I can remember, people never fumigated, never. It was all natural. I remember that my grandparents planted like that.” reminisces Sonia. “Then people started using more and more inputs, and it continues today.” When she was a teenager in the early 1980s, she says, nobody in the community used chemicals in their dairy or food production. Then everybody started to apply chemicals on all their products.

In addition to dependence, other family members add labor and profit as important factors as well. Embra has always used chemicals in production: “if you don’t apply chemicals, it won’t produce.” But there are downsides too, of course. Not only are fungicide and fertilizer expensive, she explains, it is also tiresome to apply fertilizer and fumigate. “It is laborious,” she tells me. Victoria uses chemicals in dairy farming and on her agricultural products. She explains, “If I don’t use chemicals, they won’t produce, and I have to produce. Sure it will produce a little, like this [gestures with her hand], but that’s all, and it doesn’t make a profit. So I always use inputs: fertilizers, pesticides... In order to earn a little you always have to invest.”

Most families rely on a mix of chemical and organic production methods. Many families still use pesticides on their household plots of potatoes, and some families still use them on habas and barley. Gladis only uses chemicals on potatoes, habas and barley, not on other grains or her vegetable garden. And she uses natural manure, from her own sheep, to fertilize her crops. Sonia applies chemical fertilizer only on potatoes, and natural fertilizer (manure from the chickens or cuy) on the rest of her garden. Sometimes

they even make their own mixture out of garlic to treat the worms. Pulisa uses manure from her own small animals, like cuy and chickens, as well as plant waste/green compost like banana peels. However she uses chemical inputs also. “Not too much chemicals, equal amount organic inputs.” She uses different fertilizers depending on the product. They save seeds to replant the next cycle, never buying seeds. And they rotate the location of their crops to improve the health and fertility of the soil.

Flavio uses a few pesticides on their potatoes and habas. “Yes, but very little, and only once,” do they fumigate their plants. He lists the *plagas* that affect each crop and which chemical treats which one. Fertilizer, though, is all organic; they fertilize with chicken poop and green waste compost (potato peels, corn husk). Miguel says they buy the chemicals at a store in Cayambe and use a *bomba de muchila* backpack pump to apply them. “Yes we fumigate, but minimally... whenever leaves are filled with bugs.” Otherwise he uses natural pest repellants like garlic. “With that [garlic], we use it every time we see mosquitos. That doesn’t harm humans or the plant.” Miguel continues to say “in order to feed ourselves well, we have to plant. And sometimes we cultivate naturally here because it is better for human consumption. But that requires taking better care of the plant. You don’t apply a lot of chemicals, you care for it well, and it comes out better. Whereas, over there, in places where they plant large quantities, they engorge the grain with the force of the chemicals and fungicides.”

Octavio also compares large-scale and small-scale production. “Logically, it is good to produce here and consume here, because then we can get products more...I wouldn’t say natural but a little more controlled than what you can buy from other places that is made with chemicals and everything else. Here at home, for human consumption,

when we plant potatoes, we only fumigate them one time. If one plants 2 or 3 hectares of potatoes, it is obligatory to fumigate 4, 5, 6 times to be sure not to lose the cultivation and be able sell the result.”

Those families who farm household gardens without chemical inputs do so for reasons of taste and cost: organic vegetables have a better flavor and inputs are expensive. Since they are not selling the output, there is no need for the expense. For Carmen, there are no production costs for her *huerto familiar*, family garden. She does not use pesticides on the small row of potatoes she grows because it is cheaper not to. If she grew more potatoes, she would use pesticides, because she would have more to lose. This sentiment is very similar to Carlos. When I ask him if it is expensive to grow food because of the cost of inputs, he responded “In large quantities, yes it can be. Obviously I would apply *remedios* if I didn’t want to lose a tremendous harvest. But if I plant only a little, and I lose the crop to frost or something, it doesn’t matter. Only if it was a sizable crop that I lost to frost, then I would lose money.”

Some farm organically because of the workshops that they have received recently from engineers that come into their community and teach organic methods – telling them it is better for the soil and their health. Sara doesn’t use chemicals on her household plot because 5 or 6 years ago she went to a workshop where an engineer told them that chemicals are bad, so now she doesn’t use purchased fertilizer or pesticides. And she’s happy with her new organic system: “*es bonita esa desarolla*”: she uses manure from her cuy and also food waste like banana peels and other “*deshechos de la cocina*” to fertilize the garden.

Interestingly, Lacava community members explain the importance of organic methods more in terms of human health and the taste of food than in terms of environmental protection, mother nature, or the environment for the environment's sake. Again and again, community members contrast what one grows oneself as being healthier to the produce purchased at the market that is grown by large farmers. Diana assures me "It's good to cultivate because if I cultivate myself, I don't fumigate much and it is healthier. It's a shame that I don't have more land to cultivate, and so I have to buy food." Rubia doesn't use any chemicals on her garden plot "Because my husband says no, it is healthier not to." Cristofer says "It is important to cultivate and eat that which we produce ourselves. It is important to grow food that is for us to eat here, within the community, so that we don't have to buy food." *Why?* "Because it is healthier." When he says healthier, he does not mean more nutritious compared to processed food, because when community members shop at the market they buy the same foods they are used to eating, like barley and potatoes. So the comparative healthfulness of homegrown food has to do with the production process and the chemicals applied.

Community members speak differently about chemicals depending on whether it is intended for commercial production or household consumption. There seems to be guilt and shame around consuming chemicals, moreso than producing with chemicals. Gerónimo and his wife don't plant with chemicals, they never fumigate, and only use fertilizer from their own cuy and chickens. Why not? "For our health; it scares us," explains the wife. "Sometimes the worms eat up the cabbage, but what can you do?" she asks rhetorically. However, they do use chemicals in dairy production, and Gerónimo has applied chemicals for years in his job on a flower plantation. Like many of their

neighbors, they are afraid of eating food grown with chemicals, but applying it for commercial production is okay, it is a necessary evil.

Brocano

Over the same time period, Brocano followed a similar trend as Lacava – from subsistence and commercial production of staple foodcrops to commercial production of a higher valued cash crop. Given the small size of landholdings in Brocano, which average 1 hectare, dairy farming was not a viable direction. Their small plots, however, are on flat valley land with access to irrigation water. This gave them an advantage not held by the hundreds of other indigenous peasant communities that are high up the mountainside, farming steep slopes without access to irrigation. Thus, the entire community of Brocano began to grow labor- and water-intensive crops that are valuable in both the national and international market – they began to grow *hortalizas*, vegetables. *Hortaliza* production involves less monoculture than dairy farming, but more agrochemical and imported inputs.

In the early 1990s, Brocano community members began to grow carrots and onions alongside traditional food staples – potatoes, barley, corn, wheat, and habas. Carrots and onions received a better price in the local market because there was urban consumer demand for them, and because few rural communities had the means to grow them in large volume. Ten years later, in the early 2000s, Brocano farmers began to grow broccoli for export through an agribusiness firm. Currently, Brocano farmers grow a wide variety of vegetables for export and national consumption. Yet, very few community

members continue to grow staple foodcrops. If they do, it is on un-irrigated land high up the hillside.

Plots of irrigated valley land are dedicated to commercial vegetable production that is highly chemical-intensive. In this section, I will describe the modern production methods, perspectives on chemicals, and shifts in diet and food self-sufficiency experienced by Brocano community members.

Modern Production Methods

Walking down the paved road of Brocano, you see plot after plot of *hortalizas*. These vegetables are planted in uniform rows inside the rectangle plots that extend from the road in either direction. The majority of these plots are planted with broccoli. Remaining plots are planted with other *hortalizas* intended for sale in the national market: cauliflower, lettuce, cabbage, cilantro, radishes, beets, carrots, and onions.

Of the four to six plots that each household has cultivated, half of them are broccoli. Brocano farmers do not grow broccoli as a monoculture, planting it in the same plot of land cycle after cycle. Instead, they rotate broccoli with the other *hortalizas*. However, while they plant carrots, beets, or lettuce intermittently, they continuously plant broccoli in at least one of the plots. At no time throughout the year is broccoli not in the process of being sowed, cultivated or harvested by each family. For example, Teresa has six plots of land; she currently grows broccoli in three of them, and onion, cilantro and lettuce in the other three. Victor has four plots; three of the plots alternate between all the other *hortalizas*, but one of the four plots always has broccoli. “*Variamos, pero nunca perdimos el brócoli,*” he tells me: “We vary [the crops], but never lose broccoli.”

I asked Alicia which crop she likes to grow the best and she told me broccoli is her favorite because it grows the fastest. Broccoli takes at most three months to grow while the other *hortalizas* take three to four months. Brocano farmers get at least three, sometimes up to four crop cycles each year. The quick production cycle is something that came up again and again. Brocano farmers value this about vegetables, especially in comparison to the six to nine month cycles of staple foodcrops.

After each harvest, Brocano farmers do not allot a *descansa* (rest period) or *barbecho* (rotation of fallow land) to let the nutrients regenerate in the soil. Rather, they let the land rest at most 15 days before they prepare the soil for planting the next crop cycle. It depends on the family, Esteban tells me; some people do not even wait a few weeks, “they hire the tractor for the very next day.” Traditional rest period after harvest is three months. During that time, it is customary to plant native grasses to improve the fertility of the soil. *Barbecho* is the practice of leaving one of the plots in rotation fallow for the cycle – again, in order to improve soil fertility. There are no fallow plots in Brocano; the entire surface area of valley land is covered with rows and rows vegetables.

To plant broccoli and other *hortalizas*, Brocano farmers do not save seeds from the last harvest. Before, they would plant onions and carrots by cutting them in half and putting them back into the soil to grow. Now they purchase seeds to plant carrots, beets and cilantro. All the other *hortalizas* – broccoli, onion, lettuce, cauliflower, and cabbage – come as *plantulas* (seedlings). Seedlings are purchased in plastic containers stacked in crates from agricultural supply stores. Recently, the community has constructed a few greenhouses to germinate the hybrid seeds into *plantulas*. The hybrid broccoli seeds come in a cylinder container, imported from Brazil, with multiple languages printed on

the label. “It doesn’t say anything like Made in Ecuador,” Alma tells me: “Because I’ve seen the tins. According to what I’ve seen, the label comes in three languages. From what I see, they are imported.” These seeds are germinated with chemicals and irrigation through a sprinkler system in the greenhouse before they are sold to the surrounding community members.

Seedlings are planted into the ground by hand into neat and uniform elevated round mounds. At the start of a new cycle, farmers rent tractors to prepare the soil. After the soil is upturned, farmers apply chicken manure that is not from their own chickens, but purchased from agricultural supply stores. Since there are few farm animals in the community, all fertilizer – whether chemical or natural – is purchased. Organic fertilizer comes by the truckload from other indigenous communities further up the mountainside: communities “without irrigation.” Another machine then plows the rows. This practice used to be performed by *yunta*, a cow-lead plow.

Whether planting, fumigating, or harvesting, the fields are filled with mostly women. They dress in the long skirts (*anaco*) and feathered bowler hats that have come to signify indigenous identity. In addition, they also wear rubber boots and plastic yellow and blue backpacks. These containers hold *líqida*, the chemicals they use to spray their fields. Pesticides are applied three times throughout the production cycle. Since each production cycle lasts about three months, they apply pesticides once a month on each of their plots. The last round of spraying happens 15 days before *cosecha* (harvest). To fumigate, they mix together chemicals from three different bottles of *líqida*, which they purchase from one of two input stores located in the community.

Brocano farmers work in their fields themselves and with their family, but some also hire *peones*, or day laborers. Extended family and neighbors do help each other out during planting and harvest, but given the large number of plots and quick production cycle, oftentimes relatives are not available for reciprocal labor exchange. Day laborers live outside the area, in poorer communities further out in the countryside, up steep hillsides with not as much opportunity for commercial agricultural production themselves. Brocano farmers hire day laborers from the pool of *peones* that wait under the bridge in the nearby town. Day laborers work from 6am to 4pm; they are paid ten dollars for the day, plus lunch, and a mid-morning snack of bread and soda.

With so many inputs – labor, fertilizer, pesticides, seedlings, tractors – the cost of production is high, and sometimes they barely break even. Farmers estimate that the cost of production averages \$300 per cycle. They have to buy *plantulas*, pay for the tractors, pay for *peones*, buy *abono* (fertilizer) which costs \$20 each time, and buy *liquida* which costs \$18 each time they fumigate.

The Question of Chemicals

Every day, a number of people throughout the community walk back and forth down every row of their plot, without any protective gear, spaying chemicals from the appendage hanging down from their fumigation backpacks (*bombas de fumigación*). One day, I shadowed an old man and his wife during this process. He took out two bottles of *liquida* from the agrochemical store, and mixed a few capfuls of each with water from the irrigation canal running alongside the field. I backed away during this step, facing the other direction so I would not inhale the fumes, but the smell of chemicals was so strong

that it made me lightheaded from a few yards away. “It is very important to fumigate with *liquida*,” the old man told me, “otherwise the harvest will be full of worms.”

Brocano farmers fumigate in their regular clothes, without gloves, mask, or plastic yellow jacket that is required of them in order for the broccoli cooperative to maintain their GlobalGAP (Good Agricultural Practices) certification. The only protection they do wear is rubber boots, although that is standard attire for rural peasants, not just those who apply chemicals.

Just as the old man did, Brocano farmers consistently justify their use of harsh agrochemicals by pointing to what the harvest would be like if they did not fumigate. Sofia, a middle-aged broccoli grower, tells me that fumigating is tiresome on her arms. It makes her sick. She always gets a cold after fumigating, and sometimes a fever. But if they don’t do it, she says, the crops won’t be good, won’t be marketable. They would take longer to grow and wouldn’t be as dense.

At this point, the community has been fumigating for so long that younger members do not remember the way it used to be. All they know is fumigating. It has become tradition. Antonia says that fumigating is dangerous and she doesn’t like to do it. They don’t ever wear protective gear, she tells me, then laughs sheepishly. She knows how dangerous it is; she knows they should wear protective clothing, but they are “not accustomed to” do it that way. Since she was a kid, 27-year-old Antonia tells me, she has been around the fields watching her parents fumigate without protective gear.

During an interview with Beatríz, a young mom breastfeeding her baby while sitting on a tree stump along the main road and watching her sister in the field, I asked “Do you like to fumigate?” She responded “Yes.”

Why?

Because it's, it's our work: fumigating, weeding.

When you fumigate, is it organic or chemical?

Here, for the large part, it's chemicals. Organic, no, we almost never use organic fumigation.

Why do you use chemicals?

Because they say it makes good product, because we are taught to work with chemicals.

Who teaches you this?

Our parents. They have always known, still know, how to work that way.

However, Beatriz also said it would be better if they still produced organically because “we are already experiencing sickness.” Leonardo, a college student at the university in Riobamba who lives at home with his family, is aware of the dangers of chemicals and the benefits of sustainable production. “They say that agriculture without chemicals is good, with animal manure for the soil, to fortify the soil. We, the youth in this era, we are conscientious of this. But our parents are not conscientious – they fumigate without protecting themselves.” Nevertheless, he does not think the people of Brocano will stop using chemicals anytime in the near future:

No, I don't think so, never. Because here is the community that applies the most chemicals to its crops. People want the crops to come out better and better. For that reason, they apply more chemicals, they want to harvest more product, and I don't think they will stop using. It's for life. They won't stop using chemicals, not ever.

Most Brocano farmers are aware of the negative consequences to human health and the health of the soil, but continue forward along the same path because they need to make a living for themselves and their families. In response to the question *In your opinion, is using chemicals a good thing?* Esteban says: “Listen, you have to understand, it's a point of equilibrium. For me, as a farmer, it's good. But for health, it's not good. As a farmer, because that is my income, my livelihood, that from which I hope to make

money, for me chemicals are good, from the side of a farmer. But on the other hand, for my health, it's not good."

Alma shares her fears about the reality of intensive farming techniques in the long run:

When we fumigate, we are poisoning ourselves; when we fumigate the plants we are poisoning the air and the ground, we are poisoning both. But necessity obligates us to fumigate. If we don't fumigate, we don't produce. There is no choice, we have to fumigate, we have to treat the plants.
Are there people in the community that think organic production is better?
 Now it is not possible to go back to the way it was before, to the natural way, because the land has grown accustomed to the chemicals. I don't know how many years we would need to return to organic soil. I don't know if it would take years or if the land will ever return to the way it was. Only chemicals, chemicals; we would need a lot of time to return to organic. Before, a plot that we planted with 7000 broccoli seedlings brought back 3200 or 3500 kilos of broccoli. Now, it only reaches a maximum of 2000 kilos. It is tired, the land; it is tired.
Are you afraid of losing more production?
 They say, a few engineers have said that after 10 years, the soil is not going to be good for anything. And that is when the price of crops will climb up high, when the soil is worthless.

Ironically, it was also engineers that introduced agrochemicals to the community in the first place. In 1992, when the canal was built and Brocano began to receive irrigation water, *casas comerciales* (agricultural supply warehouses), sent technicians to the community with onion and carrot seeds. They taught them how to apply agrochemicals to the new crops. "These factories sent the engineers to us, to the countryside. They arrived to introduce how to apply fungicides, and all chemicals, to the plants. They taught us how. Now I am 42 years old and I work only with chemicals. And, in turn, we are unfamiliar with organic," Alma explains.

Like Alma, Antonia knows that chemicals are bad for the soil: "*ya no produce como antes, ya no cosecha como antes*" [now it doesn't grow like before, now it doesn't

harvest like before] she tells me. From the same plot of land, they used to get 180 or 200 sacks of onion; now, they only get 80 sacks. There is a dramatic decline in output because they are overusing the soil: “the soil is tired, it needs to rest.”

On the other hand, some other community members are not concerned about the long-term health consequences of chemical use. Lorenzo, a religious leader in the community, says he isn’t scared about developing cancer because of all the chemicals they use: he leaves it up to God to decide his future. Similarly, Alicia, a 25-year-old mother washing clothes while we talked, responded to my question *Are you afraid of getting sick after fumigating?* by saying: “nobody knows about sickness, only our father God knows why people get sick. Today I am healthy. Tomorrow sickness could get me – we don’t know. Only God knows.”

Imported Inputs

Most community members in Brocano are aware that inputs like agrochemicals and seeds are imported from other countries. One morning I was waiting in line to buy an avocado at the little store on the main road through the community, when an older man came up and asked me where I was from. “Oh California! Where the onions come from,” he exclaimed. At first I thought he meant we grow a lot of onions in California, but then he said that the onion seeds they grow come from California.

Similarly, Mariella explained to me that “*hortaliza* seeds aren’t from here. I don’t know why they are all imported. None of them are from here, none.” *Where are they from?* “Don’t they come from California?!” she exclaimed, surprised that I didn’t know that. Victor knows the *hortaliza* seeds they use are transgenic: “they are *hecho en fabrica*

[made in a factory], they all come trademarked.” “Broccoli seeds aren’t from Ecuador,” Alfonso tells me, “they come from other countries – they come from factories in Germany.” When I asked Aída where the seeds come from, she said: “I believe they are brought over from other countries, and then sold in warehouses.” With agrochemicals too, farmers know that they are imported from other countries. *What type of fertilizer do you use?* I asked Leonardo. “It comes from over there, where you live, from the United States,” he responds, “For example, *la urea*. Urea comes from there.”

It is clear that community members do not know exactly where the inputs come from, just that they are imported. According to the engineer from the Ministry of Agriculture that is employed by the government to work at the community cooperative, broccoli seeds arrive in a canister from Brazil – but the technology is developed in Europe. So Alfonso is likely correct that they come from Germany. Alfonso explains that hybrid seeds (called *semillas mejoradas*, *hibridas*, or *transgenicas*) produce better, like the market wants: not small and flowered like other seeds, but large and dense. Alma is also in favor of hybrid seeds. They are the best, and that is they are more expensive, she explains. “The seeds that are cheap produce less: a little stick, that’s all,” she says as she holds up her hand to show the size.

Others in the community are aware of this, and for that reason, defend the importation of agricultural inputs. I asked Alicia *Would it be better to buy seeds from this country?* Her response was no: “There is only cilantro, that’s all, from this country. All the other seeds come from other countries.” So no, it would not be better to buy only local seeds, “it is good that we buy seeds from other countries” she insists. Beatriz similarly views this globalized cycle in a positive light. According to her, it is a good

thing that they buy inputs from other countries, grow the product, then export it to countries. “Of course! Just like we send products over there, the chemicals come from there.” Alma is only in favor of importing seeds because Ecuador does not have the technology to produce transgenic seeds: “If there were a way to produce those seeds here in this country, then great, but we don’t have the machinery, the technology, we would need that to be feasible for Ecuador to make the same seeds.”

Shift Away from Food Self-Sufficiency

“Many people here use a lot of chemicals. Broccoli, lettuce, all the *hortalizas* are maintained with a lot of chemicals. But since we sometimes consume our own *hortalizas*, we are talking about putting more organic inputs and less chemicals.” It is fitting that Victor said they “*sometimes*” consume their own vegetables. Because that is precisely the case in Brocano: despite growing plentiful amounts of nutritious vegetables, community members hardly eat any of them.

After the harvest, any left over broccoli heads are fed to the animals. One day, as I was walking down the main road, I saw two women carrying shawls overflowing with broccoli on their backs. I thought to myself, *I can’t believe it, they are bringing home so much broccoli to eat, I only ever see families bring home one or two heads at a time*. So I asked one of the women how many days it would take them to eat all the broccoli and she said one day. *Between how many?* I asked, and she said four. But then she dumped the huge pile on the ground for four cows grazing in the yard.

Families do eat some of the vegetables they grow, especially carrots and onion in soup, and even some broccoli. Agustin explains that he usually keeps a handful of

broccoli per harvest, but sometimes he only brings home one head. However, on any given day if he feels like eating broccoli, lettuce or any vegetable, he just picks some from the neighbor's plot. If it is ripe, it is fair game for any neighbor to take, because that is better than letting it *floreecer* (flower) or go bad before harvest day.

Teresa estimates that 95% of the output is for sale, and only 5% is eaten inside the community. "Almost 100% of the harvest is to sell," Alma tells me. Instead, what they eat is "rice, rice, rice." "We eat a lot of rice," says Alma, "We eat rice every day because it sustains us. We work hard in the fields and soup doesn't keep me full for long, but rice does." Not only that, but rice is quicker to make when you come home hungry from the fields. "With soup, it takes a long time for the flavors to develop," Alma informs me.

Even though Alma pokes fun at how much rice they eat, she explains that their diet varies and still incorporates many traditional foods. "Sometimes we eat rice, sometimes we eat soup with carrot, onion, peas, broccoli, cabbage, and chard. And we cook barley rice with milk, *morocho* (a type of corn) with milk, and we make *machica* (barley powder with milk)." *Why don't you grow barley anymore?*, I followed. "Because barley needs 6 or 7 months to mature before harvest, whereas *hortalizas* only take three months," she responds, "Because we have irrigated land and it gives us a more profitable option."

Most families in Brocano still rely on barley and potatoes for their primary means of sustenance. For example, Beatríz has to buy potatoes, barley and corn because all they grow is *hortalizas*. Before, her grandma used to grow barley, potatoes, and corn. Now they don't grow any of those crops anymore and instead must buy them at the market. Even though they only grow *hortalizas*, they don't eat them very often, says Claudia as

we harvested her cauliflower. What they eat most is barley, which they must purchase. Then she laughs and says they used to grow barley but now they sell *hortalizas* in order to buy barley. Sandra, who I was helping plant lettuce, said the same thing: they eat a lot of *machica* but do not grow barley anymore so they buy it by the quintal – each of which only lasts one month.

Alfonso explains the shift away from food self-sufficiency in terms of diversifying their diet. “Look, there are different types of food. Earlier, sure, people ate only one thing and that’s it; now in recent times, it is mixed. We can go to Riobamba and buy noodles. Here, we can get cabbage, broccoli, lettuce, our own *hortalizas*.” Still, he does admit that there is a downside to not growing their main food staples and instead relying on the market to feed themselves. “When potato gets really expensive, we don’t eat it. When it gets to be 24 or 25 dollars a sack, we don’t buy it.” Instead, they use wheat flour and mold it into a ball – the same shape as potatoes – and cook it in soup. “We call it *yushpa*.”

Alicia says her family eats mostly barley, but they don’t grow it anymore. “Before we planted barley here but now no, we buy it.” They also buy potatoes and rice by the quintal, each of which lasts one month. They sell almost all of the vegetables they grow. The only thing they keep to eat is a little carrot and cilantro. Broccoli they hardly ever eat: only once a month, if that. However, how much food they are able to buy depends on the prices they receive for their vegetables as well as the market price for barley, rice and potatoes. “Sometimes, when we are below the economy, we don’t buy much,” she says.

Even though all of the flat land in the valley is planted with *hortalizas*, community members assure me that the land up on the hillsides is still used to grow

staples like corn, barley, and habas. Sofia pointed up to the *loma* (hilltop) and said that some people continue to grow grains, including quinoa intercropped with corn. Aída who works one of the greenhouses in the communities to sprout seedlings, has *terreno seco* (un-irrigated terrain) where she grows grains like corn and habas. But still she must buy *machica* and potatoes. Therefore, most of the food she eats is purchased since she eats broccoli only three times a month, whereas she eats potatoes every day. For dinner, they eat soup and colada; for lunch they eat rice, which she usually prepares with a tomato and cucumber salad. Ironically, the vegetables she does eat most commonly are the ones that are not grown in the community.

Antonia tells me her family always eats soup and *colada* for dinner. While this is the traditional diet found across the countryside, other communities make soup and *colada* with the food they harvest from their garden while Brocano community members must purchase these ingredients at the market. Alicia tells me they always buy potatoes, rice, barley powder, and even milk (!) since so few families in the community have cows nowadays. It is worth noting, however, that even though large farm animals are less common in the community, most Brocano households raise small animals like cuy and rabbits, to eat on special occasions.

There was actually surprising heterogeneity among Brocano community members about what they eat: some stressed the modernization of their diet and some stressed the traditionalism of their diet. This likely has much to do with the visible inequality in wealth: some families have large, two-story painted houses while others live in the typical small cement homes found throughout the countryside. The wealthier a family is, the more variety of food they can buy – such as meat, fruit and processed goods – and

thus the more modern and less traditional their diet is. “Traditional” diet is largely a product of poverty: they can only afford to eat the grains they grow themselves, get from relatives, or buy for cheap in the market. Overall, whether Brocano families have more or less money to spend on food, whether they have a traditional or modern diet, they all rely on buying most of their food since the *hortalizas* they grow themselves make up such a small portion of their diet.

Another interesting trend is that many community members still insist they are mostly food self-sufficient, even when they admit to not eating many vegetables and recite a long list of foods that they buy. Leonardo insists his family is largely food self-sufficient. The only things his family buys, he assures me, are products that aren’t from the highlands, like seafood from the coast. During holidays, they drink *colada morada* (a purple grain beverage) with their own corn “that we harvested ourselves, not purchased.” Moreover, they kill their own cuy and chickens to eat. Then as the conversation continues and he lists more of the items they buy – rice, noodles, oil, meat, and even *leche fundado* (milk in a plastic bag) – he finally admits that it is about half and half from their own land and purchased food. Eventually he comes around to the same conclusion as Alma: “for the most part, what we eat is rice. We always eat rice for lunch.”

When asked if it is better to use land to grow food to eat or products to sell, a few responded “*para comer*” but most responded “both.” For example, Alma says “Planting [food for self-consumption] is better, is much better – to nourish ourselves, so that we will survive, to sustain our children. But we need to sell [the food we grow] to have money so our children can study, and for some foods like rice, sugar, oil – we have to buy those. We have to sell what we produce.” Alfonso also pointed to the importance of

both with reference to their children: “there are two objectives. For self-consumption, we have enough. But we also want to improve the economic situation of our children so they can be better. We have to produce the land and give added value to our products so that we are able to export to other places.”

That most Brocano farmers responded “both” is surprising considering the visually obvious expanse of commercial crops, which they admit to not eating. But what was almost more surprising were the Brocano farmers who did answer that it is better to use land to grow crops to sell. Esteban said “to sell. It’s because that is our income. In order to survive, we live off of agriculture.” This seems reasonable, yet Brocano is the only community where people responded in that way. In the other two communities, respondents answered the question by talking about how important it is to grow your own food.

This is a case of competing discourses, as even Esteban himself later stated that almost 90% of the food he eats is from his own land. Only fruit, sugar and rice from the coast are purchased, he insists. It is unlikely that rice makes up less than 10% of his overall diet considering that “rice is always on the table.” About broccoli, he even admits: “sometimes you don’t appreciate what you have. When there is a lot of it, you don’t want any of it.”

Overall, the diet of farmers in Brocano is decidedly more “modern” than in either Quiloa or Lacava. And so are their production methods and outlook on chemicals and globalization. Representative of all three, Leonardo was eating an apple while we talked. He looked at it and exclaimed, “this apple isn’t from here either, *es comprado* [it is purchased].” In fact, all the apples in Ecuador are imported from Chile. Comparing it to

the broccoli they grow, he says, “This apple is also pure chemicals. They apply a lot of chemicals to it, it is not natural, they apply a lot of chemicals. That is why it is so sweet,” he says with a smirk.

The attitude in Brocano that fumigating is a part of life is looked down upon by members of other communities in the area. For example, Elsa is a woman from a nearby community who befriended me at a school function. She is a highly conscious leader of a local women’s group that advocates for women’s reproductive rights among other issues. During a visit to her house, which borders Brocano, we got on the topic of her *hortaliza*-growing neighbors. “¡*Está malísimo!*” she exclaims, “It is very bad.” Like others, she explains that she does not eat many *hortalizas* because they are all full of chemicals. But she also worries that people in Brocano will develop skin cancer because they do not wear protective gear when they fumigate. “*La química está comiendo el cuerpo* [the chemicals are eating their bodies],” she passionately remarks.

The women’s group she is part of has put on informational workshops for them, but they don’t attend. She also worked with another community development organization that tried to spread small animal production – like quail eggs – to reduce their dependence of chemical-intensive agriculture, but nobody from Brocano came to those meetings either. Elsa is also critical of her neighbors because of their use and pollution of water. Not only the chemicals themselves, but also chemical bottles pollute the local waterways. Animals are getting sick after drinking from contaminated canals. In addition, broccoli farmers rely on more and more irrigation water since the chemicals are drying out their soil. They have had informational workshops about this as well, but it is “in one ear and out the other.” Sadly, they are not interested in alternatives, she laments.

At the same, Brocano farmers look down on quinoa farmers in the neighboring *parroquia*. Why don't the farmers in Brocano join the quinoa boom? Because it takes too long to grow. Alicia says they don't grow quinoa because it takes nine months. That is three whole cycles of broccoli, beets or carrots they could grow, harvest and sell.

Brocano farmers "can't afford to" wait nine months for a plant to grow.

Quiloa

Compared to the farmers in Lacava and Brocano, farmers in Quiloa have no access to irrigation water and less modern standards of living. In terms of the infrastructure of their homes, vehicle ownership, and household appliances (refrigerators, ovens, toilets), Quiloa is less developed than Lacava, Brocano, and most other rural communities in Ecuador I have visited. Of the three comparison cases, Lacava is also the most agro-ecological in their production methods and thus closest to Via Campesina's food sovereignty model of sustainable production. This section explores the question of why Quiloa progressed in a sustainable direction rather than a water and chemical-intensive direction like the other two communities.

In many ways, Quiloa follows the same trend as the other two cases: moving from the production of staple foodcrops towards production of a higher-value crop intended primarily for sale in the market. However, in this case, the cash crop is produced under sustainable, diversified practices, and even *increases* the overall sustainability of their farm production. Although the re-introduction of quinoa improved the ecological impact of their farming practices, it has not led to a parallel increase in household food self-sufficiency. Nevertheless, quinoa farmers continue to value traditional foods and

household food production, and they are more food self-sufficient than either broccoli or dairy farmers.

From Staple Foodcrops to Quinoa Cash Crop

Quiloa is made up of 160 households. There are two main dirt roads that run through the community, one down low and one up high. Households have a mixture of flat valley and steep hillside land. On the lower road, the left side is flat farmland and the right side is houses. Behind the houses, the hillside extends up until a plateau where the other road is located. On the upper road, houses have small plots of flat land with a large steep hillside behind them. Houses are small and simple, made from cement blocks. What sets Quiloa apart from the other two communities is the clay-walled, straw-roofed round huts that stand beside the houses. Families keep the huts they used to live in alongside their current houses to use as kitchens with fire pits to cook soup and warm them up at night.

The average landholding size of quinoa growers in Chimborazo is recorded to be between .25 and .6 of a hectare. In Quiloa, due to a process of *herencia*, in which parents give land to their children when they marry, the average landholding size per household is less than one hectare. This hectare of land is not likely all in one place, but a mix of flat and steep, near and far from the house.

On these plots of land, Quiloa community members have traditionally grown potatoes, habas, wheat and barley. These staple foodcrops were grown first on communal farmland and later on individual household plots after the collective divided up the hacienda land. During the 1990s, these four crops served both subsistence and

commercial purposes. Whenever families needed cash, they would sell potatoes, habas, barley or wheat to buyers at the local market.

In 1997, a Chimborazo-based indigenous community development organization, referred to locally as *Radiofónica*, began a rural agrarian development project to export organic quinoa in order to improve small farm livelihoods throughout indigenous communities. Radiofónica, inspired by liberation theology to work with the poor, had a long history of assisting indigenous communities in Chimborazo. They began a project to commercialize quinoa among small farmers after approached with an offer to export quinoa to the United States. Leading up to this, an American Peace Corps volunteer had been living in the region, working with Radiofónica in the indigenous countryside. When he returned home to the United States, he began an import company called Inca Organics. Radiofónica sent their first shipment of quinoa in 1998 – 50 tons from 200 producers – and grew as large as 1,632 suppliers from 86 communities in 2009.⁸

Before Radiofónica introduced export-oriented organic quinoa in Quiloa, community members only grew a small amount of quinoa. Paloma tells me when she was a kid they would grow quinoa, but only a little, demonstrating how they would sprinkle only a handful of seeds. Bernardo tossed a rock from where he stood to two yards away and said that is how much they planted before. When Pablo was a kid, he always remembered growing quinoa, but in rows instead of a whole plot. Before, they would plant only one pound, now he plants ten pounds.

⁸ The farmers supplying Radiofónica have since divided into several different groups, supplying four export organizations in total.

Back then, they grew quinoa in the same way they grow the other native Andean crops (mashua, oca, and melloco) today: only for household consumption. “But now people plant more quinoa; it’s not like before. Before we planted only to eat,” Manuel explains. There was no local, domestic market for quinoa. It was not a crop consumed in urban areas; it was only consumed among the rural indigenous communities – and even there, to a lesser degree than other grains, like barley and wheat. While at one time the staple grain of the Inca, quinoa production decreased throughout the twentieth century.

When quinoa emerged as a cash crop, production expanded in multiple ways: a greater number of households began growing the forgotten grain, and the quantity produced by each household increased tenfold. Martín from Quiloa tells me:

Before, my parents planted barley and potatoes more. Then the quinoa project started. We had quinoa before, but not a lot like we do now. Before, we planted it just to eat because the price was so low and barley had a little better price. But then Radiofónica arrived with their project and started buying quinoa for a good price.

Currently, the market price to sell quinoa is about five times the price of other crops. Multiple Quiloa farmers remarked to me: “*Quinoa es como oro para nosotros*” [Quinoa is like gold for us]. “*Hay más plata en la quinua*” [there’s more money in quinoa] is another phrase often repeated by farmers when describing the role of quinoa in their family economy. Luís even goes as far as saying “*Sufrimos hasta que llegue la quinua*” [We suffer until the quinoa arrives].

Hernán elaborates on its importance: “Quinoa is like gold for us. It’s the only grain that has a high price. Wheat, barley, potatoes, they don’t have a high price.” “If you go to the market with a sack of quinoa, you can sell it for 90 to 120 dollars. Barley, right now I’m not sure what it goes for, 15 or 20 dollars, it’s not enough,” says María.

Guillermo explains that wheat and barley prices are so low that selling it does not even cover the cost of production. But, they do profit from selling quinoa, he says. Whereas agricultural farm income used to be derived from the sale of barley and wheat, now it is largely, if not entirely, from the sale of quinoa.

Quinoa is important to the community as a way to avoid outmigration. Without quinoa income, Luisa's husband has gone to work in the city. This year they are letting the land rest, growing other crops but not quinoa. As a result, her husband, who usually works in family agriculture, now lives in Quito because they need another source of income. This is the first year he has migrated to find wage work, and now he comes home only once a month to visit for the weekend. Quinoa was an important source of income for them. "We sell quinoa for the kids to study, for household necessities. Always, for whatever we need, quinoa helps us," she says.

Diversified Agropecuario

Despite the high price of quinoa, Quiloa farmers do not maximize production of it. They grow it in equal proportion to other staple grains. In addition to foodcrops, farmers also dedicate their land to raising animals and maintaining small vegetable gardens. All of the quinoa farmers I interviewed rotate quinoa with at least three other crops: most commonly with barley, wheat, and habas. Some of their land plots are used to grow grass for cows, sheep and donkeys to graze, or to cut and carry to their cuy. In their small gardens, they grow Andean tubers like *oca*, *melloco* and *mashua*, as well as potatoes and *hortalizas* like carrots, onions, chard and spinach. Thus, quinoa is grown as part of a diversified *agropecuario* [agriculture and livestock] system.

Not all household plots of land are exactly the same size. Some of their plots of land are bigger than others, but the biggest plot does not always grow quinoa; sometimes the biggest plot of land grows barley, wheat or habas, depending on the rotation. Three respondents reported growing more quinoa than anything else. However, three other farmers likewise reported growing more barley than anything else. Considering the market price for quinoa is five times the price of these other grains (\$90 a quintal as opposed to \$15 a quintal), it is surprising that they do not dedicate more land to the higher value crop. Quinoa farmers give a number of reasons for why they do not grow more quinoa.

For one, crop rotation is healthy for the soil. Javier explained he would never grow only quinoa as a monoculture because then the land would dry up. Similarly, Guillermo replied that growing only quinoa would create “terrenos secos” [dry land]. Raúl tells me that using quinoa in rotation makes soil healthier: “you can’t only grow one crop year after year because the land needs to rest like Christ,” he says. In addition, sometimes quinoa is left out of the rotation in order to increase soil fertility. Four of the quinoa farmers I interviewed were not growing quinoa this year to let the land rest. Luisa explains “The land needs to rest. So what I planted this year is habas, wheat, barley and corn. I will change production next year and plant quinoa.”

After quinoa harvest, farmers let the land rest for two to three months before they plant another crop. Their animals graze on the plot, then they upturn the soil and apply manure. Thus quinoa cultivation takes an entire year: nine months to grow and the rest of the year to rest and prepare the soil for the next crop cycle. Quinoa farmers are passionate about this *agropecuaria* system, in which they feed the plant waste after harvest to their

animals, and then use animal manure to fertilize the soil. “*Este producto, este abono, que rico es* [This product, this manure, is so rich],” Manuel tells me while standing over the pile of cow manure he is shoveling to bring up the hillside to his plots.

Another reason for continuing to grow other grains alongside quinoa is their importance for household reproduction. Eva, when asked why they do not grow more quinoa than their other crops, responded that they feed barley, wheat and oats to their animals. Not only the grains themselves, but leaves and stalks are fed to animals. Quinoa, on the other hand, cannot be fed to the animals; they will not eat the dry, straw-like stalks. Describing the multiple purposes of barley, Manuel explains: “For example, we eat it, we save it to plant the next year, the rest we give to animals so they can produce manure, and the rest we sell.” Grains are an important source of food for families as well. Barley, especially, is fundamental: whether in soup or warm drink, it is consumed as part of almost every meal.

Even though barley and the other staple grains are grown primarily for household consumption, they are still sold in the local market when the family needs cash. Quiloa farmers sell their other crops little by little, “*por necesidad*.” About barley and wheat, Lupe tells me: “When there is necessity, yes we sell it; but if there isn’t necessity, we only grind it to eat.” Raúl still sells wheat and barley, but it is really cheap, so his family sells it a little at a time when they absolutely need the cash. Amalia still sells barley little by little in the plaza whenever she needs money. She does not get much money for it, however, only 7 or 8 dollars at a time by bringing in a small sack.

The third reason Quiloa farmers commonly give for why they do not grow more quinoa is that it is “*bastante trabajoso*”: it is labor-intensive. Farmers repeatedly stress

the hard work involved in growing quinoa. Eva says the reason they grow more barley than quinoa, even though quinoa has a better price, is because it is a lot of work. With barley and wheat they just plant it and it grows, and then they harvest it. But with quinoa there is more maintenance involved; they have to weed it, which is *trabajoso*. With barley, it is not necessary to weed; you just plant it and let it grow: “*deja no más* [just let it be].” Luisa stresses the hard labor required at harvest time: “to work, to produce quinoa, it’s tough, the work is hard. For example, the moment of harvest itself is very hard. It’s quite laborious.” Alberto also tells me harvesting quinoa is very tiring and labor-intensive. He says the amount of work that goes into it quinoa is why people do not grow more of it.

Three different people informed me they do not grow quinoa anymore because it is so labor-intensive and they do not have enough family members for the agricultural labor needed. For example, Carlotta, rather than growing more quinoa because of the good price, actually stopped growing quinoa two years ago because she did not have anybody to help since her children work in town during the day. Similarly, Dolores stopped growing quinoa when her husband died because it requires more work than other crops and she does not have the family labor.

According to a presentation by the National Institute of Agricultural Research (*Instituto Nacional de Investigaciones Agropecuarias*, INIAP) at an event to launch 2013 as the International Year of Quinoa, peasants were hesitant to grow quinoa at first. They did not want to cultivate more because it is hard work. Even now that quinoa has such a high market price, people are still reluctant to grow it. At a workshop I attended at one of the quinoa export organizations, attendees told the *técnico* that people in their

communities did not want to grow quinoa because they would rather have pastures for their cows to produce more milk.

This preference for dairy farming was echoed by Luís from Quiloa. During our talk, he pointed to the hillsides covered in red, yellow, orange and purple quinoa plants. “If we had irrigation here in Quiloa, all the hillsides would be green with pastures,” he tells me, because milking cows is less labor-intensive and brings in a constant income. Since they cannot grow more pastures, they have quinoa.

However, quinoa was much more labor-intensive before the boom. To harvest by hand requires a process of *golpeando* (hitting the quinoa stalks repeatedly with a stick to remove the saponin covered seed pouches from the stalk) then *fregando* (rubbing the seed pouches together to remove the white grain from its shell). Now, quinoa farmers rely on *trilladoras*, thresher machines, to remove the quinoa seed from the stalk and saponin shell. Besides the post-harvest machines, there are no other input costs to quinoa production. Seeds are saved and replanted, fertilizer comes from their own animals, and no agrochemicals are used. The only input cost is labor – and that does not require a monetary investment, just time and a physical toll on the body.

The Question of Chemicals

Quiloa farmers have not always practiced organic methods. During the 1990s, pesticides were always used in the production process, especially on potatoes. Without them, farmers tell me, potatoes do not grow well: they get eaten up by worms. Quiloa farmers used pesticides until Radiofónica came, taught them organic methods, and started buying quinoa from them at a high price. Fanny tells me that before, she used chemicals

on potatoes, habas, and peas, but not on barley or wheat because they did not need to. However, they did not fumigate organically either, because they did not know how – not until the technical assistance of Radiofónica. Engineers from Radiofónica came and taught them how to fumigate bugs with natural products, and how to wait at least four years before planting the same crop in the same plot of land. Gloria explains that she has always used animal manure on her crops, but the engineer told her to apply much more. She was skeptical at first, but then the stalks grew taller, fuller, and faster.

Now, Quiloa farmers rave about the productivity of their organic production techniques and hold disfavorable opinions toward chemical use. When I ask farmers in Quiloa if they use chemicals on their crops, they respond with a look of disgust and a vehement no. When it comes up in conversation that I also do research in Brocano, quinoa farmers look at me with a face of shock. Bélen’s mouth dropped open before she said: “*¡Pero ellos usan puro químicos!*” [But they use pure chemicals!]. Another time, Clara exclaimed “*¡Ellos fumigan todos!*” [They fumigate everything!]. Paloma made the same horrified face as others and proceeded to tell me all about how they use chemicals in Brocano.

Similar to Lacava community members, they value home-grown food because food purchased at the local market is grown with chemicals. “The most important thing is to grow your own food. It is so important because it doesn’t utilize chemicals. It is the most organic,” Liana says to me. She continues to explain why in terms of taste: “It doesn’t have the same flavor as one you plant yourself. It is very different. For example, carrots. When you buy them at the market it is not the same, they have a different flavor. You can’t use them for juice, you can’t use them to make marmalade, nothing. Put them

in soup, and that's it. And so, for that reason, it is very important to plant and cultivate oneself. That is the most natural, the most healthy. It is not contaminated, it is not full of chemicals.”

Just like Liana complained about carrots from the market, other farmers complain about the potatoes they buy in the market because they are grown with too many chemicals. They tell me the potatoes from the market have a different taste than the potatoes they grow themselves. When I asked Manuel if he buys potatoes, he responded: “When we run out, of course. But they are different; they are not like the potatoes we grow ourselves. They are mealy, a little bitter. You have to put a lot of manure and they come out well, but those farmers don't use manure, only *chemicals* [he says with a voice of disgust]. Because of that, they come out a little bitter.”

During a presentation put on by the Ecuadorian Ministry of Agriculture, Cecilia Ponce talked about the ecological benefits of AFC, which stands for *Agricultura Familiar Campesino* (Peasant Family Agriculture). This system of crop rotation, rest and small vegetable gardens promotes biodiversity, healthy soil, saves water, and is sustainable for the future. Peasant families, she explains, plant certain grasses to reinstate the nutrients after harvest, before the next year's cycle of crops. Without this diversified system, farmers must purchase more of their food, which leads to unhealthy eating patterns, she warns. Even though this system of traditional peasant family agriculture does apply to Quiloa, it is important to note Radiofónica's role in teaching quinoa farmers these practices.

The Radiofónica office is filled with handouts of cartoon images showing the right and wrong way to grow agriculture. In addition to graphics depicting chemical

fertilizers and pesticides as bad, they encourage farmers to intercrop Andean tubers and leafy green vegetables in small vegetable gardens. “Radiofónica came and taught us not to use chemicals in our agriculture because it is bad for our health. Instead, we only use natural manure from our animals. They would come and check our soil and not buy from us unless it was organic,” says Raúl. In order to be certified organic, chemicals cannot be applied to any of the plots in which quinoa is rotated. For this reason, Quiloa farmers stopped growing potatoes in their large plots since organic potatoes get eaten up by worms. Now, if they are grown at all, it is in small vegetable plots – not nearly enough to meet household demand for potatoes.

In this sense, the increase in sustainability came at the expense of household food self-sufficiency. Although quinoa production replaced potato production in the fields, quinoa did not replace potatoes in the kitchen.

Food Self-Sufficiency

Radiofónica claims that their quinoa farmers save 30% of output for self-consumption, and another quinoa exporter reports 10%. While these percentages are not regulated or enforced, based on my interviews with producers, they are more or less the current norm. However, rather than thinking of it as a percentage, it is more like a minimum for self-consumption. A few families keep up to 3 quintals, and some report selling all except for 20 pounds, but most frequently producers report saving half or one quintal for self-consumption (50 to 100 pounds). However, in keeping one quintal, the percentage of output varies from 67% if they only harvest 1.5 quintals to 4% if they harvest 25 quintals.

Quiloa farmers do not eat much quinoa. In comparison to the traditional five staples, quinoa is not eaten frequently or in great quantity. For example, Liana says they eat mostly potatoes, followed by barley, habas, wheat and corn. They eat the least amount of quinoa: only twice a week. Of my respondents, the frequency of eating quinoa ranged from three times a week to once every two months, with the two most common responses being either twice a week or twice a month. By comparison, farmers eat barley every day, wheat every day, habas every day, and potatoes more than once a day.

Liana says she likes the taste of quinoa, but she says it is hard work to prepare. In addition to the hard work involved in cultivating and harvesting quinoa, quinoa is also very labor-intensive to prepare for consumption. María explains that quinoa involves more work than preparing barley: “Barley is easier; you just grind it and it’s ready to eat.” Whereas quinoa must be carefully cleaned to make sure all the saponin residue is removed.

However, farmers are by no means eating *less* quinoa now than before the boom. Most responded that they eat the same amount, or even a little more. Even if they only keep a small percentage – 50 pounds out of 10 quintals, for example – this is the same total amount of quinoa that they produced before the boom. Previously, farmers only grew quinoa in rows in their family garden, not an entire plot like today. Although they would eat all of their quinoa, rather than selling any, their yearly harvest was only about 50 pounds.

For example, Clara eats about the same amount of quinoa now as when she was a kid. Now she saves half a sack, about 50 pounds each year to eat between her and her mom; yet, before Radiofonica, they only grew a little bit, so they would not even harvest

as much as 50 pounds. Hortencia, an old woman about 65 years old, said that after the harvest, she is going to keep 20 pounds of quinoa to eat between her and her husband. Before, even though they would eat all their quinoa, the harvest would only be about 15 pounds.

While most respondents reported that they eat the same amount of quinoa now as before, some say they eat more now. When Pablo was a kid, they would plant only one pound of quinoa, but now he plants 10 pounds. Before, they would eat it very seldom, only three times a year; now, they eat it two or three times a week. Manuel tells me that before, they would plant about five pounds each year; now he plants 20 or 30 pounds. When I asked Manuel how often he eats quinoa, he responded: “It depends on how we prepare it: we make *colada*, soup, sometimes we eat it three times a week, once a week, twice a month, it depends. It depends on each family, they could sell it or they could eat it. In my family, we eat quite a bit. We make tortillas, we make drinks out of the quinoa.”

Even though Quiloa community members do not eat a lot of quinoa in comparison to the main staples of their diet, they do eat it; they do not sell it all. When I asked Sylvia if they sold it all or kept some quinoa, she said “*Que chiste sería producir y no comer*” [How funny it would be to produce but not eat it]. Even though the market price of quinoa is so high, only two people out of all my respondents mentioned that sometimes they sell all of their quinoa harvest; the first person because they do not like to eat it; and the second because sometimes they need the money really bad. At the same time, four people reported eating their harvest instead of selling it, or only selling a little of it occasionally when they really need the cash. Amalia does not sell quinoa because they only have a little: “*Si vendemos como vamos a comer a la quinua? Si vendemos, que*

vamos a comer?” [If we sell it, how would we eat quinoa? If we sell it, what would we eat?].

Despite the high market price of quinoa, farmers still engage in cultural practices of food exchange with relatives who come to visit and also with family members and neighbors who help out in the harvest. Labor in Quiloa is “*trabajo cultural*” which means cultural labor as opposed to wage labor. Farmers pay their family members who help out in the harvest by providing them lunch and giving them some of the harvest. Many of my respondents have reported giving 5 or 10 pounds of quinoa to the community members who help during harvest, or to their siblings or children who live in the city. Others report receiving quinoa from family members as a gift (for example, a 75-year-old man or a blind couple). Pablo explained that they give each family member or neighbor that helps out a bag of quinoa, about 10 pounds. Knowing the market price for quinoa is about one dollar a pound, I said, *Oh so you pay about \$10 for helping out*. But Pablo responded that he never thought of it like that; he has never put a price on it by quantifying the value because it is a custom they have always done to share output with whomever helps with the harvest.

Just as they are following tradition in carrying out cultural practices of labor and food exchange, these farmers are following traditional practices in the amount and frequency with which they eat quinoa. When I asked Quiloa farmers why they do not eat quinoa as often as they eat potatoes, corn, habas, wheat or barley, many shrug and do not know why. It seems to be because they never have; it is not tradition to eat quinoa all the time, it is a once-in-a-while food. Daniela, who eats quinoa only twice a month despite harvesting 15 to 20 quintals a year, says: “*No estamos acostumbrado comer solo la*

quinua” [We aren’t accustomed to eat only quinoa]. When I ask how often they eat quinoa, some get embarrassed or defensive after they answer and feel the need to explain their response with “you can’t only eat quinoa” or “you can’t eat quinoa for every meal.” Yes, I think to myself, but that rationale does not hold for potatoes: you eat potatoes for almost every meal.

One day for lunch I was sitting on a stool in the kitchen with my host parents, their three daughters, great granddaughter, and a family friend visiting from Quito. We were all eating habas with our hands, breaking open the skin and eating the green legume inside, when they asked me if I like habas. I said yes, very much so, they are a treat for me in Ecuador because they are hard to find in the U.S. Then my host father said “You don’t have habas, and all we have are habas!” Everybody laughed and continued asking what Andean products can be found in the U.S. I explained that we do have quinoa; it is becoming more popular and I like to eat it for lunch as a salad. Then their friend who grew up in Quito chimed in: “It’s nutritious right?” Yes, I said, people in the U.S. eat it who want protein and to cut down on carbohydrates. “Ahh,” he says, “the wealthy people of the U.S. eat quinoa for their health while the poor people of the *campo* [rural countryside] sell it to buy pasta.”

Despite this common assumption, in which Ecuadorians are reproducing the popular media image of quinoa being replaced by pasta, this was not actually the case among my research subjects. Most people reported not eating, or eating only very little pasta. 22-year-old Belén does not eat much rice or pasta. When I asked her, she smiled and laughed, and said no, they eat mostly *arroz de cebada* and *machica* (barley rice and

toasted barley flour). Luisa buys rice but not pasta. “I only go to the market sometimes, when we don’t have vegetables at home,” she explains.

The quinoa farmers I talked with stressed the infrequency with which they buy food. “De *repeeeente*”, “*Muuuuy poco*” do they purchase food. The foods that are most commonly listed as being purchased for consumption are basic cooking supplies like salt, sugar, and oil; rice; or fruits and vegetables that do not grow in their zone, such as tomato. Bernardo says they only buy food “*cuando hay plata*” [when there is money]. When they have no money, they eat mostly *colada* made with flour from the grains they grow themselves – either barley flour, wheat flour, quinoa flour, or corn flour – mixed with milk from their own cows. Almost all of my interview respondents reported that they eat mostly their own crops, that more than half of the food they eat comes from their own land. *What foods do you eat at home?*, I asked Hernán, to which he shrugged and responded: “*lo que producemos*” [what we produce].

Just like in the other two communities, Quiloa farmers stress the quantity of food that comes from their own land rather than the market. They list cooking supplies and foods that grow in other climates as the only products they purchase. What quinoa farmers are leaving out when they do so is their dependence on purchasing potatoes. Quiloa families eat potatoes at least once a day; they are very important to daily sustenance. In my host families, I was commonly served soup with potatoes – along with onion, carrots, chard, barley, sometimes corn and peas, and very rarely noodles – twice a day. In asking quinoa producers how often they eat potatoes, not once did I get a response less frequent than *diario* (daily).

“*Mmmm, la papa es lo que sustentamos*” [Mmmm, potatoes sustain us], says Liana rubbing her belly. “*Trabajar en campo es duro*” [Working in the fields is hard],” she continues, “*sin papa no hay comida*” [without potatoes there is no food]. “Sin papa no hay comida” is a phrase repeated by Clara as she and her daughter giggled when talking about how often they eat potatoes. Guillermo laughed when I asked how often he eats potatoes: “We eat potatoes with everything, with every meal. Potatoes go with everything. You can't have soup without potatoes,” he said. When asked if he eats more quinoa or more potatoes, Martín tells me “*Bueno la papa, la papa es lo que comimos siempre*” [Well, potatoes. Potatoes are what we always eat].

Now that farmers replaced potatoes with quinoa, they must purchase potatoes. They go to the weekly plaza to buy potatoes by the quintal: 100-pound sacks sold on platforms that take up the largest area of any product in the market. Even the families who continue to grow organic potatoes in their small vegetable gardens buy a quintal of potatoes a week for most of the year. Pablo's potatoes only last about a month after harvest before they have to buy more in the market. And it is a lot of work to grow organic potatoes. You cannot leave them a few days without tending to them or they will die from the frost, he explains. Plus, the *gusanos* (worms) eat them all up. Clara explains that potatoes are not resistant to *la lanchar*⁹ the way quinoa is; the small amount she does produce lasts them only three months out of the year. Raúl lost his whole potato harvest three years in a row to pests. Before, when he grew potatoes with pesticides, this would not happen, but now the worms eat them all.

⁹ Lancha is kichwa for *plagas*, or pests.

Ironically, the most solid, tangible reason that people gave for why they do not eat more quinoa is: “I don't cook quinoa often because my kids don't like it, they won't eat it, they say it looks like worms.” Therefore, quinoa producers dedicate their time, energy and land to grow a crop they do not eat often, and in doing so, edge out potatoes, their primary food staple. However, potatoes are cheap. A quintal of potatoes usually costs around five or six dollars. A quintal of quinoa sells for around \$100. “Imagine how many sacks of potatoes you could buy by selling one sack of quinoa” Martín explains.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I compared the agricultural production practices of three communities along several axes: land use for commercial or subsistence crops, application of agrochemicals and other modern inputs, saving seeds, rest periods between rotations, and use of family or wage labor. In addition, I compared farmer perspectives on agrochemicals and preference for homegrown or purchased food. Each of these indicators are reviewed below.

(1) Lacava farmers use their land mostly or entirely for commercial production, with subsistence foodcrops relegated to small garden plots; Brocano farmers plant more export cash crop than other commercial crops, and little or no subsistence food; and Quiloa farmers plant their high-value cash crop in equal proportion to low-value staple foodcrops for subsistence and sale in the local market, *and* they practice a diversified organic nutrient system with additional land dedicated to animal pastures and small vegetable gardens. (2) Brocano farmers use chemical fertilizers and pesticides on all their crops while Quiloa farmers use only natural inputs – including fertilizer from their own

animals – and Lacava farmers use a mix of both methods, depending on the crop and whether it is intended primarily for commercial or subsistence purposes. (3) Brocano farmers purchase imported, hybrid seeds and wait only two weeks between harvest and re-planting while Quiloa farmers save seeds from the previous harvest to plant in the next crop cycle and wait months between harvest and re-planting. (4) Quiloa farmers only employ the help of relatives and neighbors in the field; Brocano farmers utilize both family and wage labor; and Lacava farmers do not need to employ farm help because milk production is relatively non-intensive.

With regard to perspectives, similar attitudes and discourses can be found across communities. In both Lacava and Brocano, farmers talk about dependence on agrochemicals. Now that they have relied on using those inputs for years, if they try to grow food without them, “it won’t produce.” Farmers similarly talk about how the land has become “accustomed” to fertilizers and pesticides. The overall consensus is that agrochemicals are a necessary evil, but individual farmer perspectives differ between and within communities about how evil chemicals are and whether or not they really are necessary. Now that they have an alternative livelihood source that does not require and in fact prohibits chemical inputs, Quiloa farmers are the most critical of them.

Farmer skepticism towards chemicals is most clearly apparent in their dis-taste for food bought at the market. This sentiment is found mostly among community members in Lacava and Quiloa. Vegetables grown themselves without excessive pesticide application taste better and are healthier than the vegetables that they buy at the local market – vegetables that are grown under similar conditions as they are in Brocano. For that reason

and others, continuing to dedicate some land to grow food for household consumption is important to most farmers in Lacava and Quiloa.

Brocano farmers do not share this concern about eating vegetables grown with chemicals, and do in fact eat the vegetables they grow themselves, albeit in small quantities. The majority of their diet is made up of either modern urban-mestizo meals like rice and meat or bread and soda, or traditional rural *campesino* meals like soup and *colada*. Therefore, much of their diet is still made up of the same staples as before – potatoes, barley, corn and habas – only now they purchase those foods, or receive them from relatives up the mountainside, rather than growing them themselves.

Although not to the same extent, household food self-sufficiency has reduced in Lacava and Quiloa as well. This two-part process is a combination of using land for cash crops instead of staple crops (pastures not corn; quinoa not potatoes) on one hand, and using that income to purchase food they cannot grow themselves, like cucumber and tomatoes, on the other. Despite increased income from higher prices for milk and quinoa in Lacava and Quiloa, community members continue to value and eat traditional food like barley and potato soup, and corn or barley warm cereal drinks. They insist the majority of their food is grown themselves or gifted from friends and relatives – that they only rely on buying cooking oil, salt, sugar and other items one cannot produce oneself – even when it is clear more and more of their food is purchased, including key staples like potatoes.

Blurring the Lines of Agrarian Modernization

In some ways it appears that these three communities fall along a continuum of agrarian modernization: from traditional, agro-ecological, food self-sufficient peasant to modern, chemical-intensive, food-dependent capitalist farmers. The former more accurately describes Quiloa and the latter more accurately describes Brocano. However, this trajectory of agrarian modernization is blurred when one considers the non-linearity of historical developments in each community.

Even though Quiloa is the least modern and the most agro-ecological of the three communities, I argue that traditional-modern and sustainable-unsustainable are not necessarily parallel trajectories. Quinoa farmers looped back in the direction of agro-ecology after the intervention of a sustainable development NGO. Their “traditional” sustainable production of a native grain is motivated by the higher prices received for an organic-certified, export-oriented niche cash crop. Even though Lacava practices modern dairy production, they carry on the tradition of staple food production for household consumption. Their perceptions and practices of chemicals differ depending on whether they are considering commercial or subsistence-oriented production. This bifurcation is certainly not linear. Even as Brocano is the most modern in standard of living and in production methods, they carry on traditional communal practices such as food sharing and they too defend their food self-sufficiency. While adopting certain capitalist tendencies they are not fully capitalist farmers. In addition, if they had access to an organic-certified market, Brocano farmers would likely reverse their current trajectory of agricultural modernization.

Quiloa is the least modern community because they lack the resources to develop in the same manner as other communities. They are the only one to lack irrigation water; they have more hillside and less flat valley land; and they were the last of the three to begin cash crop production. In addition, quinoa production is the most difficult and risky given the current unpredictable weather patterns. Had a different opportunity opened up, Quiloa farmers would have gone down a different path: milk, broccoli, potatoes, tea, or any of the cash crops that small-scale farmers specialize in. Quiloa farmers tell me they cannot specialize in any other cash crops because of the geographic conditions of their location: too much frost for potatoes, no irrigation water for dairy or *hortalizas*. Quinoa offered a fortunate opportunity for Quiloa farmers because it grows well at their altitude and does not require irrigation water. But given different geographic conditions, or approached by a different development organization, Quiloa would have progressed along a different trajectory; they plausibly would be utilizing more modern, intensive production methods; and they likely would hold different perspectives on the merits or harms of agrochemical use – justifying its importance for securing their livelihood rather than making faces of disgust.

Moving on from the Myth

The myth of agro-ecological peasant farmers content to grow subsistence food for themselves and occasional sale in the local market is not only inaccurate but also counter-productive to achieving the real goal of making the global food system more ecologically sustainable. The food sovereignty agenda of agrarian reform must include technical assistance and organic market opportunities. However, in accounting for peasant interests

that value income-generation and livelihood security, development practitioners should not follow the mistakes of the past in assuming that the rural poor are rational-actors who will maximize economic self-interest.

These peasant farmers are different than capitalist farmers because family reproduction is factored in to their decisions (Chayanov [1925] 1986). While still attempting to maximize production and profit, they also factor in the workload and which family members will be able to help in the fields, and they continue to value a certain degree of food self-sufficiency rather than complete dependence on the market to access food.

The myth of indigenous peasants as agro-ecological producers who employ sustainable production methods in order to protect mother nature needs to be revised to account for livelihood interests. At the same time, the difference between peasant and capitalist relations to the land is important: the former is less mobile. Because of long-standing, historical, family ties to their land, indigenous peasant farmers are likely more concerned about the longevity of soil productivity than are large-scale capitalist farmers who could sell the land, pick up and leave. Indigenous peasant farmers are more rooted in place and tied to a community of people. Indeed, their concern for ecology is evidenced in practices of crop rotation to improve soil fertility. Even though broccoli farmers are the most modern in their production methods, they do not dedicate all their land to broccoli monoculture as do the large capitalist broccoli farms in the Machachi area of Cotopaxi, Ecuador.

Nevertheless, peasant farmer explanations for their production practices do not revolve around the environment for the environment's sake as an entity deserving of its

own rights as the peasant and indigenous movement discourse does. For them, the environment is intricately tied to making a living for themselves. Their decision about how sustainable or unsustainable to be has to do with weighing the cost and benefits of long-term productivity with short-term necessity. Appeals to sustainability that frame the importance in terms of saving the planet, or even their own health, will not be as effective as market-based incentives that offer higher prices for sustainable production.

A number of scholars critique market-based solutions to environmental problems (Fridell 2007; Gould, Pellow and Schnaiberg 2008; Holt Gimenez and Shattuck 2011). Yet I argue market-based solutions to environment-livelihood tensions should be taken more seriously in the alternative development and food sovereignty movement. To move towards agro-ecology, it must be framed in terms of compatibility of the dual goals rather than choosing between the two. If peasants, especially indigenous peasants, continue to be romanticized as agro-ecological and subsistence oriented – that they will feed the poor and cool the planet if they are given access to land – then the problem of training and incentivizing agro-ecological production gets overlooked.

Agency within Structural Disadvantage

The new wave of peasant persistence scholars (Walsh-Dilley 2013) are accurate in their depiction of peasant smallholders as enterprising, adaptable, capable actors in the global capitalist era of the 21st century. Peasant persistence scholars should be careful, however, not to overplay the amount of agency that peasants, especially indigenous ones, have to make these transitions on their own. Looking at the histories of the three case

communities in this study, it is clear that external intervention played a large role in each story.

Marginalized actors face limited possibilities to break out of the situation they find themselves in. Each community went down a path that landed them at a certain node in the web of old and new, modern and traditional, sustainable and unsustainable. Brocano farmers embrace chemicals because they are necessary for their short-term livelihood survival even if they threaten the long-term productivity of the soil. This difficult situation is not entirely of their own choosing. Is it possible to give peasants agency while still admitting they are often manipulated?

Rural peasant farmers have always held a marginalized role in their respective countries. Peasants, especially indigenous ones in the highlands of Latin America, continue to face a society that naturalizes structural racism along cultural lines. This context creates a situation of ‘damned if you do—damned if you don’t’ when it comes to agrarian modernization. Most government, NGO, and business actors look to indigenous peasant populations as backwards if they continue sustainable subsistence-oriented production. Meanwhile, environmentalists, anti-globalization and alternative food system activists hold indigenous peasants up as martyrs for their cause.

This dynamic creates a tension that community members can either turn inward in rejection of or outwardly face and use to their advantage. I argue that each community has embraced their current position on the spectrum of production methods and is now making the best of their situations by looking to external actors – governmental or non-governmental, conventional development or sustainable development – to improve their positions within their commodity chains and better market their products. These

indigenous peasants in the highlands of Ecuador have not turned inward toward self-sufficiency as a rejection of market forces like the Zapatistas in Chiapas (Vergara-Camus 2014) but rather face outward, toward the global market. As the next chapter details, these farmers look to forge ahead in new directions that further secure their livelihoods by bringing in more income along the commodity chain, not just as producers, but as middlemen entrepreneurs.

I acknowledge that this chapter is based, in part, on the argument published in the following article:

Soper, Rachel. 2015. "Globalization and the Agrarian Question: Divergent Development of Two Export-Oriented Farming Communities." *Current Perspectives in Social Theory* 34(1): 235-260.

CHAPTER FOUR: MARKETS

Introduction

This chapter argues that food sovereignty discourse of national food self-sufficiency and small-farm production for local consumption differs from the actual practices and preferences of peasant farmers on the ground. Just as peasants are romanticized as environmentally sustainable when in reality they share histories of agrochemical dependence (see Chapter 3), so too are peasants romanticized as embodying the virtues of “local.” In movement and scholarly discourse, peasants are depicted as practicing farming for subsistence purposes and sale in the local market. However, among the peasant farmers in this study, most are networked into global commodity chains. They want to continue exporting and to export new products. Even the case community that currently supplies the national market wants to start exporting their product. For the peasant farmers in this study, the export market is preferred because the local market does not offer a viable livelihood. Not only are local market prices low and unreliable, but local market intermediaries are viewed as exploitative.

In their critique of the food sovereignty movement, Burnett and Murphy (2014) call for empirical research that examines the question of market interests from the perspective of producers themselves: “Dialogue with small-scale producers whose crops are sold in export markets will be an important part of this, to understand their interests and their motivations, and to use this understanding to broaden the scope of food sovereignty” (22). That is precisely what this chapter accomplishes.

In doing so, I situate my research within critical Fair Trade studies. Spotlighting the experiences of Fair Trade certified quinoa farmers, I reflect on how – even though it is preferred to the local market – the export market is far from perfect. Supplying quinoa to export organizations carries with it its own array of difficulties and injustices. Just as local market intermediaries are perceived to profit off of the farmers without doing any of the hard work, so are export organizations increasingly viewed as middlemen. As a result, quinoa farmers, as well as dairy and broccoli farmers in the other two communities, are looking to engage in value-added, downstream activities through community-based enterprise. Rather than supplying the raw material to export organizations run by white, urban, middle-class professionals, these indigenous peasant farmers want to become their own middlemen.

These findings support Burnett and Murphy's (2014) claim that small-scale export farmers want to improve their position within the markets they already know, rather than reject the global trading system entirely. The findings in this chapter carry lessons for both food sovereignty and Fair Trade scholar-activists. Well-meaning top-down discourses do not always resonate with the lived realities of actors on the ground. Both food sovereignty and Fair Trade movements must take the ethno-class position of marginalized farmers more seriously – in terms of material interests as well as dignity, respect and voice within the organizations that represent them. Fair Trade is a step forward toward livelihood security but the small farmers themselves deserve more ownership and say in the process.

In the rest of the chapter, I first review the debate regarding small-scale export farmers within literature on food sovereignty. Then I outline the insights of critical Fair

Trade scholars who question the representation of small farmers within the alternative trading system. I then detail how my case study contributes to both of these literatures by organizing my findings in terms of (1) small farm preference for export because of the difficulties they face in the local market, (2) a closer look at the experiences and perceptions of Fair Trade quinoa farmers, and (3) what fair markets entail in the eyes of the indigenous peasant farmers in this study. Lastly, I conclude that local markets must become more fair – through government intervention – if the food sovereignty vision of small-scale production for local consumption is going to become a viable reality.

Small Farm Exports

Due to its stance on international trade, a few scholars have begun to question the food sovereignty movement's representation of peasants. "What do we make of the millions of smallholders who produce agricultural commodities for export?", ask Edelman et al. (2014: 915). Is it possible to incorporate them into a food sovereignty model?

According to Burnett and Murphy (2014), the food sovereignty movement's neglect of international trade risks marginalizing the tens of millions of smallholder producers and farm workers who earn their living from growing crops for export. They explain:

Whether producing for fair trade markets, or traditional or non-traditional agricultural commodity chains, some fieldwork evidence suggests these producers are motivated to continue their engagement in export markets. Millions of farmworkers, too, want to improve their working conditions, but are also protective of their jobs. They perceive international trade to be important for their livelihoods (16).

These scholars argue that peasants whose livelihoods are dependent on export markets do not necessarily want to exit international markets. Rather, they want to improve their economic bargaining power in the markets they already know. Even if the market conditions they face in the international market are not ideal, evidence suggests they want to integrate more equitably into the global system rather than rejecting it entirely. According to Burnett and Murphy (2014), peasant farmers are looking for practical opportunities instead of radical and ideological change.

Indeed, other scholars have found similar trends among small farmers engaged in export production (Bacon 2005; Masake and Henson 2005; Fischer and Benson 2006; Finan 2007; Raynolds et al 2007; Jaffee 2008; Wolford 2010; Vorley et al 2012; Walsh-Dilley 2013). For example, Masake and Henson (2005) find that small vegetable farmers in Zimbabwe are primarily motivated to enter into contract relations with export firms in order to reduce market uncertainty and access a guaranteed market price.

Studies of peasant development discourse on export agriculture find that small vegetable farmers in Guatemala and Peru hold up exporting as an ideal. They are thankful for the improvements they are able to provide their families with as a result of the higher prices they receive from exporting vegetables like broccoli and snap peas (Fischer and Benson 2006; Finan 2007).

Marygold Walsh-Dilley's (2013) case study of quinoa farmers in Bolivia provides further empirical support for Burnett and Murphy's (2014) claim that small farmers want to continue exporting. Although traditional forms of production persist (reciprocal labor exchange; preparing the soil by hand instead of with tractors), these traditional practices are utilized strategically in order to improve their returns in the quinoa export market.

“This takes place not alongside struggles to resist capitalist processes, but rather precisely as San Juaneños are seeking to become even more closely aligned with markets and market opportunities,” explains Walsh-Dilley (2013: 675).

In addition, a number of scholars point to the benefits of Fair Trade certified export markets compared to conventional ones (Taylor 2002; Raynolds et al 2004; Bacon 2005; Becchetti and Costantino 2008; Ruben 2008; Jaffee 2008; Linton 2009). These benefits include fixed price, long-term contracts, and generating economies of scale through the formation of producer cooperatives – all of which reduce vulnerability in the global market place. Bacon (2005) and Jaffee (2008) both find that Fair Trade certified coffee producers receive higher prices than those who sell to local middlemen. Although these prices do not always cover the costs of production, they are at least better than the alternative.

Empirical case studies find that small-scale export farmers want to continue exporting. For cash crops like vegetables, quinoa and coffee that are primarily for export, it is better to sell them for a guaranteed price through a cooperative than for a low and fluctuating price to local intermediaries. This preference for export is less surprising among Fair Trade certified farmers than conventional ones since the alternative trading system is designed to address the difficulties small farmers face selling to local intermediaries. However, scholars have problematized the Fair Trade system for other reasons, including the misrepresentation and micro-management of small producers, and a disconnect between movement ideals and on-the-ground realities.

Critical Fair Trade Studies

Early literature on Fair Trade certification highlights it as an alternative “moral economy” that connects producers and consumers in the global North and South in a radical new way (Simpson and Rapone 2000; Lappe and Lappe 2002; Jaffee et al. 2004). They see Fair Trade is a moral connection between producers and consumers that overcomes unequal power dynamics. For example, Simpson and Ramone (2000) argue that coffee roasters are linked to producers and consumers in a moral economy which promotes social solidarity. From this perspective, Fair Trade substitutes the values of community and solidarity in place of capitalist competition. By labeling items with information about the producers, Fair Trade overcomes the invisible exploitation and isolated disconnect between the two groups.

Recently, scholars have attempted to debunk this myth of Fair Trade. Fridell (2007) calls into question the idea that Fair Trade certification establishes a bond between producers and buyers that ruptures the impersonal nature of global markets. He critiques that line of thought, which he refers to as ‘Fair Trade as decommodification.’ Similarly, Moberg and Lyon (2010) argue that “most scholarship” on Fair Trade follows the myth that certification counters the impersonal nature of market-based relations. It falsely claims that mutual respect replaces competition and profit maximization when commodity chains are re-embedded in social relations.

To counter this approach, Moberg and Lyon (2010) highlight the gaps between the discourse and reality of the Fair Trade – between consumer illusion and the material-political reality of the farmer. “Instead of promoting social justice, fair trade runs the risk

of becoming a niche market catering to relatively affluent consumers seeking commodified morality in their purchases,” Moberg and Lyon (2010: 9) argue.

The morality of Fair Trade is thus seen as a top-down marketing image on the part of buyers and consumers that does not resonate with small farmers themselves. Research sheds light on how, from the farmer perspective, Fair Trade is not a new relationship of trust or solidarity, but rather a better market price. Most Fair Trade farmers, scholars argue, are unaware that they are participating in an ‘alternative system.’

Doane (2010) finds Fair Trade coffee producers in Mexico rarely share the meanings that roasters and consumers impute on Fair Trade relationships. In fact, most producers thought Fair Trade was the same as organic certification, only higher quality.

Doane (2010: 252) asserts that:

A reasonable market for producers was not a matter of values but rather a matter of price. That is, producers did not organize themselves into cooperatives—a considerable investment of time and energy—in order to preserve shade for birds, promote organics, or transform the global economy. They did it to create economies of scale and administrative structures large enough and efficient enough to make it possible to compete in the global market and to receive the best possible prices for their products.

She points to a gulf between the ways Fair Trade advocates and producers conceptualize new trading system. In that sense, rather than de-fetishizing commodities, Fair Trade effectively *re-fetishizes* them.

Henrici (2010) and Wilson (2010) similarly argue that Fair Trade labeling draws on simplified and romanticized representations of ethnic and tribal groups in order to market their crafts in the global economy. Henrici (2010) finds that Fair Trade producers are not opposed to free market values. They want to participate in and benefit from the

market. Thus, when Fair Trade labeling invokes “imaginary solidarity,” portraying these societies as egalitarian and communal, it ignores local divisions. Instead, she argues, it tailors the activities of local producers to meet external values and perceptions.

Wilson (2010) identifies the role of top-down standards in reifying cultural essentialism. He refers to this as ‘top-down indigeneity.’ Fair and alternative trading organizations contribute to the local performance of globally-constructed, acceptable ethnic heritage. In order to network with these organizations, community leaders often must portray ‘indigenous’ traits. These constructed, strategic representations seek to mirror the expectations of external agents – performing indigeneity in order to favorably position themselves within a niche market.

In this sense, alternative trade organizations claim to create a moral economic link between producer and consumer by valuing other cultures, even when the cultural traits they value are essentialized versions of those cultures that fit their own ethical principles. “Fair trade regulations promoting cultural preservation, gendered equality and ecological protection contribute to commonsense understandings of an essentialized indigeneity,” argues Wilson (2010: 192).

Top-down morality goes hand-in-hand with top-down environmental standards. Lyon (2010) argues that eco-friendly ‘traditional’ ancestral products are being promoted from the top-down rather than bottom-up. Maya women in a Fair Trade craft cooperative learned how to use natural dyes from the North American women who trained them in the technique. Some resisted this in favor of the synthetic colorful dyes they were used to, but others incorporated the new technique into their weavings in order to “accommodate

a foreign market predicated on constructed notions of ecological sustainability and ‘traditional’ dying practices” (137).

Moberg (2010) describes the top-down environmentalism of Fair Trade banana certification. Small peasant banana growers in St. Lucia were used to fumigating their banana trees with backpack sprayers. Under Fair Trade certification, herbicides were banned in favor of hand-held weed wackers. Yet the farmers themselves are not ideologically attached to the sustainable methods. In fact, they see it as a labor-intensive burden that is less reliable in controlling pest problems. One banana farmer complained about the requirement by saying: “I weed eater my whole farm, but I only get to ship fair trade a third of the time. So what’s fair about fair trade when the farmer who weed eaters has to pay more to grow his bananas but doesn’t get the benefits?” (Moberg 2010: 55).

Numerous scholars problematize the added labor costs associated with environmental standards that are enforced through top-down certification requirements. (Mutersbaugh 2002; Lyon 2006; Jaffee 2007; Moberg 2010). Even though Fair Trade coffee farmers in Oaxaca earn more than twice the price per pound compared to non-certified coffee farmers, they do not actually make more of a profit (Jaffee 2007). This is because of higher labor costs. Sustainable production methods are more labor-intensive. Family and reciprocal labor exchange are not enough; certified farmers thus end up spending their extra earnings on wage laborers. Conventional coffee producers pay an average of 21 person-days per year while Fair Trade certified coffee producers pay an average of 64 person-days per year (Jaffee 2007: 123).

In the case of Fair Trade bananas in St. Lucia, farmers similarly complain about labor costs. Even though prices are higher, production costs are higher too. Many farmers

claim that they do not realize a net gain, and that Fair Trade environmental policies have aggravated their economic circumstances. Moberg (2010) argues that the transition from herbicides to weed wackers is not culturally appropriate because of labor shortage on the island. To comply with the herbicide ban, almost all older farmers hire younger men to operate weed wackers. In this context, older women face a larger disadvantage because they have to hire more labor. Farmers reveal frustration with the weed wackers as an impractical tool imposed by European certifiers possessing little knowledge of the realities of local farming or the labor constraints under which they operate.

Buffer zones are another example environmental standards conflicting with local contexts. Moberg (2010) explains the Fair Trade certification requirement that banana farmers leave buffer zones adjacent to streams and roads to minimize soil erosion and protect watersheds. This universal certification requirement makes more sense for larger banana plantations, but when applied to the St. Lucian context, it creates difficulties for the small-scale farmers. They view it as an unreasonable economic demand because it removes a significant amount of their land. Clearly, some of the top-down rules of Fair Trade certification are inappropriate for local conditions.

Ultimately, this emerging body of critical Fair Trade studies questions the top-down nature of the system. Scholars point to a lack of representation and low levels of farmer participation in network decision-making (Lyon 2006; Vásquez-León 2010; Moberg and Lyon 2010; Moberg 2010; Dolan 2010). According to Vásquez-León (2010), Fair Trade markets involve the redefinition of production processes to satisfy external demands while fundamental issues of democratic participation are left on the sidelines. Lyon (2006) questions the representation of small producers within a fair trade movement

that claims to help them; she argues there should be more producer participation in administrative decision-making.

Lack of transparency and participation is particularly evident in how the Fair Trade Labeling Organization (FLO) decides what the production standards of each commodity are. Scholars also point to a lack of democratic decision-making with regard to how to use the social premiums. Dolan (2010) reveals that what Fair Trade tea farmers want to do with the social premiums is different than what FLO has authorized. While FLO promotes schools and roads, farmers said that well-constructed schools remain vacant because the government is not able to provide staff or supplies. What they want instead is a medical dispensary, but that is not endorsed by FLO. Moberg (2010) also notes that decisions about how to use the social premium from Fair Trade banana sales are dictated from above.

According to Dolan (2010: 168-169), the bureaucratic processes through which Fair Trade is produced, conveyed, and validated creates a “normativity that is veiled by the ‘alternative’ positioning” of the moral contract that the Fair Trade movement claims to generate. She points to “tension between the principles of social justice that they seek to emplace and the impersonal and often paternalistic experience that they can create” (163).

Overall, Moberg and Lyon (2010) point to the apparent arbitrariness and lack of transparency of Fair Trade standards and question whether Fair Trade certification actually operates as a means of governance and control. Moberg (2010) reveals that banana farmers in St. Lucia actually think of their relationship with the Fair Trade organization as a “new set of masters.” In practice, he argues, Fair Trade falls

considerably short of the mutuality and transparency in producer-consumer relations promised by advocates in the North. In this light, Fair Trade has failed to realize its most fundamental goal: elimination of exploitative middlemen (Moberg and Lyon 2010: 17). Instead, Fair Trade has created a new category of middlemen: foreign organizations instead of local intermediaries.

Indeed, in my case, some of the quinoa farmers are frustrated with this new class of middlemen. Rather than padding the pockets of the white, urban businessmen who run the export NGO, they want to create an indigenous-run export enterprise. In that way, they can take on leadership roles and distribute more of the profit among the producers themselves. In attempting to become their own middlemen, they want to make global trading relations more fair, but they still want to continue being part of the global system – rather than resisting it entirely in favor of the local.

My findings support the arguments of those scholars who see Fair Trade certification as a market niche that offers better income, rather than a moral economic commitment to social justice. More than shared morality or shared concern for the environment, certification is important to farmers because of the market advantages of fixed price and reliable weighing. My findings also support the argument that Fair Trade is a form of top-down environmentalism, fostering ecological practices through niche market access. Export NGOs taught farmers how to grow organically, and they do so because it is incentivized.

In the following findings section, I describe small farmer preference for export trade as a result of the problems they face in the local market. They associate local markets with low, fluctuating prices and being taken advantage of by local

intermediaries. Nevertheless, because of strict quality standards and delayed payments, export farmers do sell part of their harvest to local intermediaries. They continue to rely on the local market to fill in the gaps of the export market. Despite the importance of both, they value the export market more and want to continue exporting. These indigenous peasant farmers are not opposed to global trade; nor do they hold national self-sufficiency or localized consumption up as the ideal. While we might expect preference for export among Fair Trade certified farmers, I found this preference among all respondents. After focusing specifically on certified quinoa farmers and the problems and promises they face supplying Fair Trade organizations, I point to trends found in all communities, including desire to export new, value-added products. The findings section ends with a discussion of what constitutes a fair market in their eyes.

Preference for Export

The indigenous peasant farmers in this study are strongly in favor of participating in international trade. During my interviews, I asked every farmer the same question: *Is it better to sell your crop in this country, or export to other countries?* The overwhelming response was “it is better to export.” Out of 85 interviews, all but one responded in this way. The one person who initially responded that it is better to sell in the domestic market – a middle-aged female quinoa farmer in Quiloa – qualified her response with “*if it was more fair.*” This association of export markets with “fair” and domestic markets with “unfair” was common across interviews. Farmers explain their preference for export in terms of the high and fixed price offered by export markets and the low, unstable, and unfair price received in the domestic market by selling to local intermediaries.

This collective response in favor of international trade is interesting given the differences between the commodity chains that these three groups of indigenous peasant farmers supply. One would expect the Fair Trade quinoa farmers to prefer export trade (because of the long-term contracts and guaranteed price), but not necessarily the conventional broccoli and dairy farmers. However, regardless of the commodity – and its distinct production and market characteristics – in all three cases, the local market mechanisms are perceived to be so poor that export chains are the preferred alternative.

From the interview responses below, it is clear to see that solidifying a stable livelihood is foremost important to these indigenous peasant farmers. Neither feeding fellow Ecuadorians or reducing the distance food is transported is of concern to them. This section begins with explanations for market preference that is common among farmers, then differentiates the specific circumstances of each community and its specialized commodity.

Better Market Price

Farmers in all communities shared their stories and complaints about the prices they receive for their products when they sell in the domestic market. They reveal the hardships faced by selling their current cash crop, as well as other crops they currently or previously have sold, in the local market. By comparison, they claim, selling crops in the export market brings in a stable, constant, predictable price.

Indigenous peasant farmers see themselves as deserving of this chance to make extra money because the work they do in the fields is so strenuous. It requires a lot of labor to prepare these products, yet they hold little value in the Ecuadorian market.

Broccoli farmer Alma tells me, “We campesinos are on the land, with the crops, day and night. For us, it is better, more profitable, to export. It is better that there is a lot of movement and trade. It is better not to be stuck only in the national market, but rather the international market.” With regard to exporting quinoa, Liana from Quiloa says “It is a good thing how we are producing a few cents more for ourselves here, to benefit ourselves. For us, to work, to grow quinoa, it's tough, the work is tough.”

The comparison between the price of their products in export markets compared to internal markets came up again and again. Leonardo from Brocano says “it is better that products from here, Ecuador, go abroad and profit a little more. Here it is cheaper. There, when you sell abroad, it is more expensive.”

Low local market price has to do with overproduction and competition between farmers from rural communities. Quinoa farmer Ana points to the fact that everybody grows the same things as each other, saturating the local market at harvest time. “Sometimes, for example, lettuce or potato, when it is cheap, it is *cheap*. And everybody has it. Only potato, potato, potato.” Esteban from Brocano says “I think that since there is a lot of competition here in Ecuador, it would be better to sell to other countries if there is a market, so the future generations can advance little by little. It's best these days to look for other markets to sell to other countries.”

Even in Lacava, where the dairy farmers sell their milk to a national agribusiness firm that exports some products to Venezuela but mostly supplies domestic supermarkets, the farmers shared this sentiment towards export. They also attribute low local market price to overproduction and competition. Gerónimo says “It is better to sell to other countries because they pay more. Because here they don't pay the same price, it is very

cheap. Because here there is so much.” Victoria tells me “It is better to export because here it’s always cheap.” Gladis says it is good to export milk “because they pay us a little more.” *If there was not enough milk to meet the demands of Ecuadorians, then would it be better to sell milk only in this country?*, I asked. “No, I see the better option as always to export,” she responds.

“Like all products, the national price is lower,” Octavio from Lacava tells me. Before the community had a *centro de acopio* (collection center), the dairy farmers in Lacava sold their milk to intermediaries that drove through the community to buy their milk and re-sell it elsewhere. At that time, Hilario explains, most people had only one or two cows. “We would sell, at the most, 10 liters a day. But there weren’t tanks like we have now. We would sell to intermediaries who drove their cars through the community to collect milk and deliver to Nestle.” The intermediary would buy the milk for 13, 14, or 15 cents and re-sell it for 25 cents. He profited at least 10 cents a liter on all the milk he bought from them. “The person who makes the money is the one who carries the milk to other places,” Octavio laments.

Dairy farmers in Lacava now sell all their milk for a fixed price at the community *centro de acopio*. Sara thinks selling collectively through the *centro de acopio* is a good thing because it “maintains the same price.” Before, since there is a lot of competition, the local market price for milk would drop without notice. Diana thinks the *centro de acopio* helps a lot because before, with local market intermediaries, they were practically “giving the milk away for free.” What she cares the most about is that milk has a *precio estable*, a stable price. Before, they would never know what to expect with the price of

milk. If they went out of town, when they got back, they could not guess what the price would be.

Straddling Both Markets

This clear preference persists despite some problems farmers have faced with export markets, and despite some advantages offered by local market intermediaries. The biggest problem that farmers have with their secure export links is delayed payment. Farmers in Quiloa and Brocano complain that export buyers (be they NGOs or agribusiness firms) do not pay right away. They have to wait weeks, even months, to receive their payment. This is frustrating for them since they need the money right away to re-pay harvest expenses. Meanwhile, in the local market, they are paid immediately. Additionally, the export buyers have stricter quality standards. When the export organizations do not buy all the harvest, community members have extra product to sell elsewhere. Because of these reasons, both broccoli and quinoa farmers sell some of their output in the local market.

Quiloa farmers sell some of their quinoa at the weekly plaza. In addition, all the other grains they sell (barley, wheat, habas, oats) are sold at the weekly plaza. They thus have ample experience dealing with local market intermediaries. The weekly plaza is located in the small town within their canton. These weekly local markets are also called *mercados minoristas*. Intermediaries stand with their large scales in the open plaza while farmers line up with their sacks of grains to weigh and sell. Local intermediaries purchase quinoa from the small farmers in quantities ranging from a dozen 100-pound sacks (*quintales*) down to 20 pounds. They then turn around and re-sell all their quintales to

different intermediaries with cargo trucks. These intermediaries take the quinoa from the *mercado minorista* to the *mercado mayorista* where they supply grain vendors with quinoa in their *bodegas* (grain stores) to sell directly to consumers by the pound. They also sell to supermarkets who package the quinoa under their own brand name.

Broccoli farmers sell some of their broccoli, along with all of their other *hortalizas*, to intermediaries at the *mercado mayorista*. This daily wholesale market is located in the city of Riobamba. Farmers wake up early and rent a car to take them to the market, where they negotiate with intermediaries to sell the sacks of vegetables they harvested. The intermediaries then load up products at the *mercado mayorista* and stop by the community of Brocano (located right off the Panamerican Highway on the route to Guayaquil, the largest city in Ecuador) to pick up the sacks of produce and add it to their trucks. Broccoli is trucked to the *mercado mayorista* in Guayaquil, where intermediaries sell the produce in stalls to other vendors. Intermediaries buy 20 or 30 sacks of broccoli at a time from the farmers, and re-sell one at a time to each vendor who buys a variety of products to sell at *mercados minoristas*, smaller markets around the city.

For broccoli and quinoa, while local market prices fluctuate, the fluctuating price sometimes rises above the stable price offered by the exporter. For example, the quinoa export NGO buys quinoa for \$.90 a pound all year, while the local market price can reach up to \$1.40 and as low as \$.50 a pound. The broccoli export firm buys broccoli for \$.25 a kilogram year round, while the local market price ranges between \$2 and \$6 a sack. Each sack contains 20 heads and each head weighs about 1 kilogram, so when the local market is high they get a better price per head.

The occasionally higher price offered by local market intermediaries attracts farmers to sell at least part of their export crop in the local market. Intermittent higher prices, paired with the immediate cash they receive from local intermediaries, lead broccoli and quinoa farmers to sell a portion of their output locally right after harvest. Out of opportunity or necessity, farmers continue to sell broccoli and quinoa in the local market – strategically straddling both markets.

With broccoli farmers, when they plant, they do not know which market they will ultimately sell to; it depends on the price during harvest time. Whether to the export *empresa* or the local merchants, perishable broccoli must be sold right away. With quinoa, they anticipate to sell at least part of their harvest in each market. Because of the delayed payments they receive from the export NGO, many quinoa farmers need to sell part of the harvest right away, even if the local market price is low, in order to pay back the cost of harvest (thresher to clean the quinoa off the stalk, food to feed lunch their family members who helped with the harvest). Many quinoa farmers also hold on to small amounts of quinoa to sell here and there when they need to buy something: whether it be cooking supplies like oil or salt, or school supplies like uniforms or backpacks. Only some quinoa producers are able to hold on and wait for the local market price to increase before they sell the bulk of their harvest.

Alicia tells me that she sells half of her broccoli harvest to the *empresa* (community cooperative which supplies the export firm) and half of her broccoli to *comerciantes* (local market intermediaries). She does this because of the comparative quality standards of each market. For export, they want the most dense heads of broccoli, because it is weighed. For the local market, they want the largest heads of broccoli, since

they sell by volume. The export firm chops up the broccoli heads into small florets, so the size of each head does not matter. Whereas in the local market, customers pick the biggest heads since it is sold by unit rather than weight.

How do you decide if the broccoli is for the empresa or for comerciantes? I asked Esteban. His response was “*Oiga, aqui somos oportunistas.*”

Listen, here we are opportunists. When the plaza price is really cheap, then we look to the *empresa*. Then I’ll deliver my broccoli there. But when the plaza price is high, then I don’t say anything to them [the *empresa*]. *Calladito*, with my mouth closed, I take my broccoli, and since it is mine, I sell it [to the *comerciantes*]. For us, everything, all our interests, are about economic income.

Despite the advantages that local markets offer, on the whole, export markets are still viewed as more desirable because they offer a consistent price. As a follow up question to broccoli growers, I asked *But in the national market, if intermediaries pay immediately, and if sometimes their price is better, why do you prefer to export?* Alma responds, “Yes, but exporting has a good price. It has a good price when the market here is low. When we deliver to export, it’s secure. The price is more secure.” Mariella agrees: “Because of the fixed price. Because in the plaza sometimes it rises, and sometimes it falls. Sometimes it is just *low*. There is no fixed price. But for exports, there is a fixed price.”

Out of necessity for immediate cash, some broccoli farmers sell in the local market even if the market price is low and unpredictable. And this creates feelings of powerlessness in negotiations with merchants. In Brocano, a 70-year-old man sitting at the base of the community, waiting for a big truck to drive by and pick up his broccoli, tells me about his experience that week selling his broccoli harvest. “Every day the price

changes. Wednesday was \$4; Thursday was \$3 and today is \$2.50.” The *comerciantes* have the power, he assures me. When he goes to the *mercado mayorista* to sell sacks of broccoli, if he proposes a price of \$5 a sack and the *comerciante* says “No, \$2.50,” then they go with \$2.50.

This same dynamic – of straddling both markets out of opportunity but also necessity – characterizes Quiloa community members as well. Guillermo is not going to sell his quinoa right away because the market is always low at market time. He tells me he is going to wait until February or March when the market price will be \$1.30 or \$1.40 a pound. Similarly, Luis says they are going to hold on to their quinoa and take it from buyer to buyer to see if they can get a price higher than the \$.90 per pound that Radiofónica pays.

In addition to Quinoa community members, other quinoa farmers I talked to revealed similar practices. Tomás sold six quintales to Radiofónica, saved two quintales for household consumption, and sold the rest in the plaza last December when the price was \$1.00 per pound. Out of seven quintales, Wilson sold four to Radiofónica, kept one for household consumption, and is selling the other two quintales little by little at the plaza. He sells quinoa at the market “de vez en cuando” [occasionally], whenever he needs the money.

Because of delayed payments on the part of export NGOs, Quiloa community members often point to immediate cash as their reason for selling some quinoa at the local market. When the quinoa is ready, Liana sells part of the harvest right away, out of necessity, regardless of what the current price is. After that, and after selling a few quintales to the export NGO, she keeps a few more sacks on hand as a safety net for

when she needs to buy items at the market. “When I want to sell half a quintal of quinoa, with those fifty pounds I don’t go to Radiofónica, I don’t go to Fundamyf. I need the cash right away and so I go to the market (*Necesito ahora mismo la plata y me voy al mercado*).”

Over and over again I heard the phrase “*por necesidad*” [out of necessity] as explanation for why they do not save their quinoa until the market price rises. “Por necesidad,” in order to pay back the expenses associated with harvest, Martín has sold quinoa in the local market for as low as 45 cents a pound. Pablo tries to hold on to more quinoa because he knows the market price will go up 5 or 10 cents a week after peak harvest season, but “por necesidad” he always sells a few quintales right away after harvest. For Sylvia, the need for money to invest in the cycle of production, to plant other crops, is why she sells quinoa harvest right away. “Por necesidad,” she cannot wait for the plaza price to rise.

This year, Cora sold four quintales to the export NGO and kept three quintales at home to eat and sell little by little. Of that, she already sold 30 pounds in the local market. The export NGO pays a *peso justo* (fair weight) but they do not pay right away. For immediate cash, she’ll bring a sack of quinoa to the market and sell it no matter what – even if she faces *precio bajo* (low price) or *peso injusto* (unfair weighing) – in order to buy groceries. After she sells quinoa to the intermediary, she uses that cash to buy cooking oil or other basic cooking supplies they need at home. Similarly, Hernan brings quinoa to the local market whenever he needs to buy salt.

Luisa sells half of her quinoa harvest to Radiofónica right away, and saves the other half for immediate necessities. “They make us wait [for payment]. But here at

home, with the kids and their studies, we have to bring it to the plaza too.” Similar to Alma and Mariella’s quotes above, Luisa prefers to export despite the problems it poses – namely, delayed payments. She prefers the export market for its fixed price and reliable weighing. Despite waiting, she prefers the export market “Because they offer a *precio justo* (fair price) and do not rob us of part of our quinoa sacks like in the plaza.”

Despite their continued reliance on it, quinoa farmers complain about the local market. Besides fluctuating, unpredictable price, this unfavorable opinion of the local market, has much to do with feeling taken advantage of by local market intermediaries. They feel they do not get a fair price because the intermediaries profit more than they do just for turning around and selling it to someone else; and the intermediaries rob them, rigging the scales to pay less than they owe.

Quinoa farmers think the intermediaries rob them of their grains because they do not weigh honestly. Whether it is quinoa, barley, or wheat, Quinoa farmers complain about *peso justo* (fair weighing). Alongside *precio justo* (fair price), *peso justo* is just as important. When I asked Liana if there are also negatives, or only positives to selling quinoa to the exporter, she responded: “Only positives. Because they pay a fair price and they don't rob you of pounds like in the plaza. In the plaza they rob you of a good part of your sack.” Cora also talks about being robbed of pounds. “In the plaza, they rob you. This time, they robbed me of 4 pounds.” She went to the weekly market with 30 pounds of quinoa; the first intermediary she went to weighed it as only 20 pounds, so she went to another and got \$26 for it. That day, the local market price was \$1.00 a pound, so she received \$4 less than she thought was fair. Even though the local market price for quinoa

at that time was high, she didn't get as much money as she would have if she took the quinoa to the export organization which offers \$.90 a pound, but always weighs honestly.

At the weekly plaza, there are usually two or three intermediaries with large scales to weigh the sacks of grain. These intermediaries buy small amounts of quinoa from many different producers, combine it all into 100-pound sacks, and then turn around and sell it the very same day to *comerciantes* with big trucks. In addition to the two or three main intermediaries, there are numerous, aggressive intermediaries with hand scales who compete to poach farmers before they sell to the others. These intermediaries approach farmers as they stand in the long lines, waiting for their grain to be weighed. Admittedly, they have to cheat the price a bit in order to make a profit for themselves at the end of the day. After the plaza is over, they re-sell the quinoa they purchased to the intermediaries with large scales. Since all the intermediaries (whether large scale or hand scale) buy quinoa for the same price, the smaller ones have even more incentive to rig the scales and pay farmers less than they owe.

Quinoa farmers *see* that the local market intermediaries collect their quinoa and other grains, and then turn around and re-sell it at the end of the day for more money. According to Fanny, the intermediaries are “*los que tienen plata*” and “*los que ganan más.*” They are the ones who have money and the ones that profit most. She knows that intermediaries buy for cheap and then sell to the bodegas and supermarkets for a more expensive price. The producers labor in the fields for nine months to bring quinoa to the market. All the intermediary does is stand there, buy, and re-sell. Yet they make more profit than the farmers themselves do! This is a very visible injustice.

While straddling both markets, broccoli and quinoa producers ultimately prefer the export one. Even if the local market price occasionally pays more, this benefit does not make up for long periods of low prices, or the uncertainty of frequent price fluctuation. Moreover, even if the intermediary says they will pay a given price, in practice they often pay less by claiming the farmer brought in less weight than they actually did. While export prices might occasionally be lower, at the least the farmer trusts the intermediary to pay the promised price and weigh the product honestly.

In actuality, these broccoli and quinoa farmers do currently supply the domestic market with some of their export-oriented crop. In that sense, they do still contribute to the national food supply. Yet, they do so not because of their sense of national belonging, patriotism, or vision of national food self-sufficiency, but rather for livelihood security. Straddling multiple markets is part of their strategy to utilize all available resources in order to secure viable rural livelihoods.

A Closer Look at Fair Trade Quinoa

Another reason quinoa farmers prefer export is because they feel Ecuadorians do not value quinoa. Prior to the export boom, quinoa was not sought in the national market. Urban consumption of quinoa was all but non-existent. In Ecuadorian society, quinoa was viewed as low quality “Indian” food. It was not even included in the Ecuadorian agricultural census until 1986 (Buitrón 2011). As a result of this devaluation, quinoa was grown only in small quantities in rural highland communities, and for household consumption. Some indigenous peasant families even lost the tradition completely.

After the local sustainable development NGO, *Radiofónica*, revitalized quinoa production for export, a number of other development NGOs followed suit. Each of these organizations buys certified organic quinoa from the large indigenous peasant population of Chimborazo. They enter communities, propose the farmers start growing quinoa to supply the organization, teach them the organic production techniques, and in some cases even teach them how to plant and harvest quinoa.

Farmers in a number of communities, including Quiloa, are pleased with the opportunity to learn these new methods of composting, crop rotation, and natural fumigants. But they also consider it more work. They appreciate the premium price they receive in the export market for organic certification and are frustrated that the local market intermediaries do not pay more for organic quinoa.

For example, Patricia tells me it is important to export because the people of Ecuador don't eat that much quinoa, but people in other countries do. Not only that, but they "pay well" for quinoa. Javier says that "*la gente urbana*," the urban people of Ecuador don't want to eat quinoa because they prefer easier to prepare products like pasta and bread. He thinks it is better to export because people in other countries "pay more" for organic certification. "One of the biggest problems," Javier says, "is that Ecuadorians don't care whether quinoa is organic or fair trade, but people in Europe and the U.S. do, and so they pay more. Ecuadorians don't want to pay more for certified." Fanny had a similar response. I asked her whether it is better to export quinoa or sell it in national market and her response was "We never use chemicals, only manure from our own animals." I prompted her further about what that had to do with markets and she said "In

the national market, it doesn't matter if it's chemical or organic, it doesn't matter to them at all.”

While all of the export NGOs buy certified organic quinoa from the producers, they are not all certified Fair Trade. And so their practices of collecting and paying for quinoa differ. In what follows, I compare the background and practices of the NGOs, and then detail farmer preferences and complaints regarding the quinoa export organizations.

Comparison of Export NGOs

Radiofónica¹⁰ began exporting quinoa for the first time in 1997, but their history dates back much farther than that. They originated in 1962 as a Catholic organization with a mission of indigenous rights to education, literacy, and cultural valoration.

Radiofónica started the first radio station to broadcast in the Kichwa language; this was instrumental in spreading awareness about political events throughout the population.

Radiofónica is now independent of the Catholic Church, but they continue to work towards the empowerment of indigenous communities in Chimborazo.

Radiofónica began to promote organic quinoa production in the indigenous peasant communities of Chimborazo after they were contacted by Inca Organics, the wholesale import company based out of Georgia that a former Peace Corp Volunteer started. Inca Organics refers to the re-introduction and valoration of quinoa in

Chimborazo as the “Heirloom Quinoa Project.” The goal of this project was to “provide

¹⁰ Also known as ERPE (*Escuelas Radiofónicas Populares del Ecuador*). The farmers call the organization Radiofónica for short. The wing of Radiofónica that actually commercializes the quinoa is called Sumak Life. The farmers do not make the distinction between the development organization and the quinoa company, referring to them both as Radiofónica.

adequate income for the indigenous farmers, teach organic gardening, and promote nutritional food products both for exportation and consumption.” This project aimed to benefit indigenous farming communities with “significant economic growth while rediscovering their Andean ancestry.”

The quinoa development project thus unfolded under the direction of four organizations: Radiofónica, Inca Organics, BCS (a third party organic certifier based out of Germany), and the Canadian Development Fund. The Canadian Development Fund helped Radiofónica establish themselves into an export enterprise under the name Sumak Life. In 1999, with international funding, Radiofónica built a quinoa processing plant. They use the facility to clean quinoa in bulk and to manufacture derivative products, like quinoa flour, pasta and cookies. Since the beginning, Radiofónica purchased quinoa from the farmers at a fixed price, established at the beginning of the planting season rather than at harvest time. This feature differs from their largest competitor, Fundamyf.

Fundamyf¹¹ is another development NGO that started their own quinoa export enterprise. They buy quinoa from indigenous peasant farmers in the central Andes, process it in their factory in Riobamba, and export to the U.S. and Europe. Fundamyf is certified organic but not certified Fair Trade, so the price they pay farmers for quinoa is not established in advance as a fixed price, but rather varies along with the local market price. Fundamyf began commercializing quinoa in 2006 and now manufacture a variety of value-added goods, including quinoa bars and candy.

¹¹ Fundamyf stands for Fundación Familia y Mujer Andina. The wing of the non-profit organization that commercializes quinoa is called Randimpak. However, similar to suppliers of Radiofónica, the farmers themselves refer to their quinoa buyer as Fundamyf.

Fundamyf started as a women's development organization, working with indigenous and Afro-Ecuadorian communities across the country. They hold workshops on empowerment and assist women's groups with efforts to commercialize their agricultural and artisan products. These income-generating activities are described by the organization as a means of independence and self-empowerment for women who have suffered from domestic abuse. According to Fundamyf, they began buying directly from women producers out of a bottom-up, grassroots need that emerged during workshops. Women complained about the problems they face selling their products in the market because of *maltrata*, mistreatment by intermediaries who take advantage of them. According to organization rhetoric, that is why they began to buy quinoa from producers.

Sylvia, a quinoa farmer and long-term participant of Fundamyf, complains about this transition of the organization. Before, she says, the organization was all about women. It worked towards increasing the value of women in society, so that they could be more than slaves who do housework and take care of the kids. In her community in another canton of Chimborazo, 31 women were part of the community development program during the early years of Fundamyf. They offered the women a credit and savings bank, talked about domestic abuse, and organized a women's group at the province-wide level in order to change gender norms so that women could go to school and get an education. However, then Fundamyf started to promote quinoa production and buy quinoa from her community and others. And now, Sylvia says with resentment, they work with men! They work with male quinoa farmers, and worse, the *técnicos* that go to the communities to teach quinoa production methods and to buy quinoa from them are all male. In her opinion, Fundamyf no longer works towards the goal of female

empowerment. All they are interested in is finding more quinoa farmers to increase the amount of quinoa they can export.

Diego, Radiofónica's processing plant operator, is similarly critical of Fundamyf's transition into quinoa. He tells me that Fundamyf only works towards their own interests, making money through the sale of quinoa to pad the pockets of the NGO director and staff. Their rhetoric of helping women, Diego insists, is only propaganda. He is especially critical of their practice of lowering the price they pay for quinoa when the local market price goes down. This takes advantage of, rather than helping, the farmers – including women farmers – that supply their organization.

Another quinoa export NGO is MCCH.¹² They are a national community development NGO that works in the coast as well as the highlands. Their overall objective is to help small farmers and artisans commercialize their products; and they also work with community tourism. Like Radiofónica, they began under a Catholic priest in the 1970s but are currently non-religious. MCCH is certified organic and Fair Trade and exports mostly to Spain. They work with 100 families in 16 different indigenous peasant communities in Chimborazo, mostly in *cantón* Guamote but also in *cantón* Colta. They do not, however, work in Columbe, the *parroquia* in Colta where Quiloa is located, because Radiofónica and Fundamyf already have agreements with those communities.

All of the quinoa export NGOs emphasized to me that they are looking for new members but there is a lot of competition from other foundations. During a Fundamyf processing plant visit, the staff told me they are trying to increase the volume of quinoa

¹² MCCH stands for Maquita Cushunchic. This is a Kichwa phrase that means 'lending a hand.' They commercialize quinoa under the label Maquita.

they process. They want to sign up more suppliers but the primary obstacle is competition with other foundations. Similarly, MCCH is looking for more suppliers, but there is too much competition. The CEO of Radiofónica also confirms they are looking for more suppliers, but the competition is high. Diego from Radiofónica says that “*muchas entidades,*” many entities, want to buy quinoa from the farmers but there is not enough to go around.

Quinoa export NGOs are approaching new communities, trying to convince them to start growing quinoa. One day, I rode around with Oliver, Fundamyf’s *técnico*, as he drove to community after community, talking with the leaders, convincing them to start growing quinoa and sell it to Fundamyf. These peasant farmers said they do not know how to grow quinoa; Oliver said he would teach them. They said they do not know how to grow organic; Oliver said he would teach them. Some of these community members said they would rather have *potrero*, grass pastures for milk cows, but Oliver was insistent on what a good economic opportunity in quinoa is, since they pay such a high price for it.

The local market intermediaries are also scrambling to access quinoa. Mónica, a Quiloa community member, tells me that every time she goes to the weekly plaza in the nearby town, the intermediaries always ask her – based on her appearance – if she has any quinoa to sell. They always ask and try to convince her to sell to them, not the NGOs, once her quinoa is ready. And many of these local market intermediaries do attract quinoa farmers because of the advantages they offer: immediate payment, convenient location, and no paperwork required.

Quinoa Farmer Complaints

Before, when Radiofónica first started buying quinoa from rural communities, everyone in Quiloa sold directly to them. Then in 2003, all of the producers in Chimborazo that supply Radiofónica formed a producer organization called Coprobich.¹³ In order to supply Radiofónica, producers had to join Coprobich. When this happened, a number of producers decided not to join because they did not want to fill out the paperwork, register with their *cedula* (social security number), or attend meetings. Now, some of the community members in Quiloa are *socios* of Radiofónica/Coprobich, some are *socios* of Fundamyf, and others are not affiliated with either export NGO.

However, even those community members who are not themselves *socios* have access to sell to the export NGO when they want to through their family members. Since the export NGO expects a given volume of quinoa from each of its members, if that producer sells part of their quinoa in the local market, then they can make up the difference by selling some of their brother's, sister's, parent's, or cousin's quinoa. For example, Guillermo was originally a *socio* of Radiofónica, but he did not want to organize as part of the producer organization. He did not want to register his *cedula* or fill out all that paperwork. Nevertheless, he sells part of his quinoa harvest to Radiofónica/Coprobich through his sister Maria who is a *socio*. When the local market price is low, she will take his quinoa to the organization and sell it to them under her name and registration information.

¹³ Corporación de Productores y Comercializadores Orgánicos Bio Taita Chimborazo (Corporation of Organic Producers and Sellers “Our Father” Chimborazo). “Bio Taita Chimborazo” refers to the snow-called volcano, Chimborazo, for which the province is named. “Bio Taita” is a Kichwa phrase.

Community members claim they do not have time to be *socios*. Carlotta used to sell to Radiofónica, but then she stopped because they demanded all the quinoa suppliers be *socios* and she did not have the time. Julisa used to sell to Radiofónica; now she sells to Fundamyf; but she does not want to be a *socio* there anymore either because she does not have time to attend meetings. Quinoa farmer from another community, Jorge, does not want to be a *socio* anymore either because you have to attend meetings. He lives far up the hillside and does not have time to come to town for meetings. Not only that, but he is sick of delayed payments and is starting to think it might be better to get a cheap price of \$50 a quintal as long as he gets the cash immediately.

Quiloa farmers also complain about the high quality standards of both Fundamyf and Radiofónica. Even though he knows that all intermediaries cheat their scales a little, Guillermo plans to sell to the local merchant that offers the best price rather than to the export NGO. Radiofónica does weigh fairly, he tells me, but the problem is that they expect high quality standards. The plaza will buy lower quality quinoa, whereas Radiofónica will drop the price down several pounds if they find impurities. These little pieces of shell or stalk are impossible to avoid, he tells me, even when they use the *trilladora* (thresher machine).

Another complaint about Radiofónica is that they do not come to the community to collect the quinoa from the producers. Instead, producers must bring their sacks of quinoa all the way to Riobamba. This is difficult to do considering how heavy 100-pound sacks of quinoa are, and the fact that few community members own cars.

Lupe explains that if she only has a few sacks of quinoa to sell, she will bring them herself on the bus. But right after harvest, when everyone in the community has a

lot of quinoa to sell to Radiofónica, they will all chip in and rent a car to bring their quinoa to the office.

Liana told me that when she tried to take sacks of quinoa to Riobamba by bus, oftentimes the bus driver would not stop to pick her up or would not let her take the sacks on the bus. Besides, the bus stop in Riobamba is still on the other side of the city from the Radiofónica office, and so she would still have to take another, smaller, more crowded, bus across the city, or splurge and pay for a taxi to take her to the office. For that reason, she is now a *socio* of Fundamyf instead of Radiofónica, because they come to the community to pick up directly from producers.

The fact that Fundamyf goes to the community to pick up quinoa is one of its biggest selling points when advertising themselves to prospective *socios*. However, pickups can also be inconsistent and unreliable. After a workshop in Riobamba about self-esteem and leadership, led by Fundamyf staff, Oliver the *técnico* joined us for lunch. Sitting around the table, one of the participants told Oliver that somebody in his community had quinoa to sell to Fundamyf, but they never came by to pick up the quinoa and so he went to the weekly market instead and sold to intermediaries. Oliver apologized and explained that the reason he did not come was that he was sick all of last week.

Fanny has been a *socio* of Fundamyf for 5 or 6 years. It is better to sell to Fundamyf than the plaza, she says, because their prices are always slightly higher. Plus, they are trustworthy with their scale. Even though Fundamyf has bought quinoa for as low as \$40 a quintal, she ultimately prefers Fundamyf to Radiofónica because they come to the community to pick up their quinoa and because they hold workshops.

The price Fundamyf pays for quinoa has reached as low as \$40 a quintal because Fundamyf is not certified Fair Trade and thus does not pay a guaranteed price. Instead, the price they pay for quinoa varies alongside the local market price. They always pay just slightly more than the current market rate. Many *socios* have a problem with this, however, because they prefer a fixed, reliable price. Sylvia tells me it is a huge problem that Fundamyf's price fluctuates. She is harvesting her quinoa next month and she has no idea what the price will be when she sells it to Fundamyf.

Liana also has a problem with the lack of fixed price. She does not know until harvest time how much they will get for the quinoa. That makes budgeting harvesting expenses more difficult. The problem with harvest time is that the local market (and therefore also Fundamyf's) price goes down dramatically because all the quinoa producers live in the same zone of Chimborazo with the same climatic conditions. They all wait for rain to plant the seeds, and so they all harvest around the same time.

Irma was a *socio* of Radiofónica for three years but for the last four years her and the rest of her family have been *socios* at Fundamyf. The good thing about Fundamyf, she tells me, is that they come to the community to pick up the harvest, rather than having to go to Riobamba and drop it off. However, she does not like that Fundamyf's price goes down when the local market price goes down because Radiofónica never did that. One time she sold to Fundamyf for \$50 a quintal. This was frustrating for Irma who knew she would have received \$85 a quintal selling to Radiofónica. For that reason, she actually liked Radiofónica better and admits that the only reason she switched is because of community politics. I will elaborate on what she means by political divisions in the

community in the upcoming section when I discuss the quinoa producer cooperative's initiative to break free from the export NGO and become their own middleman.

Becoming their own Middleman

Javier sees Radiofónica as the intermediary. They buy, process and market the quinoa products, making more profit than the farmers who actually grow the quinoa. The intermediary always takes advantage of the grower, Javier assures me, and Radiofónica is no exception. Because of that, Coprobich, the quinoa producer cooperative that supplies Radiofónica, wants take on the role of the intermediary. They want to become their own middleman.

Coprobich wants to buy quinoa directly from producers, process it themselves, and export directly to Fair Trade buyers in other countries. They want to process their own quinoa so that the growers can earn more of the profits from exporting it. Coprobich's goal is to have an entire indigenous-run enterprise, where the farmers are included in the processes that take place downstream the commodity chain. That way, profits can be distributed among the quinoa farmers rather than concentrated in the hands of urban professionals.

Their decision to break apart from Radiofónica has much to do with the ethno-class differences between white-mestizo urban professionals and rural indigenous peasant producers. The CEO of Sumak Life (the wing of Radiofónica that buys, processes and markets quinoa) is a tall, white, suit-and-tie wearing, busy, impatient, condescending man. The quinoa farmers complain that he is rude, talks down to them, and does not listen to their ideas or take their concerns seriously. He is a businessman, concerned with

the bottom line. Based on his calculations, it is no longer profitable to pay for Fair Trade certification since Fair Trade certification does not open up many market opportunities beyond what they access through organic certification.

The quinoa farmer leaders of Coprobich, however, want to continue to supply Fair Trade importers. They plan to continue to supply Inca Organics as well the European Fair Trade importer Ethiquable. Not only that, but they intend to label themselves as SPP. SPP is the *sello de pequeños productores* or small producer seal. It is an additional label on Fair Trade certified products to verify that the Fair Trade product was grown by small producers rather than by a plantation. Now that plantations are eligible to receive Fair Trade certification (see Reynolds et al 2007; Reynolds 2012), CLAC (Coordinadora Latinoamericana y del Caribe del Pequeños Productores del Comercio Justo; Latin American and Caribbean Coordinator of Small Fair Trade Producers) began their own SPP seal to differentiate small producers from other Fair Trade certified producers.¹⁴

In addition to issues of transparency and certification, Coprobich farmers want their own community members to be employed in the quinoa processing plants. They want to be an exporter make up entirely of indigenous staff. Both Coprobich leaders and the Radiofónica plant manager told me the same story: that a group of quinoa farmers went to the processing plant in Riobamba and saw that all the workers were urban mestizos. They became upset and asked why people from the indigenous communities

¹⁴ CLAC launched SPP in April 2011. The Ecuadorian chapter of CLAC is called CECJ (*Unión Nacional de Asociaciones de Pequeños Productores Agropecuarios Certificados en Comercio Justo del Ecuador*; National Union of Certified Fair Trade Small Agricultural Producer Associations of Ecuador). CECJ Is made up of twelve producer organizations. Besides Coprobich and quinoa, the other organizations produce coffee, bananas, cacao and tea.

were not hired. Coprobich farmers plan to employ their own sons and daughters to run the machines at their new processing plant.

During my fieldwork, they were in the process of constructing this new processing plant. The plant is located just outside of the town of Cajabamaba in *cantón* Colta, where the weekly plaza takes place. That way, quinoa farmers do not have to travel all the way to the city of Riobamba to deliver their harvest. At this plant, in addition to cleaning and packaging the bulk quinoa for export, they plan to manufacture the same types of value-added products that Radiofónica does: quinoa flour, quinoa pasta, and quinoa cookies. According to Javier, Coprobich broke away from Sumak Life because they wanted to be involved with the value-added processes that take place along the commodity chain. Since the profits from those products are so much more than straight quinoa, he tells me, it is important that the producers themselves have a part in it.

Above all, Coprobich wants to be an indigenous-owned enterprise. They want more decision-making power, and they want a larger share of the profit. Indigenous community leaders felt the white, urban professionals at the export NGO were excluding them as actors with a stake in the process. Lupe tells me that Coprobich left Radiofónica to create their own processing plant because it is *theirs*. It is an indigenous community enterprise. Whereas Radiofónica was not run like a community enterprise, it was run like a for-profit business, *con fines de lucro*. Four men acting like *dueños* (owners) were in charge of everything and made all the decisions. Whereas the producers, the *gente del campo*, did not have a say. According to her, Sumak Life got taken over by a group of urban *dueños*.

The same differences between quinoa producers and Radiofónica staff characterizes the dynamic with other export NGOs. Oliver, the *técnico* from Fundamyf who deals most closely with the producers, is a tall, white, young, fast-talking, university-educated urbanite. The office staff who weigh the quinoa at the Fundamyf office are also white, urban, educated professionals. Even though they weigh honestly, not cheating them of pounds like in the local market, the profit goes to fund their own salaries.

At the International Year of Quinoa event in Riobamba, a stark contrast was visible between the quinoa farmers in attendance and the staff of the export NGOs and government representatives. Coprobich members showed up in matching red ponchos for the men and burgundy shawls for the women. They were visibly shorter, darker, and more weathered than the others. Meanwhile, MCCH staff – made up of tall, mestizo, college-aged men and women – also wore matching outfits of black fleece vests with MCCH logos over their button-up and polo shirts, black slacks and jeans, leather boots and heels. At the front of the stage, the Ministry of Agriculture hosts of the event wore black slacks, blazers, high heels and sunglasses with blond highlights in their hair.

The class hierarchy in Ecuadorian society is a highly visible one, ranging from short and dark to tall and white, from colorful *ropa del campo* to monochromatic professional attire. Despite similar ethno-class differences between Fundamyf and MCCH staff and producers, the quinoa farmers that supply those organizations have not yet initiated any effort to break away and export on their own. In fact, since Coprobich separated from Radiofónica, another producer organization has formed to take its place.

Since Coprobich has broken away from Radiofónica to start their own processing plant and product label, another group – Sumak Tarpuy – has replaced it as the producer

cooperative supplying Radiofónica. Now, instead of competition between Fundamyf, MCCH and Radiofónica/Coprobich to sign up *socios*, there is competition between Fundamyf, MCCH, Coprobich, and Radiofónica/Sumak Tarpuy. Interestingly, the Quiloa community member involved in the formation of this new cooperative is not actually a quinoa grower himself. Salvador lives in Quiloa and works for a reforestation sustainable development NGO in Riobamba. He spearheaded the creation of Sumak Tarpuy even though, for lack of time, he has not planted quinoa in years.

Sumak Tarpuy intends to represent the quinoa farmers that used to supply Radiofónica through Coprobich but do not want to stay *socios* with Coprobich. Coprobich tells me they lost members in the transition, most likely because those farmers did not want to pay the one-time \$40 fee to help fund the construction of the new processing plant.¹⁵ While some producers want a voice and want to attend meetings, others prefer not to add the extra time burden to their already busy and exhausting schedules.

Thus, the three different quinoa producer organizations in Quiloa are each lead by a different community leader: Salvador, Javier and Pablo. The fight over quinoa in Riobamba, characterized by competing community development NGOs, reflects and perpetuates existing divisions within Quiloa.

Coprobich and Fundamyf suppliers in Quiloa map onto pre-existing organizations run by rival community leaders. Coprobich affiliates are also members of CEDIBAL (*Centro de Desarrollo Integral de Balda Lupaxi*), led by Javier. Fundamyf affiliates are

¹⁵ Plant construction was divided 50/50 between the producers themselves and the government Ministry of Agriculture. I will go into more detail on government support of Coprobich in chapter 6.

also members of the *Asociación de Trabajadores Agrícolas Balda Lupaxi*, led by Pablo. They all used to be part of the same organization, but Javier did not like the way Pablo ran the *Asociación*. Rumors circulated in the community that he was pocketing the development money for personal expenses (an allegation I am inclined to believe given the fact that Pablo is one of the only community members with a car and indoor toilet).

These are the community politics Irma was referring to above. She joined Fundamyf not necessarily because she preferred their practices to Radiofónica, but because she is related to Pablo. At the divide, community members sided with either Javier or Pablo, and now Salvador is trying to convince his fellow community members to leave Coprobich or Fundamyf and join Sumak Tarpuy.

Community politics can be tense. Similar divisions and allegations of misconduct will likely follow Coprobich as they endeavor to create an indigenous-run export enterprise. In fact, that is what Diego, the Radiofónica plant manager predicts. He questions whether Coprobich really wants to benefit the rural people, or if they just want to pad their own pockets. Even if they start out with good intentions, Diego assures me, they will end up serving their own interests. The leadership of Coprobich will take advantage of the others, he predicts. The growers will realize this too, explains Diego, when the leaders end up with a car or a bigger house.

Taking a closer look at quinoa, we see that certified quinoa farmers do complain about certain aspects of the export market – such as delayed payment, difficulty transporting quinoa to the export organization, and the time commitment of meetings – but ultimately prefer it to selling in the local market because they feel taken advantage of by local market intermediaries. However, some of the quinoa farmers are beginning to

recognize that the export NGOs are also middlemen. These middlemen do more work than the local market intermediaries who buy and re-sell in the same day: they process the quinoa, provide technical assistance, hold workshops, and redistribute some of the profit. Yet some of the profit also goes to pay the salaries of the organization's leadership and staff, who tend to be urban, middle-class, white-mestizo professionals rather than indigenous *gente del campo*. Therefore, a core group of quinoa farmers are leading the initiative to become their own middleman. In that way, the farmers export directly to the importers without going through another set of hands. They plan to employ their own community members in the processing plant, develop their own value-added products, and distribute more of the profits to the farmers themselves. Whether this develops into an enterprise run by and for the indigenous *campesinos* of Chimborazo, or whether this becomes a venue for within-group exploitation – for a few leaders to get ahead at the expense of the rest – remains to be seen.

Fair Markets

Coprobich leaders were not the only community members interested in getting involved with downstream activities. Farmers in Brocano and Lacava also expressed interest in processing value-added products. They similarly want to earn more of the profit along the commodity chain by taking the step from producer cooperative to community enterprise.

A similar initiative is emerging in Brocano. Currently the community has their own *empresa* to collect broccoli and sell collectively to Nova, the agribusiness firm. Their goal is to upgrade the facilities to process broccoli and other vegetables into ready-

to-eat packages to sell to national and international supermarket buyers. Currently, this trimming of the broccoli heads into florets takes place at the agribusiness firm, but they want to take on this value-added activity themselves because clean, cut, ready-to-eat broccoli is more profitable than bulk broccoli. They are even trying out the idea of making *harina de brócoli* (broccoli flour) to use in soups or mix with mayonnaise and eat with crackers. First, broccoli must be cut into small pieces, then dehydrated and put through the *molino*, or grinder.

In Lacava, they have a *centro de acopio* where they collect milk and sell collectively to a national agribusiness firm, Ordeño. Yet, numerous community members told me of their plans to upgrade the centro de acopio facility beyond *tanques de enfriamiento* (refrigerator tanks) so they can manufacture and sell value-added products like yogurt, cheese and *leche en funda* (milk bags), not just the raw material. Their first step is to sell these products in national supermarket chains and work towards an export market: “Of course, if we had the opportunity to export, that is a dream to one day export product from here to other countries, because here we have a large quantity of milk that we produce daily,” says Octavio. Pulisa told me: “It is our vision that all the milk we produce leaves for the exterior.”

These indigenous farmers want to export, but they simultaneously want to have more control over the process. From yogurt in Lacava, to chopped broccoli in Brocano, to quinoa pasta in Quiloa, community members want to benefit from activities downstream the commodity chain by processing and directly exporting value-added products through community-based enterprises, eliminating intermediaries.

Farmers in all three communities also expressed interest in exporting more of their crops, beyond broccoli, quinoa and milk. Quiloa farmers want to export other grains besides quinoa. Brocano farmers want to export other vegetables besides broccoli. And Lacava farmers expressed interest in exporting products beyond dairy, like grains and even *cuy* (guinea pig, a regional delicacy).

The quinoa farmers in Quiloa are interested in exporting their other grains – barley, wheat, and habas – through organic and Fair Trade certified markets. They want the export NGOs to purchase these grains in addition to quinoa. A number of Quiloa farmers mentioned that they wished Fundamyf or Radiofónica would purchase barley, wheat and habas from them at a certified price. In fact, Coprobich plans to sell barley and habas to their Fair Trade certified European importer, Ethiquable.

Many people in Brocano talk about exporting the other vegetables they grow, like carrots, onions and beets. Alma from Brocano wants to grow new “*desconocido*” export crops: “It would be better, I say, if other, new products came to the community, others like broccoli. We want the governments of other countries to demand other products, that the government here gives us other products, unfamiliar products, like artichokes, asparagus.”

Embra in Lacava wants to export *cuy*, if the government could help her find a market. Nelson from Lacava wants to export staple grains. Just as Lacava has a collection center where all the community members bring their milk to sell to the national firm, Nelson talks about starting an initiative in the community to export grains through the centro de acopio. His idea of food sovereignty is not to sell crops locally, but that they, the farmers – the small-scale, historically marginalized indigenous peasant farmers – be

the ones who profit. So for him, small-farm exports contribute to fair food, or *comida justa*, because it brings justice to the small farmers.

Victoria from Lacava also thinks the government should help them sell more products through their centros de acopio. It is better to sell collectively through the centro de acopio instead of always looking for local market intermediaries to sell to, she tells me, “because they [the intermediaries] always buy to profit themselves.” When they sell collectively, it increases the volume of product they sell, and they are able to reach a larger buyer that is more likely to pay a fair price.

Even though Octavio recognizes that their current market link with Ordeño is more fair than before with the local market intermediaries, he still wants to eventually export directly, without going through the processing firm. Lacava community members have a generally favorable opinion of their buyer because the national firm pays a fair and stable price, but they also want to be their own middlemen. Octavio, as well as Sara, Pulisa, and other community members, tell me of their plans to receive government support to upgrade their facilities to process value-added products.

Their current collection center, including the refrigerated tanks, was funded by the government. The Correa administration is also responsible for establishing the minimum price of milk that buyers cannot drop below. Now Lacava is looking to the Ministry of Agriculture to support their efforts to sell new dairy products and more of their other crops.

It is clear that the indigenous peasant farmers themselves, in all three communities, look to the government to support their vision of fair markets. From their perspective, it is the role of the government to help construct facilities, introduce new

non-traditional agriculture, network communities with buyers, and establish price controls. In this way, the government plays an important role in setting them up for success in the international market as well as in regulating the national market so that local market prices do not drop so low.

Alfonso from Brocano is in favor of President Correa's promise to set a minimum price on agricultural commodities so that the price is guaranteed to cover the cost of production. When I asked him how his experience with agriculture could be improved, he responded by saying: "Better markets. A fixed price, so it doesn't rise, drop, rise, drop, but a fair price."

Similarly, Gladís from Lacava tells me that it would be better if barley had a fixed price "because it would help us pay back what we invest. It would help us recover. Because sometimes you invest in production and then when it is harvest time, the price drops." This is a problem for farmers because they often must sell the output right after harvest, regardless of what the price is. "I have to pay for the harvest machinery, and so I have to sell right away," Gladís explains, and that is why the market price right after harvest is so important.

Therefore, the government's recent initiatives to establish base prices for basic commodities is important to the farmers to prevent the market price from plummeting due to overproduction at harvest time. But respondents also had ideas for how to prevent overproduction in the first place. They believe that local government and community leaders should assist in developing complementary division of labor. Rather than specializing as a community in the commercial production of one type of crop, as they currently do with grains, potatoes and *hortalizas*, a few farmers suggested varying the

crop schedules within a community so that not everybody produces the same thing at the same time. In that way, they can be more self sufficient in trading with each other and keeping prices high.

Through organizing and regulating planting schedules, overproduction would not occur at harvest time. Liana from Quiloa tells me: “For us here in Ecuador, I think there is a lack of organization. For example, by zone. There are zones that grow beans and zones that grow vegetables. There are zones that grow only potatoes, only corn, only peas. I think this is a lack of organization. They have to organize, for example, the municipality, *juntas parroquiales*, the government itself, for us to have a just price.” As it is now, “when there is any, there is a *lot*.” Esteban from Brocano has a similar complaint and proposed solution:

Here in agriculture you have to plant thinking ahead, and plant orderly. Because, for example, one person plants lettuce – everybody plants lettuce. And what happens is the market price drops. I think it is better to analyze well what your neighbors plant to plant another thing to balance each other. If your neighbor plants lettuce, everybody plants lettuce. If your neighbor plants broccoli, everybody plants broccoli. What happens is the market drops to the ground. That’s what happens. There should be agricultural studies.

Ideas for how markets can be improved revolve around establishing stable prices so that the market price does not drop low at harvest time. This could happen through government price controls, regulating planting schedules, expanding centros de acopio, transforming raw material into value-added products, or supplying exporters – be they non-profit organizations or for-profit agribusiness. Currently, all three communities have “fair” links with their buyers. Even though they are not certified Fair Trade, broccoli and milk buyers in Brocano and Lacava also offer a fixed, stable, reliable price. It does not

change day-to-day like selling crops in the local market. Fair prices are mostly associated with export, but local and national markets could be made more fair with reliable intermediaries.

Thus, for crops like broccoli and quinoa, as well as other grains and vegetables, if the national market link can be made more fair, then indigenous peasant farmer preference for export markets might fade away. Farmers want to export because of its reputation for offering higher, stable prices. If the local market offered higher, stable prices – whether through government price controls (like Correa’s current initiative) or reliable national firms (like Lacava’s milk buyer) – than supplying fellow Ecuadorians in the national market would become more attractive to these farmers.

In this way, we can see milk as an example of fair market trade, nationally. The case of Lacava demonstrates that it is the initial intermediary more than the final market destination that farmers are most concerned with. Whether destined for domestic or foreign consumption, if farmers receive a fixed, reliable price that covers the cost of production, they will be more satisfied. Lacava farmers supply national consumers through the condensed milk, powdered milk, yogurt and cheese that Ordeño sells at supermarket retail stores. Ideally, Lacava community members want to do this themselves through their community enterprise, but in the meantime at least they receive a fair price for the raw material.

For the indigenous peasant farmers in this study, fair markets mean markets in which they, the producers, earn more money for the products they grow. Fair markets are those in which farmers are not taken advantage of by intermediaries. Avoiding exploitative intermediaries requires government support. To improve the local market,

farmers think the government should establish price floors and organize planting schedules. To improve the export market, farmers want government support to sell new and value-added products through community enterprises.

Conclusion

The indigenous peasant farmers in this study desire to export their products because of the problems they face selling in the local market. Negative views of the local market revolve mostly around their perception of being taken advantage of by local intermediaries. It is not that they are not exploited in other markets, but it is not so obviously visible. In the local market they literally see the middleman turn around and sell it to someone else right away for more money, sometimes profiting more in that one transaction than the farmers profit for months and months of labor.

Nevertheless, farmers are beginning to see the exploitation of all middlemen who profit more than they do for re-selling in larger quantities, moving product from one location to another, or transforming harvest into value-added products. Because of that, these communities are looking to the possibility of becoming their own middlemen and taking on some of the value-added activities themselves. In Lacava and Brocano, these micro-enterprise initiatives are based within their own community. For Quiloa, some of the quinoa farmers are affiliated with the new indigenous-run export enterprise, while others are members of the other two export organizations. These divisions within Quiloa did not come about as a result of the quinoa boom, although they were likely perpetuated and exacerbated by it.

Scholars have been critical of Fair Trade organizations for requiring environmental practices that are inappropriate for local conditions. In this case, the certified quinoa farmers appreciate the new agro-ecological methods they have learned from the export organizations. Even though it is more work, farmers seem proud of the composting and organic fertilization and pest-control techniques they have learned from the *técnicos*. They appreciate the technical assistance to problem shoot the troubles they face with unpredictable weather patterns. This differs from the resentment and economic hardship that environmental standards have instigated in other case studies. Nonetheless, it points to a similar trend: top-down environmentalism.

Export markets have the potential to incentivize sustainable production methods. The quinoa export market has done so in Quiloa. Farmers in the other two communities use chemicals in agricultural production, but they are torn about choosing between health and income, and ultimately make choices that improve their market position. Brocano and Lacava community members apply chemicals in order to meet quality standards and quantity expectations – blemish-free produce and plentiful supply of milk. The certified organic export market for quinoa offers a market incentive for sustainable production, while milk and broccoli markets provide incentive for using agrochemicals. Some export markets value sustainable production methods and others do not, but none of the local markets offer higher prices for organic products.

Fair Trade differs from food sovereignty in their stance on international trade, but both are charged with imposing top-down values on small farmers and misrepresenting their material interests as cultural values. Both can be seen as promoting the values of environmental sustainability. Fair Trade instills ecological practices in producers through

market incentives, but the environmental vision of food sovereignty – of agro-ecological production for local consumption – does not yet resonate because the current conditions do not constitute this a viable option.

Scholars depict peasant farmers as the antidote to agri-food globalization because they feed local populations (Rosset 2000; Borras 2008). However, the structural inequality of national food markets and advantages offered by global commodity chains need to be taken into consideration. Peasants do not necessarily produce, or want to produce, for local consumption; if they have the opportunity to export products to the global North, they will likely take advantage of it. This study provides empirical support for Burnett and Murphy's (2014) argument that peasant farmers want more equitable access to global markets rather than opposing the global trading system. This study also heeds Burnett and Murphy's (2014) call for dialogue with small farmers to understand their interests and motivations.

These indigenous peasant farmers' ideas for how to improve agriculture revolve around fairer markets and commodity chains, both export and local. They call for opportunities to export more of their crops, develop value-added products, and export more directly by eliminating intermediaries; they call for fixed local market prices that cover the costs of production; and they call for government support in achieving these goals. Local markets must become more fair – through government intervention – if the food sovereignty vision of small-scale production for local consumption is going to become a viable reality.

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CHAPTER FIVE: PROTESTS

Introduction

This chapter examines the question of social movement participation. The previous two chapters analyzed the agricultural practices and perspectives of indigenous peasant communities and how those compare to the food sovereignty goals of sustainable production and localized trade. This chapter continues to explore the relationship between the movement leadership and base with regard to food sovereignty policy issues. Rather than in the fields or at markets, I analyze practices and perspectives with regard to protest campaigns.

I found that the majority of base community members did not participate in recent indigenous movement protests around food sovereignty issues. Even among those who did participate, numerous community members were indifferent or openly hostile to the movement. Some respondents were more supportive of overall indigenous movement history, tactics and goals than others – but this did not necessarily map on to differences in protest participation. Instead, support and participation varied independently of each other.

In one community, members support the indigenous movement agenda, but only a few groups of community members have network ties with organizations outside the community that facilitate their participation in recent protests. In another community, some members agree with the movement agenda and others are indifferent to it, but all protest because of communal obligation, even if they resent doing so. In the third community, most members are indifferent to or resentful of the movement. Their reasons

for not joining in protests have less to do with the content of policies, and more to do with a cultural consensus not to protest because of previous negative experiences associated with the act of leaving their fields and blocking the highways.

These differences are explained in part but not in full by livelihood specializations. Whether or not community members attend indigenous movement protests depends on a combination of factors, including cultural obligation, organizational ties, and material interest. Although physical presence at protests is driven largely by cultural obligation and organizational ties, whether or not indigenous peasants support the goals of indigenous movement campaigns mostly depends on the day-to-day lived reality of their livelihood base.

With regard to movement tenets, the indigenous peasant farmers in this study, as a whole, were more in favor of water rights than anti-free trade protests. The political issues they are most passionate about are distribution of resources and government investment in the small-farm sector. This sentiment can be seen in previous chapters when respondents speak about how they wish the government subsidized farm inputs, stabilized volatile price fluctuations in the national market, introduced new agricultural export crops, or invested more in their *centros de acopio*. This same outlook is elaborated with regard to water rights. Respondents were overwhelmingly in favor of the *Ley de Aguas* campaign to prioritize access to water among small producers and invest in infrastructure to bring irrigation water to rural communities. Attitudes towards protests against signing free-trade agreements, however, were more mixed.

This chapter fills an important gap in the literature on indigenous peasant movements in Latin America because it brings together two analytical foci that are rarely

in direct conversation with each other: material interests and protest participation of the ethno-class. Community livelihood studies often ignore the wider identity politics into which communities are embedded. At the same time, literature on nation-wide indigenous peasant movements often ignores or oversimplifies the lived realities of base communities. My findings provide a lens through which to understand why base communities protest in movement campaigns. While support for policies largely maps only livelihood base, actual presence at marches depends mostly on other factors, including obligation and network ties. Thus, the number of participants during mass mobilizations does not necessarily reflect widespread concern or support for an issue. The relationship between base and leadership is more complicated than that.

In what follows, I review literature on indigenous peasant movements in Latin America, arguing that the focus remains on movement leadership rather than the base communities that make up the mass of the protests. I then raise the question of representation between movement leadership and base, reviewing literature on the Ecuador indigenous movement that highlights cleavages between educated, urban leaders and poor rural bases. Before detailing my findings, I briefly outline a timeline of indigenous movement protests, paying particular attention to the last two campaigns on food sovereignty issues. After presenting the variety of viewpoints within each community, I identify common trends with regard to policy issues, and analyze how these vary by livelihood specialization.

Movement Leadership and Base

Most literature on indigenous peasant movements in Latin America studies them from the perspective of the leaders rather than the rural communities that make up the base of the movement (Stahler-Sholk 2001; Collier and Quaratiello 2005; Lewis 2007). Among those who do study grassroots participation, little attention is given to heterogeneity among base community members, especially divergent livelihood interests that might conflict with the goals of the movement (Vergara-Camus 2014). These scholars continue to perpetuate the depiction of peasants as non-capitalists who engage in subsistence production.

Moreover, studies of indigenous peasant community livelihoods do not tie the two processes (livelihoods and social movement participation) together or situate rural communities within the larger context of identity politics. There is certainly plenty of research on the livelihood specializations of indigenous peasant farming or artisan communities (Goldin and de Barrios 2001; Hamilton and Fischer 2005; Finan 2007; Dehart 2009), but these studies do not account for the role of ethnic identity politics. They situate the community in a broader economic framework, but not a political one.

Even the works that do address both local livelihood struggles and wider political organizing (Fischer and Benson 2005; Postero 2007) make an indirect rather than direct link between the two. They acknowledge that national social movement organizing around identity politics impacts the local political-economic realities under which communities derive their livelihoods, but the actual participation of the communities in the national political arena is left unknown.

Fischer and Benson (2005) give comprehensive detail on both ends. They bring us into the lives and livelihoods of indigenous broccoli farmers who have, in their words, internalized the hegemonic discourse of modern agriculture and export trade. Then, in the last part of the book, they discuss the indigenous movement of Guatemala Mayas as part of the larger pan-indigenous movement, referencing the well-known platform of the Zapatistas. But what is glaringly overlooked in this book is the connection between the two: where do the indigenous broccoli farmers fit into this burgeoning and influential indigenous movement?

Postero (2007) makes a more explicit connection between the happenings in Bolivian indigenous politics on the national level and community level. She discusses how the multicultural politics of Bolivia in turn affect indigenous communities because they organize around getting assistance for development projects. This is a step forward, but it leads the reader wondering how the communities fit within the larger indigenous movement: Do they actively march in protests? Does the political discourse that has contributed to these policy changes resonate with them?

One exception to this gap in the literature is Wendy Wolford's (2010) work on MST¹⁶ communities in Brazil. She emphasizes the importance of studying social movements from the perspective of the peripheral and not just the core members. Social movement analysis, she notes, tends to focus on ideal members and coherent messages, not the "ambivalent or half-hearted members" (11). The MST is the largest member organization of Via Campesina, but rather than focusing on the perspectives of the

¹⁶ MST stands for *Movimento dos Trabalhadores Rurais Sem Terra* in Portuguese. In English, this group is known as the Landless Workers Movement.

national leadership, she travels to rural communities to understand the perspectives of the base members.

She compares the perspectives of two communities in two different regions of Brazil with distinct political-economic histories and finds that the MST agenda reflects the lived experiences of one community more than the other. The dominant viewpoint within the MST in favor of small-scale, self-sufficient agriculture more closely aligns with the peasants of southern Brazil than the landless workers of northern Brazil. Even once they gained access to land through MST occupations, the workers of the north did not want to quit the sugar cane industry they were familiar with. Wolford (2010) finds that agrarian communities with a long history of subsistence-based farming identify much more with the movement than landless workers who joined the movement because of promises for land, only to prefer wage work in the sugar cane fields to the uncertainty of growing their own food.

Wolford (2010) finds that participants of the MST movement do not value the goals of sustainable production for local consumption uniformly or unanimously. She points to the successful representation of one group and the failure to represent the needs of another group within the movement. But rather than misrepresentation between the leadership and base, Wolford sees this as competing discourses within a movement: hegemonic and non-hegemonic voices. She refers to this as a “double-sided site of hegemonic contestation” (12): the subaltern movement fights against post-colonial national development, yet within the movement itself, new hegemonies are created.

In one sense, Wolford claims to “air the dirty laundry” of the movement, but she also notes that social movements are complex. To point out contradictions within the

movement is not to question its importance. There is nothing wrong with internal tensions within a movement; it only becomes a problem when those contradictions are “hidden under the guise of uniformity and absence of hierarchy” (226). Social movement scholars, she urges, must pay attention to the alternative and multiple subjectivities within movements. “Presenting a coherent and unified picture of social movements means choosing some subalterns over others” (12), she states, because there are hegemonic and counter-hegemonic subjectivities within every movement. In the MST, the romanticized notion of the middle peasant farmer that grows food for subsistence and local self-sufficiency under sustainable methods became the hegemonic viewpoint.

Wolford’s (2010) comparison of MST members in Brazil helps fill the gap in the literature with regard to the connection between leadership and base, and between agrarian livelihood and support for the food sovereignty agenda. My study adds to hers because my comparison is not between landless workers and peasants but between peasants and peasants: all three case communities have a history of small-scale peasant agriculture. I thus account for depth and variety within a seemingly homogenous group.

Moreover, although Wolford (2010) does address dissimilar perspectives between communities and MST leadership, she does not analyze the protest participation of MST base community members. Especially in the context of indigenous peasant movements in Mexico, Bolivia, and Ecuador, where their strength lies in the number of people who march in protests, why some people in some communities protest while others do not remains an important question to be explored.

Representation within the Ecuador Indigenous Movement

As Piven and Cloward (1979) note in their classic book *Poor People's Movements*, social movements of the poor with limited resources rely on acts of civil disobedience to gain attention and a seat at the bargaining table. This is true of Ecuador's indigenous movement: it relies on power in numbers. CONAIE has been able to negotiate with the government because of the number of people marching and blocking roads in their nation-wide uprisings. Scholars of the Ecuador indigenous movement point to its ability to mobilize large numbers of participants in public displays of protest as key to successful changes in the national political arena (Perreault 2003; Zamosc 2004, 2007; Yashar 2005; Colloredo-Mansfeld 2009).

The movement is structured in a tiered fashion, relying on the rural bases to provide the mass force and back up the claims of the leadership. National confederations call upon regional federations to socialize¹⁷ the issue among community leaders and convince their community members to join in nation-wide protests. Zamosc (2007) considers the willingness and readiness of participants at the grassroots level to be the main source of the effectiveness of nation-wide mobilizations. He refers to the indigenous movement as a network of networks in which CONAIE is able to mobilize existing networks and turn social capital into political capital. Yashar (2005) credits these transcommunity networks as the reason why indigenous movement organizing has been more successful in Ecuador compared to Peru. And Perreault (2003) similarly argues that

¹⁷ In Spanish, the term *socializar* refers to spreading awareness about issues down the movement hierarchy: from federations to community leaders to community members. I use the English translation socialize, even though the word does not have the same connotation in English.

“the politics of scale have been central to the gains made by Ecuadorian indigenous organizations during the past 30 years” (115).

Nevertheless, scholars of the Ecuador indigenous movement also point to its fragility if the movement leaders do not address the livelihood concerns of base community members. According to many, there is a disconnect between leadership and base (Bebbington et al 1993; Zamosc 1994; Perreault 2003; Colloredo-Mansfeld 2009; Glidden 2011; Becker 2013; Martinez-Novo 2014). In large part, this disconnect is attributed to national-level emphasis on cultural recognition and base-level concern for economic security. For example, the legendary 1990 uprising was initially planned by CONAIE leaders to include only ethnic and cultural demands; the decision to include agrarian livelihood demands on the agenda came after pressure from the base communities. According to Bebbington et al (1993), the movement’s “focus on political and cultural resistance and on conceptions of identity rooted in non-modernized practices was often at odds with the more material concerns of the majority of the membership” (187).

Perreault (2003) also critiques the movement leadership for continuing to put forth ethnic-based demands for cultural recognition when the base communities still struggle with basic material concerns like increasing cost of production and decreasing market value for their products. Overall, Perreault (2003) asserts that the future of the indigenous movement depends on its willingness and ability to address community livelihood concerns. “If they fail to do so,” warns Perreault (2003), “the gulf between these organizations and local communities will surely continue to widen, perhaps irreparably” (114).

From a more recent vantage point, Becker (2013) and Martinez-Novo (2014) attribute the declining strength of the indigenous movement to tensions between leadership and base. Martinez-Novo (2014: 109) claims that a growing distance between grassroots and leadership was a key cause of the relative decline of the indigenous movement. According to Becker (2013), “long-standing divisions between the movement’s urban leadership and its rural base have resulted in conflicts” (10). Glidden (2011) also points to rural-urban disconnect, asking whether educated urban professionals who live in Quito can still speak for the rural poor.

Indeed, I found that indigenous peasant community members in more than one community – especially the women – were resentful of indigenous movement leaders who get ahead in their careers because of the sacrifices that rural community members make to march in often-dangerous protest demonstrations. This feeling of being taken advantage of by movement leadership was found among respondents who continue to participate in marches as well as those who no longer do so.

Indigenous movement uprisings have declined in strength in the last ten years since their heyday in the 1990s and early 2000s. Nevertheless, their tactics remain the same: to draw attention to an issue and pressure the government to make a policy decision through large-scale nation-wide protests that mobilize rural communities. The following section outlines the timeline of movement protests from the historic first uprising to the most recent effort to implement the constitutional principle of food sovereignty through water rights legislation.

Protest Timeline

Throughout the 1990s, the indigenous movement in Ecuador held a series of large, nation-wide protests. These protests demanded both cultural recognition and support for the small farm sector. In June of 1990, CONAIE led the largest uprising in the nation's history. During the nine-day protest, tens of thousands of indigenous peasants blocked the Pan-American highway with boulders and trees, stopped delivering their agricultural produce to town markets, and marched in Quito and regional capitals demanding economic, cultural, and political rights. The state agreed to negotiate with CONAIE, meeting many of the demands of their sixteen-point agenda. In 1994, CONAIE led a coalition against an agrarian modernization bill that would have privatized water and abolished communal property holding. In 1997 and 2000, CONAIE led protests against the government that resulted in the removal of two Ecuadorian presidents from office after they went against popular demand by signing structural adjustment agreements.

In the 2000s, indigenous movement protests have centered around two main topics: free trade and water rights. In October 2002, the first march of a four-year long protest campaign began. Protesters from the northern and southern ends of the Ecuadorian highlands marched toward Quito in opposition to the Free Trade Agreement of the Americas (*Acuerdo de Libre Comercio de las Americas*, ALCA). Along the way, indigenous peasants from opposite ends of the country picked up more protesters, and all met in Quito where government officials were meeting to negotiate the agreement. On the central day of demonstrations in Quito, 10,000 people marched in rejection of the ALCA.

The government of Ecuador did not sign the Free Trade Agreement of the Americas, but just over one year later began negotiating a bilateral free trade agreement with the United States. Large-scale mobilizations against the TLC (*Tratado de Libre Comercio*) were held in June 2004 and March 2006. In 2004, indigenous peasant base communities blocked the Pan-American highway. Thousands of protesters gathered in provincial capitals to block traffic and the transport of goods throughout the country. In 2006, indigenous movement leaders coordinated protests to coincide with the last day of negotiations with the United States. Indigenous community members from all over the country marched towards the capital. Two thousand indigenous marchers arrived in Quito on March 23. Prior to this, CONAIE held a radio marathon to raise funds to feed the participants during the march. In addition to demonstrations in Quito, protesters demonstrated in provincial capitals. Utilizing a similar strategy as before, they blocked the Pan-American highway with boulders, trees, and tires. Protests multiplied and continued until the end of April when the interim president agreed to postpone the decision until after the 2006 presidential election.

Rafael Correa took office, never signed a free trade agreement with the United States, and called a constitutional assembly to re-write the constitution. The 2008 Constitution of Ecuador adopted the language of food sovereignty, indigenous rights, and the rights of nature. One of these constitutional principles included priority access to irrigation water among indigenous peasant communities that contribute to food sovereignty. In the spring of 2010, the indigenous movement held a series of protests to oppose the government-proposed water bill, *Ley de Aguas*, that did not uphold the constitutional principle. These protests took place in Quito and regional capitals. The

largest day of protest was May 13, when protesters blocked the Pan-American highway until the national assembly announced they would suspend the legislation in order to consult with indigenous and peasant communities.

Prior to my field research, the most recent indigenous movement protest was in March 2012. A follow-up to the previous *Ley de Aguas* protests, it was titled the March for Water, Life and Dignity. Over 2,000 people marched to Quito from various starting points in their rural communities throughout the country. The march began on March 8 and culminated in a day of protest in Quito on March 22, coinciding with World Water Day.

Indigenous leaders are able to negotiate with government actors – to stop them from signing free trade agreements or passing unconstitutional water legislation – because of their mass protests. Whenever the media covers indigenous movement marches, they point to the number of participants. The size of mobilizations gives them their strength. Thousands of rural community members leave their fields, chores and daily commitments to join in marches and roadblocks. But we do not yet know who these community members are and what their motivations are for participating in mass mobilizations. The remainder of this chapter explores whether and why community bases have marched in recent indigenous movement protests – and if this varies depending on livelihood base.

Community Participation in Indigenous Movement Protests

Although there is more heterogeneity within communities with regard to support for the indigenous movement than there is with regard to agricultural production

practices, as a whole, the spectrum of least to most sustainable community maps onto least to most supportive of the movement. Brocano, the least sustainable in their production practices, is also the least supportive of indigenous movement campaigns. Quiloa, the most sustainable in their production practices, is also the most supportive of the indigenous movement. Lacava, which has a dual system of sustainability – chemical commercial production combined with mostly organic household production – is torn in their support of the movement: some members are highly in favor of the indigenous movement agenda while others are indifferent or resentful.

However, when it comes to actual participation in protests, Lacava and Quiloa switch places. While more community members in Lacava are resentful of the movement than in Quiloa, many more Lacava members participate in protests than in Quiloa. In this sense, movement support must be disaggregated into active/inactive participation in protest marches and agreement/resentment towards movement tactics and goals.

In each community, two common types emerge. In Quinoa, while community members generally agree with the movement's cause, only some have participated in recent protests. Thus, Quiloa can be characterized as active and inactive agreement. In Brocano, although community members no longer join in movement protests, some are still in favor of the movement while others resent their past participation. Brocano is thus characterized as inactive agreement and resentment. In Lacava, community members from each household actively participate in protests, yet some agree with the movement agenda while others are indifferent or resent their obligatory participation. Thus, Lacava is characterized by active agreement and resentment.

Quiloa: Active and Inactive Agreement

In Quiloa, some community members march in protests, and some do not, depending on what extra-community organizations they are affiliated with. Those who are inactive do not necessarily disagree with the movement. Many state that they no longer march in protests because there are not any more – “*no es como antes*” [it’s not like before]. Rather than harvest resentment towards the movement, they look back fondly on the good old days when they blocked the highway as part of a *levantamiento* (uprising). These community members have not heard about recent marches because they have not been socialized throughout the entire community. Those who have heard about and participated in recent marches are also affiliated with community-based organizations that act on the supra-community level. For example, the members of CEDEBAL – the community group affiliated with Coprobich, the regional quinoa cooperative – report that they have protested in the latest campaigns. Community members who are part of a canton-wide women’s group also participated recently. Organizational ties are clearly a predictor of protest participation.

Inactive Agreement

Guillermo, a 60-year-old man, proudly states that in the 1990s they, in Quiloa, were some of the biggest participants in protests, roadblocks and uprisings, but not so much anymore. Mónica, a young mom in her early 20s, tells me that she remembers “*bastante gente*,” lots of people from the community leaving for indigenous movement protests when she was a kid. But now there “aren’t any.” 40-year-old Benedicto reminisces fondly on his glory days, when he was active in indigenous movement

protests in the 1990s. His face lit up as he told great stories of the entire community blocking the highway, of walking all the way to Quito on foot, of being afraid of police repression but doing it anyway because it is important to “*defender nuestros derechos*” [defend our rights]. Now he doesn’t march with the movement anymore, he says with a shrug.

The overall trend is that community members have become less active in the movement in recent years. Why this decline in participation? Single mom, Lupe, says it is because there aren’t any more protests. She would participate if there were, but there aren’t any. However, CONAE did hold national marches throughout 2010 and as recently as March 2012 (one year before field work). These are the same marches that her neighbors were aware of and even marched in. Another response that people often gave about why they are not active in the movement anymore has to do with president Rafael Correa. They do not want to protest against Correa because they like him: they think he is doing a good job with rural poverty, they like their welfare checks and the new house construction program. At the same time, other people do not protest under the Correa administration not because they support him, but because they are fearful; they fear they will go to jail if they march.

Hernan, affiliated with the quinoa cooperative Fundamyf, nostalgically reminisces about participating in indigenous movement marches in the past. Just like Guillermo above, Hernan says “*Antes, éramos lo más fuertes en los paros contra gobiernos malos. Reclamamos la carretera*” [Before, we were the strongest in the strikes against bad governments. We reclaimed the highway]. Fifteen years ago he was active, he would join in the roadblocks. Now he doesn’t, the community doesn’t, because the government isn’t

bad anymore. Now the government helps with financial assistance: “*ellos dan plata a los pobres*” [they give money to the poor].

Fanny echoes this connection between a decline in protests and the current president. “*No, con Correa no salimos. No hemos salido, no hay paros, nada*” [With Correa we don’t leave [for protests]. We haven’t gone; there aren’t any strikes].

However, she follows with an explanation about fear of repression, not gratitude for social assistance. “*Con otros gobiernos sí, nosotros en Quiloa eran los primeros ir, pero Correa dice que va a poner nosotros en carcel*” [With other governments, yes. In Quiloa we were the first to go. But Correa says that he is going to put us in jail].

Manuel, affiliated with Coprobich, did participate in the last protest in March 2012, although he admits he is not very active in the movement because of his work schedule in town (as a mechanic). He tells me they don’t have uprisings anymore, only subdued marches. “Now you can’t do whichever type of march anymore. They catch you and put you in jail. It works like that now. Jail takes the fun out of uprisings.”

Those who are not active in marches anymore are not necessarily opposed to movement politics or tactics. Many are sympathetic even if they do not join. In the last few protests, only a small group of people from the community participated, Alberto tells me, but most people did not. Back in the day, the older members of the community were very active in “*la lucha*” [the struggle]. But now, CONAIE doesn’t come around as much, and the people of the area don’t really participate anymore. He thinks this change is because the young people aren’t active because they migrate. Even though he doesn’t march in protests or participate in politics, he does think the laws they work toward are important. He is a firm supporter of water rights.

Luis, a new dad in his early 30s, supports the indigenous movement and is in favor of water rights. He admits the community doesn't protest as much any more under the current president. Before, there were more protests. They would protest the rising costs of living, protest the government; now they only protest for water. He was aware of the water protest in March 2012, but did not join.

Active Agreement

Only small groups commissioned to march join the national protests. The others are not expected to. Quiloa does not protest as a whole community, like Lacava does, just as a few subgroups. The active participants are community leaders and those affiliated with supra-community organizations. Juan Guamán, the secretary of COMICH (the province-wide indigenous federation in Chimborazo), explains to me that when there is a protest, CONAIE tells the base federations, who then tell community leaders, who then socialize the issue in their own communities and form committees to join the protests. Therefore, those community members in Quiloa who are not aware of recent protests are left out of the loop: not informed by community leaders and not invited to join. Of the community members I talked to who *are* aware and *have* participated in the latest protests, all are members of supra-community organizations, such as quinoa producer cooperatives or women's groups.

Javier is very active in the indigenous movement. He supports all their campaigns that help the small farm sector. He has participated in many marches as the *cabildo* for the community organization CEDIBAL, an OSG (*organización de segundo grado*; second tier organization) that is part of COMICH (the province-wide federation),

Ecuraunari (the highland-wide regional federation), and and CONAIE (the national confederation). CEDIBAL is made up of all the community members in Quiloa that supply quinoa for Coprobich. Even though he is a little annoyed that the indigenous federations do not provide financial support to his community organization, he also understands that they are not an economic body, they are a political one; they write laws and do not have much money to hand out. With regard to the laws they write, he supports them and their model for revitalizing the small farm sector.

Belén is *socio* of Coprobich who lives with her mom and daughter. She does participate in marches. She says other people in the community don't go; only those affiliated with Coprobich go. The last time she marched was one year ago, during the march for water. The government wanted to take their water and give control to the municipality, she tells me, demonstrating she was accurately aware of the issue and why they were protesting. She also tells me she likes to march. She thinks it is fun and she likes to meet other people. When I asked her if she enjoyed participating in marches, her face broke into a rare smile.

Mother to four adolescent sons, Carlotta participated in the latest protest in March 2012. She knew it was about water, explaining that the government wanted to charge taxes on their water. Not everyone in the community marched, only those who are part of community groups, she explains. She marched with the women's group, made up of 28 *socios* in the community, along with women from other communities in the canton; they are a registered OSG affiliated with CONAIE. They marched in the national protest as far as Riobamba, but not all the way to Quito. Julisa also participated in the protest as part of

a same women's group as Carlotta. She tells me it is important that women participate in protests – it is important that they are present and show support.

Just as those who are inactive can also be supportive, active participants are not necessarily very knowledgeable or supportive of the movement. For example, Luisa is a member of CEDIBAL. Because of that, she has been informed about and has participated in the indigenous movement protests of the past few years during the Correa administration. She joined in the water protests of March 2012, and admits that only “*poca gente*,” few people from the community participated. When I asked her why she went, she shrugged and said she doesn't know why she participated since politics aren't important to her. She didn't even vote for any of the candidates in the latest presidential election. And on top of that, she doesn't like protesting. It is tough on her; she doesn't understand a lot of what goes on; she doesn't know what *soberania alimentaria* is. Luisa clearly states that the indigenous movement is not very important to her. The only reason she goes is because she is obligated: the *cabildo* decides whether or not she protests. “In the community, it is the *cabildo* that brings us.” The *cabildo* she is referring to is Javier, the leader of CEDIBAL, not the president of the community (whose role it typically is to call a community to protest).

Thus, there is a gap in Quiloa between those who do participate, and those who no longer participate. And that gap has much to do with their organizational affiliation. Those who do not participate are not necessarily against the movement: some are knowledgeable and supportive of it. Those who do participate are not necessarily in support of the movement: some are confused and indifferent. While each category of

typology can be found in each community, for the most part, Quiloa is characterized by supportive community members, be they active or inactive.

As a larger trend, there is less participation now than in the past. César Guzmán, the president of the regional indigenous federation, COMICH, even admits that the people of Chimborazo do not participate much in indigenous marches anymore. Only few people from the communities actually march all the way to Quito. According to him, those who are most active are those who are or want to be politicians themselves. They do it for personal interest, for their careers, to be elected in local politics.

Salvador is a clear example of this. A leader from Quiloa, he was the only member of the community to seek me out for an interview once he heard a *gringa* researcher was there. When I asked Salvador the last time he marched in a protest, he told me without hesitation: March 22, 2012. Without skipping a beat, he told me what the protest was about before I even asked. “It was the march defending our hydraulic resources; it was a march for water and for Sumak Kawsay. More than 50% of the people in the community participated.” (Note: this does not match up with what the other respondents in the community told me about low participation rate). “Me personally, I went to find the march with a commission of 10 *compadres*. We joined the march all the way to Quito.” Fitting Guzmán’s description, Salvador is an aspiring politician. He recently formed his own quinoa producer cooperative, Sumak Tarpuy, even though he is employed by a sustainable development NGO and does not make his living off the sale of quinoa.

Down the road in Brocano, community members are similarly less active in movement protests than communities in other regions, like Cayambe and Otavalo. In

contrast to Quiloa, however, they are noticeably less sympathetic and supportive of the indigenous movement. Community members look back to heyday of movement success not with nostalgic pride, but with disappointment and regret.

Brocano: Inactive Agreement and Resentment

As a whole, Brocano is less active than either Quiloa or Lacava. In Brocano it used to be obligatory to go, but now even the community presidents decide not to go sometimes, thereby not obligating others to go either. In addition, there is a sense of resentment regarding previous participation in protests. They sacrificed so that others could benefit, while they were left with no benefit, only harm. On the other hand, a few community members support indigenous movement marches even if they do not themselves participate. This sentiment can be found among younger males who work or go to school in the city but live at home with their parents in the community. These few have the view that any protest is good because it shows that indigenous people, that the *gente del campo* (people of the countryside), are powerful and strong. The majority, however – especially heads of household who support their families through the sale of agriculture – oppose the act of blocking the roads that take their produce to the cities, and oppose being in the street and off their fields during harvest time.

Inactive Resentment

Aída tells me she used to march in indigenous movement protests – she would march to Riobamba or even Quito – but there haven't been any in years. To the question *Do you like the indigenous movement?*, she responds, “No. When we go to marches,

sometimes it isn't for us, we make it better for others. We march so that others can benefit, not the people from here." She wants marches to help them too, as a community. *Help in what way?* "*Aboncito; la plata*" [A little aid; money]. This echoes the responses in Quiloa that pointed to the importance of material support.

In Brocano they protest more in local marches than national ones, Alfonso tells me. "*Mas para el beneficio de nuestra comunidad*" [We protest more for the benefit of *our* community]. "For example, a march requesting this or that – that is how we do it. But sometimes you have to think, why am I going?" He explains why other communities protest: "Sometimes they are selected from a list. For example, imagine this story: I am a leader from Columbe (the neighboring *parroquia*), and I am interested in joining the march. I obligate the community to go as a favor to me because I am the leader. That is how they do it. But here, no, they don't obligate us to. If it is a good cause, we'll go. If not, no. Nobody can pressure us here."

Alma similarly explains that the community is no longer obligated to go. "We used to be a little more aggressive; used to be, but now we think. We were used, stupid, when we listened to others say that if the captain leaves, everybody should go, but now no." Alma is very passionate about how the indigenous movement leaders used them so they could get ahead politically. The benefit went to leaders while they suffered the losses: their crops died while they were blocking the road for 15 days, and a young man died as well. They lost money, lost a member of their community, and received no benefit from the march. "The movement is for...how do I tell you...to put the leaders on top, that's all. Only for them to take advantage," says Alma. She continues to tell me their history with indigenous movement protests:

In 2001 or 2002 there was a tremendous strike here in the *parroquia*. We went along with those who organized the uprisings, the roadblocks. In the uprising, what we have raised up is the leaders. It is the leaders we have put in the high positions. We have brought recognition to them – but for the sector there has been no benefit. A young man, Oswaldo Cuvi, died in the strike; we fought with the military; and nothing beneficial came to us.

“*Fuimos usados, manipulados*” [We were used, manipulated], asserts

Alma. In addition, her allocation of harm and benefit is gendered. She explains that women bore the brunt of it. “We, the women, were the ones that were used, manipulated. The leaders said we have to remove the government, we have to so that the peasants can live, the agrarian sector can live, so that Brocano can live. But who left benefiting? It was all of the leaders; the leaders that used us.”

We spent 15 days on the Pan American highway. 15 days and nights, men, women and children sat there, making a roadblock. And our plots? *¡Toditos se floriciéron!* They all flowered! The harvest passed and the broccoli flowered. And who recognized us? Not the president of the movement, nobody. We were used. Here we lost thousands of dollars because of the strike. After this experience, we have not collaborated; we have not been told to leave for the strikes; we have not participated in the roadblocks. Because if we participate, our economy, our products will not leave us with anything. It is better that we support ourselves, that there are none of those inconveniences. Because if the indigenous strikes take place, the economy of the agricultural sector, all of it will be lost.

This quote makes it clear how important the broccoli economy is to Alma and Brocano. She is not willing to participate in political activity that will jeopardize their crops or cause them to lose money. In the quote, Alma also reveals her self-reliant work ethic. They would rather stay close to the land and support themselves than join a movement they hope will one day bring them support. “It is better if we rely on ourselves. We work, we put in manual labor, and we don’t wait for money from the outside. With our own force we will succeed.”

Because of this history, Brocano has not participated in indigenous movement protests in recent years. There is even a rule that the section of the road between Riobamba and the turn off for Guayaquil (the country's largest city) cannot be blocked, because then Brocano produce could not be trucked to Guayaquil for sale at the *mercado mayorista* wholesale market. "It has been almost 10, 12 years since we participated in those manifestations. Now, no. The president of the community has to listen to the voice of the community. If the people say no, then we don't go."

These feelings of being taken advantage of by the indigenous movement are echoed by others, including those not residing in any of the three case communities. For example, Sylvia, the secretary at Fundamyf who lives in an indigenous peasant community in another canton of Chimborazo, says that in the 1990s they were part of the movement. But then when the indigenous politicians began to hold formal political power, they forgot about the people in the countryside. "*Sube a poder, se olvidó de nosotros. Sube y nos olvidará*" [They rose to power and forgot about us. They rise to power and forget]. She thinks the indigenous politicians are closed off and don't encourage participation. When they take office, they forget about *gente del campo*, about those in the countryside.

Inactive Agreement

The members of Brocano who did have positive things to say about the indigenous movement were all young men who went to school or worked in the nearby city, Riobamba, but lived at home with their parents in the *campo*. In these cases, support was not for specific policy agendas (in fact, both were in favor of free trade and modern

agricultural technologies), but rather recognition and respect for rural indigenous people, more broadly. College student Leonardo says, “It is good, the movement. It shows that through large mobilizations we can do anything. Yes, I am in agreement that there is a movement, like we have with Pachakutik, CONAIE. Yes, I am in favor that they exist in order to demonstrate power and to say that the indigenous people can also do things. They show that we are capable.”

When I asked Victor, an electrical company employee, his thoughts on the indigenous movement march against the TLC Free Trade Agreement with the U.S., he said, “It is better to export, to be able to advance forward. Because if we don’t export, for example, broccoli, where are we going to make money?” I followed up with, *So sometimes you are in agreement with the indigenous movement and sometimes you are not? Or are you always in agreement with the indigenous movement?* “Always,” he responded, “We have to be united.”

Then every time the indigenous movement calls a march, you are going to march?

Of course. You have to participate. We are indigenous and have to show that there are indigenous people [*Es que somos indígenas y hay que mostrar que hay indígenas*].

Why is it important?

Because there are many indigenous people in Ecuador. From all over, that have never come down to the cities. Before, they didn’t want to receive indigenous people in the cities. But now we are mixed in the cities all across Ecuador, in all the provinces, and even in other countries.

But why is it important to participate in marches?

Because they show indigenous people are strong. Because they unify us all into one.

Despite the fact that his opinion of free trade differs with the movement’s stance on the issue, Victor is in favor of indigenous marches because they show the size and strength of his people. Much of the indigenous population is hidden from day-to-day

sight of the majority culture – the urban *mestizo* population. Yet during marches they make themselves seen, they make themselves known, they make themselves powerful. To Victor and Leonardo, it doesn't matter so much what the political issue is; what matters is the act of unifying as a sector of Ecuadorian society to make a statement and accomplish a goal.

The few community members who do have a favorable opinion of indigenous movement protests are not heads of household. They do not make a living off the sale of agriculture. Those community members who are broccoli farmers first and foremost are less sympathetic to the display of unity. They are less concerned with demonstrating the strength of an ethnic minority group and more concerned with the fate of their fields.

Lacava: Active Agreement and Resentment

In Lacava, active participation in national indigenous movement marches is more widespread. They do not leave as a small commission, as in Quiloa, but as a whole community. They are primarily concerned with the fate of their fields, as in Brocano, but it is precisely this interest that motivates many to pursue policy changes through movement participation. As a whole, they are more knowledgeable on the topics than members of the other two communities – and this is true whether they wholeheartedly agree, are indifferent, or even critical of the process. Many people in Lacava are active and supportive, but there are also many who are active yet unsupportive. They claim that the only reason they participate is because they are obligated to go if the president of the community declares so. Some give off a discourse of resentment similar to that found in

Brocano. This sentiment is similarly gendered: women feel resentful of their sacrifice for male indigenous politicians to advance their careers.

Active Resentment

Gina is a single mom who lives with her daughter and widowed mother. She tells me that indigenous politics are not important to her. She doesn't like politics and never has. Yet, she has participated many times in indigenous movement marches. In fact, that is why she doesn't like them, because she has had so many bad experiences. "When we go to the marches, they have thrown gas on us. We have escaped death. It is dangerous." *Do you sometimes stay, or always go?* "Sometimes when people don't go, they charge a fine," she tells me, "So yes, we always go, it is obligatory."

For Ofelia, an older woman who lives with her grown daughter and grandson, politics do not interest her either, but she does participate in protests. "Of course I participate. Because they make us go. They say that everyone who doesn't collaborate can leave." *Do you like to participate?* "No, I don't like it. Because when you go, you can't get anything done here at home. You have to be out there in the sun all day, and sometimes you are mistreated – they drop little bombs on us. It is frightening to have to run and hide. All of this for the protest. But you have to participate, the leaders say; they make us go."

The reasons that Brocano and Quiloa residents gave for why they do not participate anymore, or why they did not like participating in the past, are the same reasons Lacava residents give for their dislike of participating in the present: the

inconvenience of being away from duties at home, the danger of police repression, and the threat of going to jail. For them, the pay off is not worth the inconvenience.

Chronically ill Sonia tells me that politics are not important to her, they are only an obligation. “When the community obligates us, everybody in the community goes. When they obligate, they say they are going to cut off the water; if you don’t participate, they put a plug so that the water doesn’t flow.” *Do you agree with the policies of Pueblo Kayambi, of CONAIE?* “No, only for obligation. If they were helping with a little food, with something for our health...but no.” Again, this desire for material support in the form of welfare, aid or supplies echoes responses in the other two communities.

While largely gendered, indifference to politics and fear of the consequences if they do not protest along with the community can be found among men, too. For example, return-migrant Octavio dislikes all forms of politics. He doesn’t like marches, and he doesn’t like meetings either. Other community obligations are more tolerable to him, like *mingas* (collective work parties) and *talleres* (workshops). But he personally does not like politics, especially protests, even though there are *multas* (fines) for not participating.

Beyond formal retribution like fines or cut-off water, Flavio has found he is left out of acts of communal reciprocity if he does not do his part during mobilizations. Even though both he and his wife work six days a week at a flower plantation, he requests the time off work to participate because if neither he nor his wife goes, the community feels his family is not helping out. In return, the community will not help them; they will not offer things to them, like food or childcare. His work schedule is challenging though: he

can usually get the time off if it is a one-day march, but if it is two or three days, he has trouble attending.

Active Agreement

Lacava community members participate in indigenous movement protests because it is mandatory; yet despite being obligatory, time-consuming, and often dangerous, some also support movement causes. They find merit in what the movement has accomplished and the role it plays in spreading awareness on important issues. Embra, a landless widow who relies on embroidery to support her teenage daughter and ailing mother, participates in marches “because if I don’t participate, they will cut off my water, they will fine me.” However, she *does* like to go, if she isn’t busy. When I asked her if she agrees with indigenous movement politics, she hesitated, then said yes, she agrees with what the indigenous movement does because they draw people’s attention to bad policies and bad politicians.

Carmen says that sometimes she protests just because it is obligatory, but for the most part it is important to her. “When it will benefit us here, in the community, then yes we participate. Sometimes, when it is about something that we don’t agree with, then no, we don’t. For example, we are against when the government wants to take the water that we have here. The rivers. They want to bring it to other communities. We were against this and we had a march for water.” Although some issues are important to her, she does acknowledge the danger involved. “Sometimes the marches are dangerous; sometimes the government throws gases at us.” *But is it also fun?* “No. No, it is not fun.” She says with a laugh, “it is not fun, it is more worrisome.”

Former flower worker, Diana, admits they have to march whether they like it or not, because otherwise they get charged a fine. But, she does like to participate because it makes her think, be more aware. However, my conversation with her reveals a little bit of confusion or disinformation. She was passionate about the *Ley de Aguas* because she thought the government was going to take control of the water in her community and sell it to the U.S. without paying them for it. She was very upset about the thought of the U.S. bottling *their* water as Avion. “Water is the most important thing,” she insists. “We don’t even have enough water in *centro civico* [the neighborhood she lives in] to irrigate, yet they want to take it from us,” she says with disgust. This suggests that some of the socialization that takes place exaggerates the real issue to garner more support among the bases.

There are a number of active and supportive participants in Lacava who are well educated and passionate about the issues, and point to the merit of marches for taking a stand against bad policies. Juan is a community leader in charge of water. He is very supportive of indigenous movement actions and assures me of the widespread support in the community. *Do you participate in indigenous movement protests?* “Of course, I am always there.” Based on the number of responses I had so far of community members telling me they do not care about indigenous movement policies and only march because it is mandatory, I asked *Are indigenous movement protests important to the rest of the community?* “They are always organizing, attending larger meetings. They are informed of everything that is going on,” he responded. Similar to Quiloa, the strongest support is found among community leaders who may have their own political agenda.

Pulisa, who works at the community milk cooperative, shares Juan's optimism about community members' intentions. Lacava is different than other communities, she explains to me, because everybody is educated about the topic and they go to defend their rights – not like in other communities where it is just for obligation. “Here, people only march when they know why they are there, what they are marching for, and can answer people who ask why they are marching.” Whereas in other communities, she assures me, they don't know why they are marching, only because it is mandatory and if they don't, their water will be cut off. While Pulisa herself falls in this category, she should not be so quick to assume others are as passionate as her.

According to Pulisa, whether or not she supports an indigenous movement protest depends on the context. She does not blindly follow orders from movement leadership.

In the case that the protest has a fundamental meaning, yes. But in the case that it is a protest only for certain political reasons, no. Because many people are put in harms way, and these are the aspects I don't like. One should protest when...when they really understand what their rights are. But some people are going to protest to defend their *compadre* who is there in the Mayor's office; they don't know what the protest is about. It is just for obligation. It shouldn't be for obligation, but for their own rights, that people should go.

Pulisa gives an example of the specific causes she finds most warrants mobilizing, and those personal interests which to do not:

I have the right to protest when they are violating *my* rights and jeopardizing *my* work. It is my work and I will defend what is mine. When Lacava protested milk they were educated about it, and respectful. They didn't harm anybody. They were marching for their livelihood, for their rights. It was important to them and they were all in agreement that it was unjust that Colombian milk enters, and people listened to them. But in contrast, protests for the mayor, no. Going for another person, no.

In this quote, Pulisa's emphasis on defending what is hers – her work, her rights, her livelihood – is similar to Alma's self-reliant work ethic in Brocano. Only in this case, marching with the indigenous movement supported their livelihood rather than jeopardizing it. For both, defending their livelihood interests is most important. Movement activities can either help or hurt that cause, depending on circumstance. For both Pulisa and Alma, indigenous movement protests are not worth it when they are a vehicle to advance other's careers. In a context where indigenous movement actors have found success as local or even national politicians, community members insist that some indigenous leaders have led protests just to attract attention to themselves before an election.

Other community members in Lacava are selectively supportive. They agree with many of the causes but are also critical of the potential for political careerism. They feel that leaders are getting ahead on the backs of the people, yet they also support certain issues, especially those that relate to their day-to-day livelihood such as the price of milk or access to water.

Teresa affirms that yes, she does participate and she does think protest marches are important. "When united, we are stronger," she says. If protests are about issues that in reality affect them, then the community will be present. For instance, she tells me, they protested so the government would not let powdered milk enter the country. Everybody in the community went to the protest so that the price of milk would stay. When the price of milk dropped, they all marched together to the Ministry of Agriculture offices in Quito. "We all went; we all go for things that are actually necessary." However, if they

are marches for politicians, for political careers, then no, Teresa explains, they won't march.

Teresa also brought up the importance of water. They protested so the government would not privatize water, so the community could continue to govern irrigation like they have been. "Protests about milk, about water, yes," she reiterates. She thinks it is very important to help her personal interest as a dairy farmer, and she will always participate when it serves her own interests. When I mentioned that some people had told me they only go because it is obligatory, she shook her head and said "Naaaa. Those are probably the people that don't understand the issue, that don't understand why they are marching." Because if her neighbors understood the threat of imported milk or privatized water, then of course they would attend, regardless of obligation, because those issues are so important to all their livelihoods.

The Issues: Water, Trade and Livelihood

While the issue of trade barriers is important to these Lacava residents, as a whole, members in all three communities were more passionate about access to water than rejection of free trade. In fact, at a youth leadership workshop in Cayambe during field work in 2011, the president of the regional indigenous federation Pueblo Kayambi announced to the crowd that he had limited time to spend on other issues since he was so busy meeting with local community water boards about the *Ley de Aguas*. He continued on to exclaim that people who have not previously taken interest in participating in CONAIE campaigns are passionate about, and mobilizing around, the topic of water.

In Lacava, located in canton Cayambe, strong feelings about this issue can be seen in the above statements from Embra, Carmen, Diana and Teresa, which reveal concern that water will be taken away from them. Hilario said they went to the *Ley de Aguas* protest because the government wanted to bring their water – water that they have in *their* territory, water that comes from *their páramo* – to other communities. The government wants to bring it to other communities and leave them in scarcity, suffering from no water, he says. “We do not have enough,” he assures me, “we can’t afford it.” Even Octavio, who does not like marches or meetings, does think the *Ley de Aguas* and *Ley de Tierras* are important because large companies and large landowners use a disproportionate share. He thinks land and water should be more equal for everybody.

Water is highly politicized in Cayambe because of their longstanding struggle with flower plantations over access. In Chimborazo, although not all indigenous peasants are up to date with the latest political debates on legislation, anybody can speak to the importance of water for their lives and livelihoods. I did not come across one member of any community who thought it would be okay if the government took control of managing local water resources away from the communities. Salvador, the aspiring politician from Quiloa, told me why water is important:

Because we live from water. All human beings need water. We know that water is running through here, in this community, and so the water should be for this community. It is *our* water. So now we are reclaiming our rights because the state often says that even though the water runs through our community it is theirs, and they are going to administer it and we have to pay them – and that is what we don’t want. These are the rights that we are defending. And the Constitution defends us. But in practice they want to do otherwise with the *Ley de Aguas*. A little while ago, the community participated in a *consulta prelegislativa del agua* (pre-legislative water consultation) and there we learned that only water authority is going to be SENAGUA, and through SENAGUA, their intermediaries – *consejos*

provincials, consejos cantonales (province-level boards, county-level boards) – are going to be responsible. Then all the rural communities will have a minimum cost for the service. But I say, why? It shouldn't have a cost. It is our water, why do they want to take it from us?

Unlike his neighbors, Salvador is clearly well-versed in indigenous movement talking points. Yet his fundamental assertion that the government should not be able to take *their* water and charge them for it is congruent with the basic understanding that his fellow community members have of the issue. While opinion on water rights is more straightforward, feelings toward the anti-TLC campaign are more mixed. In Chimborazo, there is a good deal of indifference and confusion about the TLC. Some understand the issue, others do not; some are for it, some are against it.

Julisa is the woman from Quiloa who is active in marches because she is part of a women's group and thinks it is important that women are present at the protests. She went to the March 2012 water protest because water is very important to her. The TLC, however, is not as important. She doesn't really understand the stakes involved and she doesn't even remember if she joined in that protest. Martín from Quiloa does not recollect participating in the 2006 anti-TLC protest, even though it was one of the largest in CONAIE history, with many more participants than the one in 2012. *Did you participate in the protests for water?* “Yes.” *Did you also participate in the protest over the Tratado de Libre Comercio, over free trade policies?* “No, no, no. That one, no. The community hasn't gone much for those ones. Only for food, for irrigation water, nothing else.”

This same indifference toward the TLC can be found in Brocano. Sofia tells me “*No me interesa el TLC. Ni de acuerdo, ni contra*” [The TLC doesn't interest me. I'm

neither for nor against it]. At the *centro de acopio* in Brocano, where community members drop off their sacks of vegetables for intermediaries to pick up, I was having a conversation with Agustín. When I asked him about the TLC protest, he looked to the others at the *centro* and called out, “Why did we oppose the TLC? I don’t remember.”

While most are unaware or indifferent, some are opposed to rejecting free trade with the U.S. Patricia is the community leader from a different canton in Chimborazo whom I met at a Fundamyf workshop. In addition to the time we spent together during monthly self-esteem and leadership workshops, I spent the week with her and her family, living at her house far up the mountainside. Over a midmorning breakfast of soup and *colada*, after she came back from milking cows, I brought up the indigenous movement. She said she always participates in the marches and enjoys doing so because she is a leader. She participated in the last march, a year earlier in March 2012. Her husband and daughter stayed at home to take care of the animals, but she went with 70 other *jefes de familia* (heads of household) from the community. The march came from Loja up the Pan American highway through Chimborazo on the way to Quito. She joined the march for five days because water is very important to her. However, when I asked her about the 2006 TLC protest, she said she didn’t participate in that protest because she is in favor of free trade. Most people around here are in support of free trade, she tells me, because it gives them a wider market in the U.S. to sell their products.

Alma is the woman from Brocano who is critical of how the indigenous movement manipulated them. After she expressed dislike for indigenous movement strikes, I asked about their policies, which she had mixed feelings towards, depending on the issue.

Well, the laws the indigenous movement say they are going to make, sure, some are favorable for the indigenous, but there are other laws that go against what the people from the countryside are saying.

What about the 2006 protest against the TLC?

No, we were not there for that one. Of course the people high up say to oppose it because they don't live, don't breathe, like the people of the countryside, the peasants. They don't see, don't feel how it is to live in the countryside, work in the countryside, they don't know. The indigenous movement leaders, some of them don't know. But us, *gente del campo*, we are day and night on the land, with the plants. No, for us it is more feasible, it is better to export. It is better that there is a lot of movement, commerce, and it would be better not to stay stuck only in the national market, but rather access the international market.

Desire to export and favor toward international trade does not always coincide with opposition to the indigenous movement TLC protests, as interviews with Victor and Leonardo illustrate in the previous section. However, this powerful statement by Alma shows that some Brocano community members do understand the tension between their desire to continue exporting and the movement stance on trade liberalization. Although CONAIE frames its opposition to free trade agreements in terms of protecting small farmers, for these small broccoli farmers, their livelihood is actually protected through trade with the U.S.

In Lacava, support for the nation-wide anti-TLC protests mostly has to do with their intimate understanding of the issue of trade liberalization through their prior experience with Colombian milk. The salience of the issue is reflected in above statements from Pulisa and Teresa. In addition, single-mother of two, Sara, thinks international trade – when milk comes in from Colombia – is bad. It hurts them because Colombian milk is cheaper and lowers the price they get for their milk. The lowered price does not cover the costs of production, such as *balanceado*, *vitaminas*, *desparasitante* [animal feed, vitamins, de-worming medicine to get rid of parasites], since all of those

inputs are expensive. Hilario also mentioned the protest they had to prevent Colombian milk from entering the country. “It dropped the price to 15 cents a liter when Colombian milk came across the border,” he explained. “We didn’t like that, and so all the people, we all went to the march.”

Several Lacava community members were adamantly in favor of the protest to stop the TLC free trade agreement with the U.S. One explanation for this is they have already felt the first-hand consequences of the influx of cheap commodities from other countries. In the same breath that Pulisa tells me trade with Colombia threatened their income by lowering the price of milk, she says if they had signed the TLC with the U.S. it would have harmed them and generated unemployment because the U.S. is a big country. Embra is clear that she is opposed to a TLC because if they bring products from other countries, “*lo de aqui del campo no vale*” [the products from here in the countryside will lose value].

But even in Lacava, feelings toward the TLC are more mixed, less straightforward than with water rights. Others in the community, precisely those who make a living as wage labor in the flower industry, face tension between the interests of their relatives and neighbors in the community and the interests of the industry in which they work. Gerónimo has worked at the same flower plantation for 20 years. And he has protested in indigenous movement marches. For example, when the price of milk went down and “the government didn’t know or care that the farmers were going bankrupt,” he joined the protest. About the TLC, Gerónimo told me the flower plantation owners are repenting

that the agreement was not signed and now the ATPDEA¹⁸ is expiring. For exporting flowers, it would have been better to sign the TLC. But, at the time, he was opposed to signing the TLC. Even though it went against his livelihood interests as an employee of the flower industry, he sided with his fellow community members in opposition to the agreement.

Taking into consideration that his opinion about the TLC might have changed in the seven years since the protest, especially with the threat facing the flower industry now that duty-free access to the U.S. market has ended, I asked Gerónimo *If the indigenous movement had a march against the TLC tomorrow, would you join?* “It depends on the head of the community,” he responded, “if the leaders say let’s go, then I would go. If they said no, than no.” This is further evidence that his obligation to the community comes before any allegiance to his employer.

Gerónimo is not the only flower worker to side with the community over the flower industry during the 2006 TLC protests. Flavio and his wife both work full time at a rose plantation. For the TLC march, he got time off work and went with the whole community. Even though he attended the march, he wasn’t very passionate about the issue. He couldn’t even remember if the movement was for or against signing the agreement; he only remembered that he marched with them. In retrospect, though, now that the ATPDEA is expiring and the flower industry is facing trouble accessing the U.S. market, Flavio has mixed feelings about the TLC. On the one hand, he looks back on the

¹⁸ Andean Trade Promotion Drug Eradication Act, a trade agreement between the United States and Colombia, Ecuador and Peru since 1991. Once Colombia and Peru signed bilateral Free Trade Agreements with the United States (while Ecuador did not), the ATPDEA expired without being resigned by the U.S.

TLC protest seven years ago as a mistake: “Nobody thought about that,” he says with a chuckle, referring to how it would affect the flower industry. “More than anything, we went in opposition to the TLC because of milk. It was because of how it would affect milk prices that we were opposed to it. We were supporting our neighbors,” he admits, “Thinking about flowers...we weren’t thinking, and now it is all complicated.”

Even though the Free Trade Agreement with the U.S. was a difficult and conflictive issue among indigenous peasant community members in this study, water rights are more unanimously supported. Community members want control over the water that runs through their territories and government investment in irrigation infrastructure to bring more water to their fields. While all communities would benefit from improved access to water and most respondents voiced their agreement with the indigenous movement on the issue, only those facing communal obligation or networked into supra-community organizations actually participated in the latest water march.

Protest Participation Reflects Community Political Economy

Patterns of participation complement the differences between the communities identified in earlier chapters. Quiloa is fragmented, divided into several different producer cooperatives that compete for the quinoa market. This internal division is found in movement participation as well: some subgroups join protests, others stay behind, depending on their organizational affiliations and who is socialized on the issue and invited to join a commission. They are not one united community. Low participation in the *Ley de Aguas* protest is a shame considering Quiloa lacks access to irrigation water and would benefit from the infrastructure projects proposed in the law. However, while

irrigation would benefit their home vegetable gardens and animal pastures, it is not necessary for their primary livelihood base. Since quinoa is a native grain, it grows without irrigation.

Brocano is strongly unified as a community. They are unified against indigenous movement tactics of marches and roadblocks. This opposition stems largely from their livelihood base: from a crop schedule that requires frequent harvesting in the fields. Dedication to their work comes before their commitment to national leadership, especially if they perceive leadership as getting ahead on the backs of the peasant community bases. Opposition and resentment also has to do with community solidarity against a young man who died in a past protest. In their case, the anti-TLC campaign actually went against their livelihood interests of accessing foreign markets for their broccoli. Without signing the Free Trade Agreement with the U.S., once the ATPDEA expired in July 2013, their broccoli could no longer enter the U.S. market. Given this fact, not only is it unsurprising that broccoli farmers did not mobilize with the indigenous movement, one might even expect the community to be politicized in favor of the TLC. However, it is not this fact that community members themselves point to in explaining their nonparticipation, but rather the act of being away from their fields during protests and blocking the road that brings their crops to market.

Lacava is the most politicized around indigenous movement issues, including water rights and trade liberalization. This is directly tied to their dairy economy. It is important for them to maintain community control over the river that irrigates their cow pastures. Locally, they have faced conflict over control: they want to continue to manage the water that flows through their territories so the municipal government does not favor

the flower plantations, as they have in the past (see Soper 2013). Trade tariffs are important so powdered milk does not enter and lower the market price. Given the history they already had with the consequences of imported Colombian milk, the movement's rhetoric that signing a Free Trade Agreement with the U.S. would cause bankruptcy among small farmers, lowering the prices of local commodities in the national market, resonated with them. Community members are obligated to go, whether or not they understand the issues, yet those who understand the issues articulate the connection to their livelihood interests.

Just like Jefferson Boyer found in his (2010) study of peasants in Honduras, most of the indigenous community members I interviewed were unfamiliar with the term food sovereignty. Those who were familiar, not surprisingly, tended to be community leaders involved with national politics. However, among those who knew the term, when I asked them what it meant, they described food sovereignty to me in terms of government support for small farmers. Food sovereignty was most closely associated with water rights, but also government investment and regulation in other areas, such as supporting communities with tractors, harvest machinery, subsidized prices on production inputs like seeds and agrochemicals, and establishing a minimum and maximum price for commodities in the local market.

Overall, what is most important to indigenous peasants on the ground is not abstract policies but tangible benefits like welfare, support for their health, construction of their houses, food and water – whatever helps support their day-to-day survival. Responses about being more willing to march if the movement helped with food, medicine or aid can be found in all communities. Indigenous peasant community

members care less about indigenous movement politics – especially if they detect careerism – and more about basic standard of living improvements. If the movement directly provided material support, or if the effects of political campaigns were more obvious to the community members' lived realities, then there would be more enthusiasm toward the movement among the bases.

Conclusion

The question of why base community members participate in indigenous movement protests is a difficult one to answer. Movement participation is explained by community livelihood base, but also by cultural expectations and organizational ties. Communal obligation certainly plays a big role. If the president of the community decides to join an indigenous movement protest, then community members are obligated to go (like in Lacava). If the president decides not to join (like in Brocano), then community members are not obligated. Even in communities where the president is not in charge of that decision, community members still face obligation to participate in marches as part of the community-based organizations they are affiliated with (like in Quiloa).

Material interests also play a role in dictating whether or not community members participate. Yet these are mediated by existing obligations. In some cases, community members participate in a protest even when it goes against their livelihood interests (flower workers in Lacava). In other cases, community members do not participate even if the policy at hand would benefit their interests (access to irrigation in Quiloa). When it comes to support for the issues, however, connection to livelihood experiences becomes

more clear. According to respondents themselves, the impact of the campaign on the price of their commodity, their ability to harvest their crops on time and get them to market, and their access to agricultural inputs like water, influence whether or not they support that protest campaign. Lacava is most actively supportive, not just because cultural institutions obligate it, but because they see the connection between movement issues and their daily livelihood struggles most clearly.

The strength of the Ecuador indigenous movement has waned over time, but even in its heyday it has been most successful when it frames the issue to the base communities in terms of leveraging the government to redistribute resources and support the small farm sector.¹⁹ Just as earlier achievements in cultural recognition were made possible through the mass mobilization of bases who were more concerned with economic security, so too are food sovereignty values furthered by indigenous and peasant leaders through the mobilization of base members who are more concerned with their livelihoods than national self-sufficiency or environmental protection.

¹⁹ This can be seen in the 2006 uprising. Even though many community members could not remember exactly what was at stake during the 2006 TLC protest, there was a huge nation-wide turnout. This success was due to the fact that the national uprising was a combination of various regional-level issues. Although the national leadership framed the protest to the government and media in terms of opposition to the free trade agreement, among the bases, the protest was framed as demanding the government reactivate agrarian livelihoods; it was framed as opposition to mining; and it was framed as demanding justice for the killing of an Amazonian leader.

CHAPTER SIX: CONCLUSION

Introduction

This dissertation explores the question of whether the discourse of the food sovereignty movement resonates with indigenous peasant farmers on the ground. I found that the farmers in my study, on the whole, are not strongly in favor of movement principles. Some practice agro-ecology and others do not, depending on their market niche. Despite the heterogeneity in commodities and commodity chain types, all are in favor of exporting over local trade. Those who continue to march in movement protests do so out of obligation, not necessarily because they agree with or understand the issues at stake. There is a disconnect between educated, urban movement leaders and the rural agrarian poor they represent. Of the food sovereignty tenets, the ones that resonate most with these farmers are redistribution of productive resources and government support of the small farm sector. In this sense, the economic justice goals of the movement reflect the lived realities of indigenous peasant bases more than the environmentalist goals.

Indigenous peasant groups want access to natural resources, but not all for the same reason. Movement leaders may or may not be genuinely driven by a passion for improving global environmental problems. At the base level, among struggling small farmers, global or even local ecology is not a salient concern. Their desire for natural resources is not necessarily to take better care of them – to access land in order to improve soil fertility, or access water in order to reduce pollution – but to produce in a way that best secures their livelihood.

Due to the marginalized and subaltern position of this class of farmers in relation to mainstream Ecuadorian society and the indigenous political representatives that advocate for them, these indigenous peasants do not view the environment as an identity-based or ideological concern, but rather as a tool to sustain their livelihoods. The environmentalism that resonates with these farmers is environmental equity – in the form of equal distribution of resources and more profit along the commodity chain – more than environmental sustainability.

However, the food sovereignty movement – made up of the international organization, Via Campesina, as well as national indigenous and peasant organizations – proposes agroecological farming methods and localized trading networks as solutions to the neoliberal development paradigm and corporate globalization of food. They do so by advocating for “the peasant way” – a model of agricultural production and trade that is practiced by peasant farmers, especially indigenous ones. The problem with this discourse is that not all indigenous peasant farmers are inherently ecological and in support of local, sustainable food. Attempts to frame the movement in a way that resonates with the discursive opportunity structure in the global governance arena might inadvertently contradict the interests of actors on the ground.

Thus, an oversimplified image of indigenous peasants is perpetuated. It is perpetuated by activists as well as scholars. The Marxist meta-narrative pits capitalist development against the environment and wellbeing of the rural poor. Among peasant theorists and globalization literature, a line is drawn between destructive capitalism on one side and noble peasants and nature on the other. Post-development scholars are hopeful of the transformative potential of these radical actors in defending themselves

and their surroundings. It is up to these subaltern subjects to resist the mainstream development model and preserve their way of life.

Yet persistence of the peasantry is not necessarily resistance by the peasantry. Small farmers can secure their agrarian way of life by connecting with export chains. They can fend off proletarianization and migration by buying into the mainstream development ideal of international trade.

In contrast to the prevalent narrative pitting globalization against peasants and peasants against globalization, this dissertation paints a heterogeneous picture that reflects varied impacts, depending on the cash crop commodity chain. It recognizes some of the benefits of export agriculture on local livelihoods and ecologies. It also acknowledges the complexities that accompany ambitious, multi-layered social movements, especially between constituents at the base and leadership at the top.

In problematizing the crisis narrative, this dissertation is not meant to minimize destruction and resistance elsewhere. The question then becomes, are my findings particular to the political-economic context of Ecuador, or could my case studies illustrate a larger, overlooked, trend? The answer, I believe, is both.

Indeed, the political institutions of Ecuador have buffered against de-peasantization and have even assisted the process of re-peasantization through global market integration. For example, Ecuador recognizes communal property rights that protect indigenous peasant communities from the free land market; and it has also invested in community-based producer cooperatives that improve their terms of trade. In many regards, this explains the different fate of the peasantry in this study compared to others, like Murray and Hoppin (1992), Barros (2000) and Kay (2002).

Yet I also see parallels between my case study and the work of scholars like Edward Fischer and Wendy Wolford who also find that indigenous peasants happily engage in input-intensive export agriculture and want to continue doing so. And even in institutional contexts that are anti-peasant, the indigenous peasantry may still be less radicalized than expected. For example, Elizabeth Fitting (2011) tells us that the Mexican government refers to peasant farming as “inefficient because of its low yields and its use of ‘traditional’ technology” (12) while the Ecuadorian Ministry of Agriculture praises peasant agriculture for its ecological sustainability. Nevertheless, indigenous peasant corn farmers in rural Mexico are similarly unaware of and indifferent to food sovereignty activists’ agenda – in their name – to stop genetically modified corn from entering the rural countryside. In this sense, the counter-trend is more far-reaching.

So how much and in what way does the role of the state explain my findings with regard to small farmers and food sovereignty principles? The next section explores this question in more depth, detailing the specific efforts of the Ecuadorian government under president Rafael Correa in the years since food sovereignty was adopted into the 2008 constitution.

Ultimately, government policies and programs do help explain my specific findings with regard to preference for export, varied sustainability, and lukewarm participation in indigenous movement protests. In many ways, indigenous peasant perspectives on agrarian development are more similar to reformist state policies than radical social movement policies. Therefore, for the innermost layer of my argument, political-economic context does play an explanatory role. However, the middle layer of my argument – that national and international food sovereignty movement discourse does

not necessarily resonate with, and may in fact contradict, the livelihood interests of the small farmers they claim to represent – is likely a wider phenomenon that takes place whether or not government policies are pro-peasant. Likewise, the outer layer of my argument – that environment-livelihood tensions are bound to characterize the alternative food movement – applies to various contexts, including poor communities of color in the global North.

In this concluding chapter, I first examine the Ecuadorian government's implementation of food sovereignty. I then situate the agricultural practices and perspectives of the indigenous peasant farmers in this study in relation to the opportunities presented to them by market, movement and government actors. Given this strategic pursuit of viable livelihoods by small farmers, I recommend that food sovereignty discourse (1) acknowledge the lived realities of chemical-intensive and export-oriented production that complicate their vision, (2) emphasize that sustainable production for local consumption must be *incentivized* through local markets that pay fairly and value organic methods, (3) avoid romanticized portrayals of indigenous peasants that perpetuate cultural essentialism, and (4) incorporate small-scale export trade into their vision. In the last part of this chapter, I apply the concept of environment-livelihood tension to other sites of the alternative food movement and reflect on the delicate role of academic-activists in problematizing the social movements they ultimately aim to support.

Role of Ecuadorian Government

When it comes to transformative agrarian political economy, the state is the “elephant in the room” (Bernstein 2014; Clark 2015). In Latin America, even left and reformist governments “historically have not been pro-peasant” (Clark 2015: 5). As discussed in chapter two, mid 20th century agrarian reform legislation was limited in its actual re-distributive impact. Ecuador then slashed its agrarian reform program during the neoliberal transition of the 1980s and 1990s. However, in its current “post-neoliberal” context, the Ecuadorian state is steps ahead of other national governments in terms of support for the small farm sector.

Even though the “post-neoliberal” government administration under Correa has been criticized for carrying on neoliberal extractivist policies – affecting mostly communities in the Amazon – it has turned over a new leaf in terms of its investment in small-scale peasant agriculture. The Ecuadorian government has started a new phase of agrarian reform, investing more resources in the rural agrarian population than it has in decades. There has been a significant expansion of new state institutions and a re-expansion of established ones such as the Ministry of Agriculture (Magap). Magap was “anemically underfunded” during the neoliberal period; yet under Correa the budget has increased significantly. In 2003, public investment in the agrarian sector was \$88 million. By 2009, it more than tripled, reaching \$318 million (Clark 2015: 13).

The Ecuadorian government has still been criticized, however, by scholars who argue that there have not been enough concrete policies connecting constitutional principles to actual change. The government has also faced criticisms from scholars who view the current food sovereignty programs in place as reformist rather than radical in

nature: as not staying true to the vision of food sovereignty as resistance to modernity and global trade.

In this section, I first describe some of the current policies and programs that support small farmers, including the indigenous peasant farmers in this study. I then compare this to the official rhetoric put forward in supplemental food sovereignty laws drafted by social movement actors. Lastly, I review scholarly critique of the Correa administration for extractivist and agro-industrial policies that fail to step out of the neoliberal export-oriented shadow of prior administrations. Ultimately, despite increased support of the small farm sector, the Ecuadorian government still practices a hybrid form of neoliberalism that has yet to fulfill the food sovereignty vision. As a result, indigenous peasant farmers themselves continue to be pulled between competing logics of agrarian development.

Government Discourse, Policies and Programs

Government support for the small farm sector has taken several forms. For one, there is greater respect for diversity of practices, including methods of agricultural production that are not the mainstream modernizing models promoted for decades. There has been a discursive shift, not just on paper but also in speeches, toward the importance of traditional indigenous peasant agriculture. This differs from other cases in Latin America, including Elizabeth Fitting's (2011) depiction of the Mexican government's modernist discourse of indigenous peasant agriculture as backwards.

In addition, the Ecuadorian government has established specific policies and programs aimed to support small farmers. These policies include price floors for

agricultural commodities, subsidized access to agricultural inputs, and direct government procurement of small farm products to serve at government institutions like schools and hospitals. Government programs, implemented by the Ministry of Agriculture, include direct technical assistance to small farming communities – both in the fields to improve yields and in the office to develop marketing strategies. I will talk about each of these, in turn.

The Ecuadorian government has acknowledged more sustainable forms of production, associated with the peasant tradition (such as chacras, or family vegetable gardens) that were de-valued and partly lost in previous decades. For example, at the International Year of Quinoa event in Riobamba, Cecilia Ponce from the Ministry of Agriculture gave a presentation about the benefits of AFC (*Agricultura Familiar Campesina*; Peasant Family Agriculture). According to Ponce, this model of production is important because it is ecological (saving water by planting diversified crop rotation, avoiding monoculture) and culturally appropriate (relying on family labor and reciprocal exchange). At the same event, Eduardo Peralta from INIAP (*Instituto Nacional de Investigaciones Agropecuarias*; National Institute of Agricultural Research) talked about how traditional practices are now being valued by scientists and policy makers in the country. At the agricultural research institute, they are moving away from modern science toward a respect for the traditional production models of indigenous ancestors. For example, the lunar calendar to guide planting schedules was not considered science before, but now it is being studied and taught to producers by agricultural technicians.

Javier Ponce, the national director of Magap, greeted the audience at the International Year of Quinoa event by telling the *campesinos* how important they are,

since peasants protect biodiversity. He pointed to quinoa as a symbol of resistance and thanked quinoa producers for carrying on the practices of their ancestors who lived in harmony with nature. Just as the Ministry of Agriculture thanked peasants, the president of the quinoa producer cooperative, Coprobich, took the stage to thank Rafael Correa for supporting small farmers. The minister of province Chimborazo also thanked president Correa. “¡*Por fin!*”, he said, “At last we have a president that opens his eyes to the agrarian sector, to small producers!”

Even though the public discourse of the Ecuadorian Ministry of Agriculture romanticizes peasant agriculture in similar ways as post-development scholars and food sovereignty movement activists, in practice, they actually make on-the-ground change that benefit peasant livelihoods. They do this through government policies and programs that re-invest in the small farm sector.

With regard to policies, the government has established price floors for basic commodities such as corn, rice, bananas and milk. In 2008, the Correa administration fixed the price of a 220 pound bag of rice to 28 dollars. He also delivered seeds and fertilizers to rice farmers.²⁰ As part of the same strategy to protect producers and consumers from volatile price fluctuations for basic commodities, he set a minimum and maximum price for milk, depending on the region and degree of pasteurization.²¹ Now, Ecuador is in the process of expanding this policy to more agricultural products. In 2013, as part of the *Decreto Ejecutivo* 1438, Correa set prices for 46 different products.

Broccoli and quinoa are not included on the list, only basic commodities that go into the

²⁰ El Diario 2008: Presidente Correa fija precio de quintal de arroz (25 Aug)

²¹ El Universo 2008: Correa fija precio de la leche y controla los de la harina y el arroz (3 Jan)

canasta básica [basic food basket].²² Moreover, it is up to the administrators of the *mercados mayoristas* to abide by the new decree. According to my conversations with administrators, vendors and merchants at *mercados mayoristas*, this initiative is not being implemented consistently.

The Correa administration has also demonstrated their commitment to the small farm sector through public procurement policies. The 2011 *Ley de la Economía Popular y Solidaria* [Popular and Solidarity Economy Law] dedicates 5% of the public procurement budget to purchases from small-scale producers (Clark 2015: 16). In addition, Magap has expanded their support of small farming communities through a number of hands-on programs. These include Hombro a Hombro (Shoulder to Shoulder) and PRONERI (*Programa Nacional de Negocios Rurales Inclusivos*; National Program of Inclusive Rural Businesses).

Through Hombro a Hombro, Magap expanded technical assistance. Under this program, agronomists work directly with small farmers in rural communities. They set up offices in rural areas, usually working out of the *junta parroquial* (parish-level council, the most local form of government). However, according to Clark (2015), the majority of the Magap agronomists are trained in conventional agriculture while agro-ecology and organic agriculture remain highly marginalized within university curriculums. In this sense, despite rhetoric of alternative agriculture by the leaders of agricultural institutions, the practitioners are still rooted in modernist methods.

²² El Universo 2013: Ecuador: Gobierno fijará precios de 46 productos alimenticios (Feb 26)

PRONERI supports small farmers as micro-enterprise. The program started in July 2010 with the objective to establish links between small producers and agroindustry. By providing technical assistance to community-based enterprises, PRONERI aims to help small farmers market their products with agro-export and large national firms. These alliances are intended to be mutually beneficial to community enterprises and agro-industry. The five instruments to facilitate these alliances include: co-finance of capacity-building facilities; improving the productivity and competitiveness of suppliers; registering micro-enterprises with purchase contracts; access to credit; and subsidized irrigation technology for small producers. PRONERI intends to benefit thousands of small producers of a number agricultural commodities, including quinoa, broccoli, coffee, cacao, canola, stevia, barley, corn, beans, and cuy.

These policies and programs have indeed impacted the indigenous peasant farmers in this study. Although none of the three communities is directly supported by Hombro a Hombro, both the broccoli *empresa* in Brocano and the Coprobich quinoa producer cooperative are part of the PRONERI program. Not only has PRONERI impacted Brocano and Quiloa (through Coprobich), but the fixed price of milk has greatly influenced Lacava. All three communities have experienced the benefit of these new government initiatives.

Through PRONERI, both Coprobich and the broccoli *empresa* receive marketing technical assistance from Magap employees that work full time in their offices.

Engeniera Juana has worked with Brocano for two years, since 2011. Magap pays her salary, and she lives in Riobamba, but she drives out to Brocano every weekday. She helps the office carry out its daily activities – selling inputs to community members,

buying broccoli from community members, and selling broccoli to their exporter, NOVA – and looks for ways they can expand their market. For example, it was her idea to develop value-added products like broccoli flour and pre-packaged vegetables.

In 2012 she even accompanied two Brocano community members to Washington DC for a conference on ATPDEA (the Andean Free Trade Act discussed in Chapter 5). Brocano representatives were invited by the Ecuadorian ambassador to talk to U.S. officials about how trade with the U.S. benefits community development in hopes of convincing them to renew the ATPDEA. Since the ATPDEA expired in 2013, Brocano no longer exports to the U.S. through NOVA, only to Japan. *Engeniera* Juana wants to find an importer for Brocano farmers to export directly, without going through NOVA. She realizes that with such little volume they will not be able to export to Japan on their own, but continues to look for importers in Brazil, Venezuela, and Colombia.

Engeniera Verónica has worked with Coprobich for one and half years. Her contract is for three years; after that, it might be renewed, but the goal is for Coprobich to become self-sufficient. Currently, she is helping Coprobich negotiate with new buyers. First, they are focusing on export markets, then after a few years they will look to expand to national supermarket chains. Not only are they negotiating contracts with the U.S. through Inca Organics and with France through Ethiquable, but they are also exploring possibilities in the United Kingdom. According to her, the main purpose of her work with Coprobich is capacity-building, so that the farmers become *empresarios* (businessmen) and sell directly to importers without going through intermediaries.

Magap has helped Coprobich in more ways than the PRONERI technician.

Engeniera Verónica tells me about another program in which Magap plans to offer a field

school (*Escuela de Formacion de Promotores del Campo*) to train community leaders to become their own *técnicos*. To improve the self-sufficiency of community-based micro-enterprise, this initiative will train 20 quinoa farmers from different communities in organic production methods so they can assist others. To further democratize the knowledge, the program will develop a *Libro de Campo*, a field book, with all the information from the training. This support towards small farmers is new, she explains; it is very different than Magap's old way of working. Before, they were hands-off and bureaucratic. Magap never used to finance these types of projects. Now, they work directly with producers.

Magap financed half the cost of Coprobich's new quinoa processing plant (\$300,000 of \$603,470). At the new site, Magap hosted an event to give out supplies to quinoa producers, including water collection tanks and natural fumigation applicators. Newspaper coverage of the event indicated that the objective of this support is for small producers to be in charge of more facets of the quinoa commodity chain.²³ At the event, Mapag employees hung banners that said "Apoyo a pequeño productor" [Support for small producers]. Magap officials gave speeches about how important capacity-building is so that small farmers can get a fair price and become entrepreneurs through community-based enterprise. They also pointed to the important position of Coprobich in relation to the international market. According to one official, because of trade barriers, some large firms are not able to export abroad anymore, but Corpborich can, and so they should take advantage of that opportunity.

²³ La Prensa 2013: En Misquilli se entregó equipos (20 April)

It is clear that the Ministry of Agriculture supports small farmers, and it supports them to export. While the agro-industry links that PRONERI facilitates in the case of Brocano or Coprobich are Fair Trade importers (like Ethiquable) or medium-sized national firms (like Nova), some of the firms that PRONERI connects small farmers with are transnational corporations, explicitly opposed by the food sovereignty movement, such as Nestle and palm oil companies. This is interesting considering PRONERI describes itself as contributing to *Buen Vivir*. Buen Vivir is the Spanish translation of Sumak Kawsay, the indigenous alternative development ideology. It is under this development vision that food sovereignty was included in the constitution. PRONERI is part of CADERS (*Proyecto de Competitividad Agropecuaria y Desarrollo Rural Sostenible*; Agricultural Competitiveness and Sustainable Rural Development Project), which is part the *Plan Nacional de Buen Vivir*. In fact, the explicit objective of CADERS is to increase the family income of rural households and promote food sovereignty.

The agro-export emphasis of PRONERI demonstrates that Magap does not see export agriculture and food sovereignty as mutually exclusive. Instead, the Ecuadorian government's version of food sovereignty is pro-peasant but not necessarily anti-international trade. This continued orientation toward export, despite its new effort to support small farm livelihoods, is likely why the food sovereignty principles of agro-ecology and local consumption have yet to be successfully implemented.

Implementation of Food Sovereignty

The transition from constitutional rhetoric to actual practices takes time and effort from governmental and non-government actors alike – including indigenous movement

representatives working inside and outside formal government channels. In Ecuador, Correa appointed a commission to work on these issues and facilitate the progression from abstract principles to concrete policies. Scholars praise the degree of institutionalization of food sovereignty but remain critical about the degree of implementation.

After the 2008 constitution, a Food Sovereignty Law was adopted in 2009. This law is referred to as LORSA (*Ley Orgánica del Régimen de la Soberanía Alimentaria*). As part of LORSA, a food sovereignty commission formed in 2010. This commission, COPISA (*Conferencia Plurinacional e Intercultural de Soberanía Alimentaria*), was created to formulate supplementary laws based on the democratic participation of citizens affiliated with social movement organizations (Peña 2015). Participation came from “a wide variety of actors from rank-and-file members of *campesino* organizations, local politicians, representatives of NGOs and public servants in each of Ecuador’s 24 provinces” (Clark 2015: 11). This process took place between 2010 and 2012, with a total of 188 workshops throughout the country (Peña 2015). In the end, COPISA drafted nine secondary laws.

The Food Sovereignty Law (2010 Title 1, Article 1) defines food sovereignty as:

public policies to promote the sufficient production and adequate exchange and consumption of healthy, nutritious food – preferably provided by small and medium peasant producers and artisanal fisherfolk, respecting and protecting agro-biodiversity, traditional knowledge and ancestral forms of production – under the principles of equity, solidarity, inclusion, and social and environmental sustainability

This definition is close to the 2008 constitution and to Via Campesina’s vision of small-scale sustainable production for local consumption. It puts responsibility in the

hands of government policies to facilitate food system change. While LORSA is more comprehensive than the constitution, it remains abstract. The secondary laws formulated by COPISA, however, are more specific in outlining concrete objectives, most of which revolve around agro-ecology.

First and foremost, LORSA affirms respect for the rights of nature, sustainable management of natural resources, and good environmental practices during agricultural production (Title 1, Article 2). The law is then organized into titles and chapters that follow these fundamental responsibilities of the state, as outlined in Article 3: to redistribute land; facilitate micro-enterprise so small producers can better market their products; incentivize the consumption of healthy, nutritious, organic food; avoid monoculture and biofuels; prioritize production for domestic consumption; protect the national agri-food sector through tariffs; and lastly, to promote public participation in the formulation of food sovereignty policies. This last objective stimulated the formation of COPISA.

The nine supplementary laws drafted by COPISA pertain to (1) subsidies to finance reforestation, conservation and agro-ecology; (2) consumer health through GMO labeling, CSAs, and agroecological products; (3) food safety, including pest control through organic practices; (4) artisanal fishing and mangrove conservation; (5) land rights, including expropriation, redistribution, prohibiting the (re)concentration of land, preferential access for women, and recognizing the social and environmental function of land; (6) agrobiodiversity through prohibiting GMO seeds and promoting agro-ecology; (7) ancestral territory and communal property rights; (8) agricultural development, including technical assistance for value-added agroindustrial production; and (9) trade,

including regulation of food imports, regulation of local and regional trade, fair prices for producers and consumers, and developing markets for agroecological products

Out of the nine laws drafted by COPISA, only the Law on Agrobiodiversity has begun to work its way through the legislative process (Peña 2015). The fact that these supplementary laws have not yet been passed into effect by the National Assembly leads Patrick Clark (2015) to conclude that, despite successful institutionalization, the “implementation of policies reflecting food sovereignty principles has largely proven elusive” (1). Nevertheless, Clark (2015) argues that there has been a ‘return of the state’ in Ecuador due to the increases in public investment in rural development and agriculture under the Correa government.

Karla Peña (2015: 3) argues that the Ecuador indigenous movement and the state has formed a “synergistic relationship” in the formation of food sovereignty policies. The indigenous movement is part of a broader coalition called the *Red Agraria (Agrarian Network)*, which works with COPISA to formulate and negotiate policies in the National Assembly. According to Peña (2015), “The food sovereignty movement is working from the inside to influence the food sovereignty legal framework. Ecuador’s food sovereignty movement has opened the door to an alternative way of thinking about food politics” (13). Despite these positive evaluations of government efforts, the Correa administration has also sustained critique by scholars who question its status as “post-neoliberal.”

Correa Administration as Post-Neoliberal?

These new government programs, policies and commissions exist alongside scholarly and social movement critique of the Correa administration for its reformist

rather than radical implementation of food sovereignty principles. Scholars question whether Correa has been able to move the country in a different direction than his neoliberal predecessors. Not only are his extractivist policies criticized, but scholars ask whether his agrarian policies promote or dilute the principles of food sovereignty.

Andean scholars point to the symbolic-material disconnect of neoliberal multiculturalism under the new left, in which formal recognition and valorization of ethnic diversity is paired with policies that undermine rural livelihoods (Hale 2006; Postero 2007). This is not necessarily the case in Ecuador where the state actively supports small farm livelihoods through a number of programs, but Correa still receives similar criticism as Morales and other leftist administrations for his approach to mining and oil extraction.

Becker (2013) claims that “Correa has followed Chávez’s and Morales’s lead in moving toward increased dependence on an export-oriented development strategy” (7). He refers to this as “a failure of progressive governments to break from a reliance on mining or agroindustrial extractive economies” (12). In what has been referred to as “petro populism,” all three governments have sought to use revenue from petroleum and mining to fund social programs.

Despite efforts to redistribute wealth – including raising taxes on banks and corporations to generate revenue for social spending – environmental groups and indigenous movement leaders have openly opposed Correa’s strategy. Environmentalists oppose his state-centered development projects based on mining and petroleum. Humberto Cholango, president of CONAIE, has condemned Correa’s extractive policies that permit transnational mining and petroleum companies to operate without prior

consent from communities. “In contrast to Correa’s rhetoric of leaving the long, cold dark night of neoliberalism behind, Cholango charged that the government had fundamentally continued the economic and social policies of previous governments,” explains Becker (2013: 2).

Moreover, agricultural exports have increased under the Correa administration (Becker 2013; Clark 2015). According to Clark (2015), not only has large-scale agribusiness expanded under the Correa government, but “products traditionally produced by peasant producers for the national market have concurrently declined” as well (15). Despite his assertion that Correa’s pro-agrarian policies constitute a ‘return of the state’ in rural development, he questions whether these government programs are actually contributing to food sovereignty. About PRONERI, Clark (2015) says: “the programme integrates small-scale producers into agro-industrial commodity chains and monocrop production, and in this sense is quite far from the principles of FS” (15).

Similarly critical of the government’s implementation of food sovereignty, Giunta (2014) asserts that the *Revolución Agraria*, Agrarian Revolution, is currently weak. She argues it is more accurately classified as reform than revolution. The pro-peasant policies of the Correa administration are reformist, she argues: they are inspired by the food sovereignty principles but do not constitute radical transformation of the food regime. In this sense, agrarian reform policies and programs have benefitted the small farm sector without curbing the power of large agribusiness, and without inciting revolutionary change in agrarian political economy. Giunta (2014) thus sees a tension between revolution and reform. In pursuing the latter, the former is weakened and compromised.

“In Ecuador, incorporating food sovereignty into the constitution has done relatively little to blunt the country’s powerful agro-industrial interests” (1202), asserts Giunta (2014). Part of this has to do with the persistent gap between “constitutional mandates and official policies” (1202), which others have pointed as well (Clark 2015; Peña 2015). Giunta (2014) is clear, however, that the institutionalization, formalization and implementation of food sovereignty principles has been limited *because of* the power structure of the agri-food system. She refers to the ongoing conflict between these approaches to development as the struggle between two ideas of production: alternative development (Buen Vivir; Sumak Kawsay) versus “developmentalism,” based on market primacy, modernization, and an exploitation of nature (1221).

Despite constitutional recognition of food sovereignty and subsequent pro-peasant policies, Giunta (2014) sees a “persistence of the logic of rural industrialization and modernization” (1221) in the country. This has led to a “de facto combination of food sovereignty and agricultural modernization approaches” (1202). We see this de facto combination of food sovereignty and agricultural modernization in government programs to support the small farmers in this study, such as promoting quinoa as ancestral and agroecological but also a strategic export in light of tariff barriers to enter the U.S. market. We see this in the Hombro a Hombro program that offers direct technical assistance and subsidized access to farm inputs, but in doing so promotes chemical fertilizers like urea.

The Ecuadorian government’s approach to agrarian reform, therefore, incorporates food sovereignty principles alongside more conventional approaches to rural development. These communities continue to face competing discourses and

opportunities: some from movement actors, some from market actors, and some from the government, which is a hybrid of the two. In this sense, Correa practices a form of “hybrid neoliberalism,” and this same middle ground approach to the neoliberalism-food sovereignty debate characterizes the practices and perspectives of indigenous peasant farming communities as well.

Strategically Straddling Opportunities

It has long been argued that peasants are integral to revolutionary movements and social change (Moore 1966; Skocpol 1979; Paige 1997). Once again, a movement for dramatic change to the global political-economic system – one that is leading the charge against corporations, globalization, and neoliberalism – is based on the peasant sector. For food sovereignty, peasants are the heart of their vision forward, the building block of their alternative political economy of food. However, peasants are not ideological pawns, being led by the puppet strings of movement leaders. They filter the messages being put forward and selectively adopt or reject what resonates with their everyday experiences.

Currently, the solutions that resonate most with their material interests and lived realities come from government practitioners more than national or international movement leaders. These initiatives fall in the middle of the neoliberal globalization-alternative development spectrum. These initiatives, put forth by the Correa administration and enthusiastically embraced by the farmers, have one foot in the realm of modern production for export consumption and one foot in the realm of sustainable production for local consumption. In this sense, the visions of food justice put forth by the small farmers in this study – that they receive equitable access to resources and that

they profit a little more regardless of their production methods or market destinations – might differ from the food sovereignty movement’s call for sustainable local food systems, but they mirror Magap’s new emphasis on subsidized inputs, micro-enterprise, and small-farm incorporation into export commodity chains.

The indigenous peasant farmers in this study strategically straddle opportunities that offer viable livelihood options, regardless of where those opportunities fall on the neoliberal globalization-alternative development spectrum. Current positions on this spectrum vary depending on livelihood specializations; but they are flexible, not fixed. If an opportunity presented itself to make a better living through a different means – be it local or global markets, organic or industrial inputs – then their positions would likely pivot.

Various, overlapping agrarian development models exist in the Ecuadorian countryside. Global market actors, development NGOs, indigenous movement leaders, and government agents all have their hands in rural indigenous peasant communities. They promote conventional, export-oriented production (NOVA agribusiness firm), conventional, monoculture production (Ordeño agribusiness firm), organic household gardens (NGO in Lacava), organic export-oriented production (Radiofónica and Fundamyf NGOs), and value-added micro-enterprise (PRONERI). These opportunities have shaped the livelihood base and material interests of these community members. Current livelihood interests are therefore molded by legacies of intervention: they are not innate; they did not form in a vacuum. Likewise, livelihood interests are not set in stone. They are subject to change depending on the opportunities presented to small farmers: if Brocano farmers have the option to connect with an organic broccoli market; if Quiloa

farmers have the option to sell quinoa locally for a good, stable price; and if Lacava farmers have the option to diversify away from dairy farming, they will likely modify their agricultural practices. This, in turn, would increase the ecological sustainability of their practices and reduce the disconnect between movement rhetoric and on-the-ground realities.

Recommendations to Food Sovereignty Movement

Since Ecuador was one of the first countries to incorporate the concept of food sovereignty into its national constitution, it is argued to “hold important lessons for food sovereignty movements and national governments elsewhere” (Wittman, Desmarais, and Wiebe 2010: 9). So what does this study on food sovereignty in Ecuador tell us that might be useful for the transnational movement platform?

For one, it tells us that food sovereignty means different things for different actors at different scales and from different sites in the transnational movement. While the discourse of indigenous and peasant movement leaders in Ecuador largely mirrors the discourse of international food sovereignty activists in Via Campesina, the Ecuadorian government’s implementation of food sovereignty includes more room for modern methods, for small farm exports, and for peasant-entrepreneurs.

Ecuador may be the prime exemplar of food sovereignty discourse actually institutionalized through state policy. This is a huge step forward in translating vision into concrete agenda items. Despite this progress at the scale of the national political arena, within the indigenous peasant communities themselves, the term food sovereignty is little known and few of the key agenda items resonate. This inconsistency among movement

leadership, base, and government practitioners within the small nation of Ecuador raises doubts about food sovereignty as a universal vision. Even the exemplar case is problematic.

Peña (2015) claims that “Food sovereignty as a rights master frame in Ecuador resonates and has saliency because it ‘links how essential the beliefs, values, and ideas associated with movement frames are to the lives of the targets of mobilization’” (8). However, I argue that many of food sovereignty principles within the master frame do not necessarily resonate with the targets of mobilization – with the indigenous peasant base communities. Some do, like access to natural resources and government investment in the small farm sector. But others – like agro-ecology, conservation, and traditional indigenous knowledge (Peña 2015: 8) – do not.

While land redistribution and ending the dumping of subsidized U.S. grains on developing economies are important, it cannot be expected that access to land or access to the national market will spur peasant farmers to grow food staples for the domestic economy. It cannot be expected that peasant farmers will contribute to national food self-sufficiency or use that land to grow food sustainably.

Rather, *sustainable production for local consumption must be incentivized*. It must offer viable livelihood security. The food sovereignty agenda should therefore work towards on-the-ground efforts to teach sustainable production methods and create fair market opportunities locally. To achieve the food sovereignty vision, it is imperative to teach sustainability to small farmers rather than assume it is innate cultural knowledge.

Food sovereignty aims to create a more just and sustainable global food system by supporting local, ecological, small farmers. Even if small farmers themselves do not

identify as local or ecological, they do identify with improving the food system to be more fair, just and equitable to the small farm sector. What needs to be done, then, is to simultaneously support small farm livelihoods *and* local sustainability. The real mission of food sovereignty practitioners, then, is to connect these goals: to promote agroecological practices and local trade networks that benefit small farm livelihoods.

Thus, in addition to policy change at the national and international levels, more initiatives should be implemented on the ground to make local sustainable agriculture a viable and desirable alternative for the rural agrarian poor so that any incompatibility between environmental and economic objectives disappears. Non-governmental organizations will undoubtedly play a vital role in this effort. But national governments have a key role to play as well.

One of the policy proposals listed in Ecuador's Food Sovereignty Law is to subsidize farmers who want to transition to agro-ecological practices. Article 14 of LORSA states that the government will stimulate sustainable, agroecological and organic production through capacity-building programs, special lines of credit, mechanisms to commercialize organic production in the internal and external market, and through public procurement programs that give preference to agroecological products grown by small producers and micro-enterprise. This is the type of government-led incentivization of food sovereignty objectives that will actually make an impact and encourage small farmers to act towards the objectives of the movement.

Government funding for agricultural technicians in the fields to teach community members sustainable production techniques that increase yields without increasing dependence on agrochemicals; government marketing campaigns to increase the demand

for organic food among the urban middle-class; and government procurement to connect marginalized producers with marginalized consumers, such as low-income schools, hospitals and other institutions, are all important steps forward that should be spread to other sites within the transnational movement.

Transnational movement discourse should acknowledge the time and effort it will take to build their vision and transition to localized agro-ecology. It should spotlight some of the concrete programs listed above rather than staying in the realm of the abstract assumptions about the indigenous peasant base. Movement actors need to acknowledge the gray areas, such as where export cooperatives fit in, rather than painting a black and white picture of globalization on one side, and indigenous peasants and nature on the other. The food sovereignty movement must address peasant dependence on agrochemicals and desire for export trade rather than ignoring these tensions in an effort to present a united front against corporate industrial agriculture. The reality of strenuous labor, pest control problems, unreliable local market prices, must be taken more seriously and not romanticized away.

Generalizability

The generalizability of this study depends on the level of findings in question. My specific findings about the agricultural practices and perspectives of indigenous peasants cannot be generalized outside of petty commodity producing peasant farmers in the highlands of Ecuador. I do not intend to claim that their experiences or viewpoints can be applied to all indigenous peasants in Latin America, or even all indigenous peasants in the highlands of Ecuador. It is possible that landless semi-proletariat peasants or

subsistence peasants without a specialized cash crop may be more radicalized toward food sovereignty movement objectives, or that sustainable production for local consumption resonates even less with them.

Common trends that emerged during field research, such as interest within each community in developing value-added products for export, may be a result of the particular political-economic context (government initiatives to stimulate small farm incorporation into agro-industrial commodity chains) and therefore not generalizable to other institutional contexts.

Mid-level findings, on the other hand, likely do extend to other indigenous and peasant groups outside of the highlights of Ecuador. It is therefore likely, especially based on secondary literature, that indigenous peasant farmers in other locations experience a similar disconnect to food sovereignty movement discourse. Different tenets of the food sovereignty agenda will resonate more with some groups of peasant farmers and less with other groups, depending on their livelihood base. Whether redistributive justice and livelihood security goals are more important to marginalized producers than environmental objectives is a finding that should be analyzed elsewhere in order to determine the scope of its generalizability.

How the environmental principles of agro-ecology and localized trade resonate with the peasant farmers that make up the base of the food sovereignty movement is an open empirical question. It should be investigated, not assumed on the basis of perceived cultural characteristics. It is feasibly a wider phenomenon that peasant farmers face a tension between their material livelihood interests and the ecological-cultural expectations of them that is perpetuated by scholarly and social movement discourse.

The outermost level of findings also plausibly translates to other contexts. These broader conclusions – that environmentalism is filtered through lived realities and contingent on material circumstances, and that poor communities of color face environment-livelihood tensions within the alternative food movement – likely reverberate beyond the context of food sovereignty and indigenous peasants. This theory should be explored with regard to poor minority populations in other regions in order to account for its generalizability.

Environment-Livelihood Tensions in other Sites of the Alternative Food Movement

My critique of the food sovereignty movement for overshadowing economic justice concerns in favor of environmentalist ideals can be applied more widely to other groups in the alternative agri-food movement. In this way, my research complements an emerging group of scholars who call the local food movement out for ignoring questions of social justice (Hinrichs 2003; Allen et al 2003; Schreck et al 2006; Getz et al 2008; Gray 2014).

Even though local food is associated with environmental sustainability and re-embedding the market in relations of trust and solidarity, local food can actually reflect and perpetuate local power inequalities, especially along ethnic lines (Hinrichs 2003). For example, locally-produced food does not necessarily entail better working conditions for farm labor. Margaret Gray (2014) found that the family farms in New York that supply locally grown food direct to consumers are just as labor exploitative as their large farm counterparts in the industrial food system. They pay less than minimum wage, do not pay overtime, offer regular breaks or sick leave, and in some respects, provide poorer

working conditions than large farms. Aimee Schreck and her colleagues (2006) similarly found that organic farmers are just as likely as conventional farmers to oppose basic workers protections. They surveyed local organic farmers and found that 68% think farmworkers should not have the right to collective bargaining. California organic farmers also took the lead in a campaign against a referendum to ban stoop labor (Getz et al 2008). Leaders of the alternative agri-food movement even admitted in interviews that they are not concerned with labor issues (Allen et al 2003). Overall, local production, consumption and trade are vulnerable to existing power relations.

Tensions do not only exist between privileged and minority actors. Even among grassroots food justice efforts, tensions are likely to surface. In this way, environment-livelihood tensions exist elsewhere in the food system, including among urban inner-city communities of color in the global North. Like indigenous peasant farmers, other marginalized actors similarly face competing objectives between income generation and livelihood security on the one hand, and movement commitment to environmental ideologies on the other.

For example, from my experience volunteering at a community garden in a low-income inner-city neighborhood, I have observed environment-livelihood tensions similar to those I found in the field. The leader of the grassroots food justice organization advocates for access to more land in the neighborhood for residents to grow healthy food to feed themselves and their community members. However, this vision does not necessarily match the objectives of the urban farmers themselves, many of whom want to generate income through their garden plot. What do we make of the local resident who uses the largest bed in the garden to grow sweet potatoes for the sweet potato pies he sells

at a farmers market in the affluent part of town? And how should the gardeners respond when a young professional offers to buy a CSA share for her office? Urban farmers would access a high price and guaranteed buyer, but then the produce they grow would be eaten outside the area rather than supplied to their fellow poor black and Latino neighbors. In the local sustainable food movement, and even in the urban food justice movement, these issues are bound to come up.

These are the complexities inherent within movements for food system change, whether they take place within one zipcode track or on an international scale incorporating organizations in over 100 countries. Tensions between livelihood, environment, and social justice will always emerge. It is up to researchers to document these tensions and lay them on the table so that groups can acknowledge them, work through them, and find a middle ground.

Reflection on the Role of Scholar-Activists

There are so many flagrant injustices in the food system that destroy local ecologies and corrode the health of neighboring communities while not offering viable economic opportunities to those residents. So any and all steps forward should be taken: even if Fair Trade is not the perfect solution; even if Via Campesina oversimplifies peasants; even if indigenous movements strategically utilize environmental values. These are still valiant efforts to improve environmental and food justice.

The role of the scholar-activist-educator-practitioner is thus a complicated one: to reveal contradictions and complexities while still moving the agenda forward to enhance social justice. Scholars turn over stumps and zoom in telescopes to uncover tensions

while simultaneously effecting positive change in the world. As scholars, we document inconsistencies and problematize taken-for-granted assumptions, but overall support the transformative efforts that we ‘nit-pic.’

Therefore, as scholar-activists, we face competing objectives: to promote positive change by supporting these efforts while at the same time keeping a critical eye to them. It is important to note contradictions not only to more accurately portray social life, but also to help these movements overcome internal tensions and move forward. As Wendy Wolford (2010) notes with regard to her research on the MST in Brazil, social movements are complex. To point out contradictions is not to question their importance.

Similarly, in food movements of the global North, scholars face the same predicament of calling into question the whiteness, elitism and colorblind racism of the alternative agri-food movement – critiquing previously glorified spaces like farmers markets, community supported agriculture, and organic farms – while still acknowledging it as a necessary step forward away from conventional food from nowhere.

Thus, my critique of the food sovereignty movement in this dissertation fits within the larger body of literature put out by critical scholars who are sympathetic to the goals of alternative food system movements but also want to provide a critical eye and acknowledge the heterogeneity, complexity, and inequality that does exist within.

This dissertation calls into question some of the fundamental assumptions underlying the food sovereignty movement. This is especially relevant to scholar-activists such as Borras, Edelman and Kay (2008: 169) who “seek, from the standpoint of engaged intellectuals, to advance a transformative political project by better comprehending its

[Via Campesina's] origins, past successes and failures, and current and future challenges.” Accomplishing this, they say, entails “acknowledging contradictions, ambiguities and internal tensions” (169). These findings are meant to be useful for food sovereignty activists to understand potential barriers between platforms and constituents and respond to the material interests and lived realities of small peasant farmers.

In order to achieve a more sustainable and socially just global food system, ideologies must come face-to-face with on-the-ground realities. Further research on these on-the-ground realities is therefore necessary in order to better understand the interests and motivations of agrarian actors. This recommendation applies not only to rural peasant producers in the global South but also to urban farmers and the new class of food justice practitioners in the North.

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