



Contesting the reductionist hand of the media: A moral economy approach to food riots.

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Introduction

The food crisis of 2007/08 marked the end of three decades of low world food prices and the start of a period of global food price volatility featuring major spikes in 2007/08 and 2011 (Clapp, 2009). The food price spikes and persisting food price fluctuations has generated renewed concern and discussion regarding food security, with different understandings of both the cause of the current crisis as well as propositions on how to solve it. The response by the hegemonic institutions has been to frame the food crisis as one of food deficit whereby the poor are rioting due to lack of food availability. The 'food production imperative' whereby intensified production by means of private investment, large scale industrial farms, producing monocrops for export following the rules of comparative advantage has been the solution devised to achieve new output targets.

There are other strands of society, especially civil society movements, think tanks and NGOs that have different ideas about how the crisis unfolded and how best to solve the current broken food system. The tendency is to place more relevance on small-holder farmers and peasants as a force capable of feeding the world. There is also a general understanding that proximity of agricultural relations is beneficial both socially and environmentally and that independence of local agricultural systems from the global marketplace is a more secure way of shielding both farmers and consumers from international food price fluctuations. Although these dissenting voices are growing louder and are increasingly visible on international negotiation platforms such as WTO forums, they still remain in the background. Alternative perspectives to those of the 'food production imperative' maintain that the food crisis is not one of food availability but one of unaffordable prices for ever larger strata of the poor. It is therefore not a crisis of deficiency but rather one of unaffordability.

Following Allen's (2012) statement that 'many social institutions such as the media, politics, language, and law reflect and reinforce the assumptions, values, discourse and solutions of the dominant agri-food system, this research paper will zoom in on the media response to the food crisis and explore how the media discourse unfolded to reflect that of the WTO, World Bank, IMF and Western World

International media reports systematically pointed to the food riots that broke out within the period of the food price spikes of 2007/08 as popular uprisings directly linked to food deficits. This fits in with the current discourse on the industrial led expansion of food production as a way to end hunger and social unrest, which is assumed are directly related. I hope to take a closer look at these 'food riots' and unpack them using a moral economy and food regime perspective to examine the dynamics and tensions behind the protests to reveal that the link between food riots and food scarcity is more ambiguous than the headlines suggest. I will argue that, contrary to the discourse of mainstream international media, people do not protest because they are hungry, but that a myriad of factors contribute to whether or not a popular mobilisation is initiated.

The sudden rise in food prices was the main symptom of the 2007/08 food crisis and was the outcome of a long term structural process that can best be analysed using McMichael and Friedmann's (1989) food regime for understanding the structural relations and historical context that led to the extreme food price volatility experienced in the past decade. Food regime analysis will be a useful method for contextualising the current food crisis and placing it in historical perspective using a political, social and economic lens, uncovering the structural historical causes that built up to create the current crisis and can help shed light on the failings of the current food system.

A moral economy lens will help me argue that processes such as history and memory, changing agrarian institutions, and the changing role of government, as well as adverse class relations that undermine or promote a community's subsistence ethic, shed light on why protest is sparked.

These two theoretical tools will serve to give a more profound insight into the (mis)workings of the current food system and will help shape the argument that the hegemonic productivist logic will not end world hunger, indeed it might only exacerbate the problem, and

that solutions can take many forms but must represent a net shift away from the mechanisms of the current corporate food regime to have a chance of being both socially and environmentally sustainable.

Food crisis and riots

Looking at food price figures published by the World Bank in November 2008 in The Commodity Markets Review, it is clear that food prices on international commodity markets rose extremely sharply. The report states that from mid-2005 to mid-2008 prices of wheat rose 120%, those for maize 140%, whilst rice and soya bean prices rose 150% in the same period. Those hardest hit by skyrocketing staple food prices are net food importing nations as they depend on internationally traded food whose prices are determined by international market mechanisms rather than local price determinants. The gravity of the situation is evidenced by a UN report released at the end of 2008 that indicated that 'the annual food import basket in LDCs cost more than three times that of 2000, not because of the increased volume of food imports, but as the result of rising food prices'.

These figures did not just appear out of nowhere, the crisis has been long in the making according to Holt-Gimenez (2012). In fact, Gimenez (2012) highlights that 'decades of skewed agricultural policies, inequitable trade, and unsustainable development have thrown the world's food systems into a state of chronic malaise, in which crises are all the more severe.' Within this context of historical failings with regard to agricultural policy, Edelman (1957) reminds us to look at peasant unrest as somewhere on a continuum between everyday forms of resistance and 'open rebellion' rather than in absolute terms of peace or riot, suggesting that apparent periods of peace are not necessarily truly peaceful but simply that resistance is less overt. So for many scholars and activists, the 2007/08 food riots were a long time coming and a result of many years of misplaced decisions coming from the hegemonic institutions.

Holt-Gimenez (2012) rightly points out that there has not been enough discussion 'about the real reasons the numbers of hungry people are growing, or what we can do about it.' And that 'the future of our food systems is being decided de facto by unregulated global markets, speculators, and global monopolies.' This is because currently, the only solutions that have been suggested and implemented to counteract the crisis are simply to do more of the same: industrial corporate agriculture, international trade following the free market rhetoric and reliance on technology and genetics to safeguard the environment whilst increasing productivity. This research paper will delve deeper into the causes leading up to the food riots and strive to understand more fully the motivations for the rioting.

This paper approaches the food crisis as a food price crisis rather than one of food insufficiency and will make the point that food riots were, among other things, motivated by the struggle and injustice faced by many of the world's poor of not being able to afford food in a world of plenty. Indeed, the food price spikes at the heart of this food crisis are not the product of a food supply deficit or an anomalous rise in aggregate demand, in fact, according to FAO statistics, enough food is currently produced to feed the world one and a half times over.

Main research question: How are food riots presented by international media and how can a moral economy perspective capture what happens on the ground?

Sub questions:

- a) How is the productivist paradigm reflected in the international media discourse on food crisis?
- b) What are the factors contributing to food riots on a more structural level, and can this deeper understanding help to bring more nuanced and relevant solutions to global hunger than the productivist paradigm?

Analytical Framework

Tools for analysis

Moral Economy

In his book *The Politics of Provisions: Food Riots, Moral Economy, and Market Transition in England*, the historian John Bohstedt (2010) brings to our attention that historically, food riots marked moments of crisis in the adjustment to more market orientated or capitalist food and economic systems. Furthermore, he highlights that food riots featured as a part of a politics of provisions that helped hold public authorities to account for protecting people during price spikes or shortages. I hope to briefly delineate the idea that the 2007/08 food riots occurred within an on-going period of crisis marked by a transition to a new food regime that we have yet to reach. The moral economy approach would seem particularly useful in the context of social mobilisation as although it is understood that the poor are always exercising their agency in everyday forms of resistance, it is especially when their subsistence ethic is threatened that their moral economy ideas become explicit and articulated and could take the form of 'food riots'.

The concept of moral economy was alluded to by several authors including Chayanov (1966) in his theorisations on peasant household dynamics, Moore (1966) in his work on broader political and social tensions and peasant rebellions and Wolf (1969) who in his book 'Peasant Wars of the Twentieth Century' underlines the often central role of peasant revolts in igniting serious political upheaval and rebellions. Even E.P. Thompson's famous article on the English crowd, which was published in 1971, analysing local political and economic complexities that culminate (or not) in social mobilisation explores elements of the moral economy. It is relevant to highlight that these thinkers were all theorising at a time when moral and economic concerns were increasingly being pulled apart from each other and indeed today are two separate entities all together. More recently, E.P. Thompson published his essay 'The Moral Economy Reviewed' (1991) which Edelman (2005) refers to as 'one of the more thorough efforts to trace the origins and shifting boundaries of moral economy'. Here, Thompson (1991) underlines that his understanding of moral economy is specific to 'confrontations in the market place over access to "necessities" –essentially food' and the social upheaval that results from 'the marketing of food in time of dearth.' Thompson pointed to the treatment of food as a commodity to be traded on the marketplace as problematic in times of hardship and explains that the 18th century British protestors and rioters that he writes about in his article on the English crowd are protesting food provision shortcomings resulting from the inequalities inherent in a market based food system. Thompson (1991) noted that protestors' main grievances were grain hoarding to keep prices high, farmers who sold to intermediaries rather than direct to weekly markets, food export subsidies and prices that they deemed unfair. It must be noted here that the mid-19th Century marketplace that Thompson was referring to was most likely a concrete location where different goods were traded. Edelman (2005) informs us that it is only later that the market place became 'a metaphorical and de-territorialised' form by making the institutions that shaped market mechanisms invisible.

It was Jeremy Scott in 1976 that with his book 'The Moral Economy of the Peasant' really elaborated the concept of moral economy as a framework to understand and explain the contentious behaviour of the peasantry when subjected to particular strenuous social relations. As noted by Edelman (2005), Scott's work appeared at a time when peasant studies had gained salience in the social sciences, attracting widespread attention and provoking conversation around rural politics such as the causes of rural rebellion and the nature of the peasantry. Scott (1976) was inspired by the work of the aforementioned scholars and used elements of their work to further elaborate on the concepts of 'moral economy' and 'subsistence crisis' to include peasant risk management institutions in contexts of subsistence and vulnerability in South East Asia. Scott's (1976) use of moral economy shows similarities to Thompson's presentation of rioters as protesting the degradation of long-standing values and expectations. Scott (1976) emphasises peasants' strong belief in the right to entitlements, to subsistence security and a very convinced adherence to "justice" in relation to the state and the elite in terms of what they can claim and what in turn they must provide in times of subsistence crises. Scott's

understanding of the marketplace is similar to the conception of the market today where the market is seen as a faceless entity without any readily identifiable human agency. It is for this reason that Scott tends to only summarise the threat posed by impersonal market forces to the peasantry whilst favouring discussion on landlords and the state as agents of dispossession that are more readily identifiable. Edelman (2005) points out that Scott's struggles in identifying those market institutions that engendered peasant repression and hardship are similar to the ones of peasant movements today who work hard to 'name and put in the spotlight the institutional agency behind the increasingly de-territorialised and invasive market forces that buffet them from all sides'. Scott also drew on Chayanov's (1966) study of the peasant household that showed that the peasantry relied on a dense social fabric of moral understandings, mostly characterised by reciprocity, to help sustain the subsistence ethic. Once this network of 'mores' was unravelled and the subsistence ethic threatened, peasant uprisings occurred and were supported on moral grounds. Scott (1976) echoed Chayanov's findings that within the peasant household, there was self exploitation in terms of squeezing available labour to the maximum but that there was also a threshold of drudgery beyond which peasants refused to work. Scott also identified the purpose of the peasant household as a relentless pursuit of subsistence rather than one of accumulation. Lastly, Scott's (1976) understanding of the market was that presented by Polanyi (1957) in his book 'The Great Transformation' where the market is understood as embedded in society and not autonomous from social institutions.

Edelman (2005) suggests that James Scott's understanding of moral economy continues to be relevant for analysing today's peasantry and develops Scott's (1976) theorisations on moral economy by moving away from the localised peasant struggles of the past to an application of the concept to today's increasingly transnational peasant movements. This increasingly global reach that peasant movements are striving for reflects the globalised economy that they operate in today and the interconnected crises that they are faced with. Struggling against the same global forces, peasant strife is no longer confined to the local but rather a part of the interconnected global economy. Very importantly, Edelman notes that the demands of the peasantry are slightly altered and have moved from fighting for 'the right of subsistence' to the right of being agriculturalists, or 'the right to continue living from the land'. Today, this lifestyle is threatened by the removal of public sector institutions such as marketing boards and the increasing privatisation of nature that sees plant germplasm and cheese cultures turned into intellectual property and have resulted in the subsistence crisis becoming a 'permanent state' (Edelman, 2005). In fact, Edelman argues that due to 'multiple and intensified involvement in markets' have made today's peasantry more vulnerable than ever and that factors causing the subsistence crisis suffered in early 20th century Asia described by Scott (1976) are compounded by new risks. Edelman also points to the fairly new phenomenon that is emerging of 'urban and rural culture converging' in the sense that rural expectations are becoming similar to those of city dwellers and that it is therefore necessary to consider a revised rural moral economy 'informed by an urban imaginary and urban consumption expectations.' He notes that the consequences of peasants gaining urban consumption expectations are potentially very dangerous in a context of 'diverging life chances' and suggests that collective action will not be far. Finally, he introduces the concept of moral economy as being a central thread of the food sovereignty demands introduced by La Via Campesina in the mid 1990s that are quickly gaining widespread support, stating that 'the discourse of "rights" and justice, of a "reliable subsistence," of a "moral economy" re-embedded in society...are clearly their central pillars.'

More recently, Hossain & Kalita's (2014) published an article 'Moral economy in a global era: the politics of provisions during contemporary food price spikes' where they use the moral economy perspective to evaluate contemporary political ideas on how food markets should work. Hossain and Kalita (2014) find many hallmarks of Thompson's 'moral economy' when speaking to those affected by food price spikes today such as 'strong popular feelings against speculation and collusion in food markets in time of dearth, and an emphasis on the responsibilities of public authorities to act'. Like Edelman (2005), they believe that moral economy remains a useful tool of analysis to better understand political perspectives on food markets that inform social mobilisation. Hossain and Kalita (2014) turn to Thompson's (1971)

question: 'being hungry...what do people do? How is their behaviour modified by custom, culture and reason?' and to Scott's formulation of moral economy as the most relevant to the study of contemporary societies; the core of his definition including 'conceptions of material justice, the idea of clear limits to the tolerance of exploitation and unfairness and the impacts of sweeping economic and political change on understandings of fairness and equity'.

Food regime

Food regime is an exceptionally useful historical and methodological tool that helps to situate the 2007/08 food crisis, and the subsequent riots, within a framework that serves to illustrate that the food crisis and food riots did not happen in a historical vacuum, but where the outcome of an accumulation of factors that shaped the international food system over time. The concept was originally formulated and presented in 1989 by Philip McMichael and Harriet Friedmann and then subsequently expanded through their individual work. It is a theory of development that puts politics at its centre and thereby valuable in exposing the political and economic dynamics that played out in the build up to the food crisis. Rather than being about food per se, food regime is in the words of McMichael (2009) 'about the relations within which food is produced, and through which capitalism is produced and reproduced'; essentially demonstrating that agriculture plays a central role in the development of the capitalist world economy.

Bernstein (2015) argues that the food regime analysis helps us answer the following questions:

- Where and how is (what) food produced in the international economy of capitalism?
- Where and how is food consumed, and by whom? What types of food?
- What are the social and ecological effects of international relations of food production and consumption in different food regimes?

Answers to these questions will be different depending on the moment of capitalist history that is being scrutinised, and will help to construct an understanding of the political and economic forces shaped and being shaped by agriculture at that particular time.

From a structural perspective, the food regime maps out capitalist history defining three long secular periods within which shorter cycles of unstable transition occur that usually lead to a new and redefined long period of stability in global food relations. It is important to note that even within the periods of apparent stability, where international food relations appear to be fixed and stable, clear contradictions exist within the food regimes and that 'food regimes unfold through internal tensions that eventually lead to crisis...At this point, many of the rules which had been implicit, become named and contested...' (Friedmann, 2005).

The three food regimes that have been identified up until this point are (1870-1914), a period where the world operated under British hegemony, (1945-1973) under global US hegemony and the current food regime which was identified as entering a fairly stable period since the 1980s was coined by McMichael (2006) as the 'corporate' food regime due to neoliberal globalisation acting as the force behind the MNC dominating the global economy as well as playing a prominent role in the political sphere. McMichael now sees the three food regimes as different 'projects' of capital and states, the first food regime representing 'The Colonial Project', the second the 'The Development Project', and the third 'The Globalization Project' (McMichael, 2006). During the period of the 'colonial project', Britain and Europe relied on cheap food imports (especially grain and meat) from the 'settler states' of Argentina, USA, Canada, Australia and New Zealand where family farming provided the food to fuel the burgeoning urban population of Britain and Europe and enabled the region's rapid industrialisation. At the same time, this period saw European colonialism in Asia and Africa whereby colonies produced tropical goods for export to the European elite, providing what Friedmann and McMichael (1989) saw as an 'international division of labour.' These developments generated 'a world price for staple foods' which is still present today and which McMichael (2013) states 'is the distinguishing, and world-historical, feature of food regimes.' The first food regime ended with 'a broad agricultural crisis in Europe resulting from cheap overseas grains' which was accompanied with European protectionism' and ended the era of

free trade (McMichael, 2013). The second food regime or the 'development project which spanned from 1945-1973 was characterised by US hegemony whereby the dollar was the medium of international trade and financial transaction. Whilst in the first food regime different world regions held a specific role in terms of trade and production of agricultural goods following a Ricardian style comparative advantage economic model, in the second food regime, a global social and economic relations produce disparate effects in the global north and global south. One development was that agricultural policy in the US was trying to deal with a long-standing problem of overproduction (esp. of grains), which was pushing prices down. The policy response was to offer price supports, which only served to increase production further. The problem was approached with foreign policy decisions, which first involved shipping surpluses as food aid to war torn Europe through Marshall Aid and then re-located to the global south under Public Law 480 that was enacted in 1953. Bernstein (2015) points out that European policy tried to emulate what was happening in the US, attempting to develop the agricultural sector through protectionist measures 'that led to some European countries also becoming surplus producers of grain (notably France) and other products which they sought to 'dump' on international markets.' This huge influx of 'aid' and 'dumping' from the West onto developing countries was to price local farmers out of the market and cripple domestic agriculture. The legacy of these policies are still visible today, whereby the African continent is heavily reliant on overseas agricultural imports, being a net food importer whose population is at the mercy of international food price fluctuations. A further development visible in the second food regime was that of the rising prominence of agribusiness corporations that led the way for increasing distance between raw material inputs and final consumption, a more complete industrialisation agricultural production and the rise of mass consumption, as evidenced by commodity chain analysis (Bernstein, 2015). The catalyst for the demise of the second food regime in the early 1970s was the massive grain deals between the USA and the USSR of 1972 and 1973 which saw the soviet union import huge amounts of wheat, created a sudden, unprecedented world shortage and skyrocketing prices. Farm debt and state debt, international competition, and the changing balance of power among states intensified the crisis and led to a new world order around food (Friedmann, 1993).

This paper will focus mainly on the third food regime as this is the period within which the 2007/08 food crisis occurred, but will draw on some elements of the first and second food regimes to aid the analysis of why the food crisis did occur. McMichael (2013) acknowledged the contradictions, tensions and contestations of previously implicit rules that have unravelled pose a challenge to the current 'corporate' food regime and that a short transitional cycle may well be unfurling: 'capital's food regime has generated an agrarian crisis of massive proportions, registered now in a growing movement to stabilize the countryside, protect the planet, and advance food sovereignty against new assaults on farming cultures and diversity...' It is precisely within this volatile context that the 2007/08 food crisis occurred and that food regime analysis will be used to explain firstly, how the world food system came to be in such a tumultuous situation as well as delving into international policy responses to this crisis and why the productivist logic is an inadequate solution to a misguided problem statement.

In his article 'A food regime analysis of the "world food crisis"' published in 2009, McMichael maps out the accumulation of factors that he believed ultimately fuelled the 2007/08 food price crisis using food regime as a tool of analysis. He concluded that a host of factors, which built up over time, together led to the food price crisis and can be listed as follows: 'rising demand for agrofuels and feed crops... exacerbating food price inflation' as increased demand pushes feed/food prices up as well as increased competition for land. Financial speculation in commodity futures has only served to compound the price rise, as investors attracted by the surge in prices of agricultural commodities, have flocked to capitalise on the situation, with just Wall Street investing hundreds of billions of dollars. In addition, Myers and Kent (2003) point to a growing population of newly affluent consumers from middle-income countries, placing demand pressures on energy and food, as contributing significantly to food price spikes.

Methodology

As Hossain and Kalita (2014) underline, 'moral economy is localised and politically contingent.' In order to capture the heterogeneity of moral economy I will focus my analysis on the African continent., I plan to use media content analysis on several high profile and highly read international online media sources to examine how they have reported the 'food riots'. Online archives will be a primary source of information. I expect to find predominantly causal explanations for the riots, with these newspapers directly linking increasing food prices with social unrest.

I analyse the language used by the international media (especially prominent newspapers) when reporting on food riots. Food riots happened at a specific point in time: 2007-08. Following the food riots, which were a response to food price spikes, international institutions looked to increasing food production as the solution i.e. GM crops, industrial agriculture, focusing on comparative advantage, international trade etc. I am interested to see whether or not the language used in the media reports is in line with that of the productivist discourse. Finally, I hope to make use of scholarly articles to explore the motivations, organisations and expectations of protest groups to underline that the international media paints a too simplistic, verging on erroneous, picture of the 'food riots'.

Insights into the 2007/08 food riots

Causes of the food crisis

'The rise of food dependency and hunger in the global South is not the result of overpopulation, a conspiracy, or the "invisible hand" of the market...it is the result of the systematic destruction of Southern food systems through a series of economic development projects imposed by the Northern institutions.' (Holt-Gimenez, 2012).

McMichael (2013) highlights the multifaceted nature of the food riot, stating that 'at a political level, the food riots were not simply about staple food price and accessibility, but about the political economy of food provisioning.' He claims that food riots were long in the making and are the product of structural adjustment policies initiated as far back as the 1980s and the inequalities that stemmed from them. Similarly, Baviera and Bello(2009) echo this standpoint, stating that the IMF and WTO-led restructuring of the worldwide agricultural system as one of the determining causes for the present food crisis: 'In short, there were a combination of structural and policy ingredients in the mix that led to the food price spike of 2006–08, and certainly, a key element was the massive economic reorientation known as "structural adjustment."' This program debilitated the African continent's agricultural sector by imposing rules on the vast majority of African states such as the 'gutting of government budgets—especially its drastic reduction or elimination of fertilizer subsidies' (Baviera and Bello, 2009).

Following structural adjustment came another blow to African agriculture in the form of neoliberal policies and trade liberalisation. This manifested itself in the systematic dumping of subsidised food and food 'aid' by the West into African nations, eroding African production further. Baviera and Bello (2009) found that cattle farmers from West Africa as well as South Africa were pushed out of business by subsidised European beef flooding the market. Similarly, cotton farmers from West Africa were driven out of business by highly subsidised US cotton. Echoing Baviera and Bello (2009), McMichael (2009) clearly states that food riots are a result of both the structural adjustment program initiated in the 1980s and the neoliberal policies that followed: 'the general withdrawal of social protections, as the debt regime installed neo-liberal policies across the global South, food riots today are one outcome of these policies, insofar as they dismantled public capacity (specifically food reserves), and deepened food dependency across much of the global South through liberalization of trade in foodstuffs.'

The FAO (2004) recently reported on the extent of the contraction of the global South's agricultural sector, stating that 'Fifty years ago, developing countries had yearly agricultural trade surpluses of US\$1 billion. Today, after decades of development and the global expansion of

the industrial agrifoods complex, the Southern food deficit has ballooned to US\$11 billion/year' (FAO 2004).

Baviera and Bello (2009) reminds us that The World Bank has recently acknowledged that structural adjustment and the dismantling of state programs has indeed led to the shrinking of agricultural production in African nations. The admission was published in the 2008 World Development Report where it is stated that: 'Structural adjustment in the 1980s dismantled the elaborate system of public agencies that provided farmers with access to land, credit, insurance inputs, and cooperative organization... Incomplete markets and institutional gaps impose huge costs in forgone growth and welfare losses for smallholders, threatening their competitiveness and, in many cases, their survival.' So there is an understanding there that structural adjustment policies were a threat to peasant survival and in fact served only to deteriorate the continent's agricultural sector rather than help it flourish through a boom in private investment, as had been hoped. The structural adjustment program was, whether deliberate or not, a method through which capitalism was to infiltrate and dictate African agriculture. As Baviera and Bello (2009) starkly put it, the process has put in motion a host of structural changes that have pitted 'capitalism versus the peasant'.

These historical proceedings and their evident failures towards peasants and the poor who can no longer afford food, help shed light on the nature of the rioting that broke out at the time of food price spikes. As Holt-Gimenez and Patel (2012) insightfully observe, 'the protests were not simply crazed "riots" by hungry masses. Rather, they were angry demonstrations against high food prices in countries that formerly had food surpluses, and where government and industry were unresponsive to people's plight.' They go on to specify that contrary to mainstream discourse would have us believe, 'people are not just hungry, they are rebelling against an unjust global food system.'

It appears however, that these failings were not a lesson, as rather than let African nations build internal agricultural strategy and policy to suit their local specificities, the Bretton Woods institutions, once again, are dictating the terms in an attempt to subdue the current food crisis; this time in the form of the productivist paradigm. Rosin (2013) observes that this acknowledgement of the need for reform, however whilst still remaining within the existing realm of the current food system shows 'the resilience of existing ideological structures underlying the operation of the current global food system.' So, whilst the crisis did act as a shock, it served only to reinforce the existing ideology by highlighting the mantra of producing more.

A significant tension within the worldwide agricultural system is present in the form of the 'agrofuels project' (McMichael, 2008). In fact, Baviera and Bello (2009) argues that even more prominent explanation than financial speculation, 'was the diverting of cereal, especially corn, from serving as food to being used as agrofuel or biofuel feedstock.' Baviera and Bello (2009) suggests that 'the agrofuel factor' created the biggest transformation in US farming, 'where much of corn production was shifted from food to agrofuel feedstock' and whereby 'Midwestern America saw itself slowly being transformed into a giant agrofuels factory.' In fact, they note that by '2008, around 30 per cent of corn was allocated for ethanol, with rapid increases occurring since 2006.' This was the result of incentives and generous subsidies issued by the Bush administration in an effort to become 'energy independent' and combat climate change, making the conversion from food to agrofuel farming very profitable for agriculturalists. In fact, lobbying from the dominant agri-business corporations resulted in 'agrofuel development (being) one of the pillars of his administration's energy policy.' With increasing amounts of grain being diverted towards the production of ethanol, it is not surprising that grain prices increased.

Furthermore, the land rush taking place involving poorer states striking land lease deals with MNCs or governments for food or agro fuel production is serving to worsen the existing food provisioning problem. This is because as Baviera and Bello (2009) rightly note, investors will produce what is most profitable at any given time, which may well not be food crops. It is also the case that what is produced on the leased land will be exported straight out of the country, either as food back to the investing governments nation or as feed/biofuel to the

northern hemisphere. All these scenarios result in one fundamental outcome, which is to increase food prices on the international market. This is because increasingly commodified land is becoming scarce and more expensive to lease, pushing production prices up and thereby food prices. The fact that increasingly, arable land is being used for the production of feed/biofuels, is also serving to push food prices up. Finally, as the land being leased out is being used to produce crops for export, the problem of import dependence is not being solved even though domestic production is increasing.

De Janvry and Sadoulet (2008) remind us that those particularly hard hit by increases in international commodity prices are those 'half a billion of (the world poor) that are located in rural areas and in countries vulnerable to rising food prices' precisely due to their import dependence. In fact, to avoid risking reliance on imported rice, 'rice exports were simply banned in Cambodia, Egypt, India, Indonesia, and Viet Nam' only serving to aggravate the price rise for non-rice producing countries. Furthermore, McMichael (2009) points to other measure taken by several surplus producing countries to impose export taxes on fertiliser and grain in order to protect consumers from international food prices, has also served to increase food prices both of staple foods and farm inputs for import dependant states.

This current reality highlights that severe structural changes must be made in order to achieve affordable food prices, starting with domestic production for domestic consumption as this will serve to, at least in part, shield consumers from international food price volatility.

Productivist Paradigm

A neoliberal response to food crisis

Productivism is the 'food production imperative' of 'increasing global food supply regardless of environmental or distributional consequences' based on the assumption that there is a supply deficit that must be offset by drastically increasing food production (Allen, 2012). According to McMichael (2009), 'productivism is a legacy of the corporate food regime' and is the latest response by the World Bank as well as Europe and the US to the food crisis; the starting point being that the current agricultural crisis is one of food deficiency and that more food needs to be produced to quell social discontent and tackle hunger. The devised strategy is to push for large-scale corporate agriculture under the belief that these produce higher output.

The World Bank (2008a) envisions 'a new agriculture, led by private entrepreneurs in extensive value chains linking producers to consumers and including many entrepreneurial smallholders supported by their organisations.' The goal is to incorporate smallholders into the global market structure, filtering out those who cannot compete and eventually obtaining an African countryside much like that of the US; dominated by large scale industrial, monocropping farms using a large amount of inputs and working in a dependency relation with agribusiness corporations manufacturing pesticide and seeds. In this view, the role of the peasant is seen as negligent and one that will eventually disappear as peasants become displaced and move to urban slums to make way for large scale, industrial, capital intensive farms.

The perspective assumes a reworking of even intensifying of the current agricultural system rather than a move away from current mechanisms. For example, Allen (2012) notes that sustainable intensification 'is posited as a solution for all people, regardless of location or social conditions' suggesting that rather than developing a localised food system, the idea is to find a solution within the existing world markets.

Media Analysis

The media is a valuable source of information that keeps hundreds of millions of people updated on local and international unfolding of events. We make use of a myriad of different media outlets each day and what we read and see shape our understanding of political, economic and

social changes going on around us. Although we owe a lot to the media industry, it is a powerful tool that can shape popular discourse through the way it chooses to report on different topics. In his article 'The Press as a source of social historical data', Franzosi (1987) discusses the problem of reporting validity. He emphasises that 'the problem with using the press as a source of event data is that the validity of newspaper information is questionable. It has been argued that newspapers differ widely in their reporting practices and news coverage... and that news is biased and selective.' So although news sources, especially internationally renowned newspapers, will strive to present stories factually and accurately, there is always an element of episteme that will shape the perspective of the article through a specific interpretation of the situation.

Molotch and Lester (1974) see 'mass media as reflecting not a word out there, but the practices of those having the power of determining the experiences of others' and although this is probably not the case today with the dominant media outlets, it helps to show how much power media outlets do hold over popular beliefs and understandings. More hard hitting statements have been proposed by some scholars working in the Gramscian tradition of hegemony and cultural ideology. In the words of Franzosi (1987) 'these scholars see newspapers and mass media as both an integral part of the ideological apparatus of capitalist societies and one of the main agencies for the reproduction of these societies through their interpretation, packaging and distribution of reality throughout society.' Even without taking such a hard line understanding of the media, it is safe to say that the media is not a neutral source of information, nor is it necessarily reliable or accurate and that the framing of events reported often support a hegemonic ideology.

5.1 International Reporting on food crisis and riots

This chapter will argue that the international media reporting on food riots often implicitly supports the IMF, World Bank, WTO and Western Powers discourse of a trade based solution to hunger by using language that reinforces the productivist paradigm. Several concepts within the framework of productivism are elaborated on here, roughly categorised into GM crops, international trade, private property rights, industrial agriculture, foreign direct investment and agricultural intensification. Each concept is taken individually and discussed in terms of how it is presented in different news articles in relation to the food crisis.

Sustainable intensification - GM crops etc.

Sustainable intensification is a relatively new concept that emerged as a result of the critique of the impact of increased agricultural production on the environment. Sustainable intensification is an umbrella term for increasing farming productivity in an environmentally friendly way. One of the components of sustainable intensification is the use of GM crops. GM crops are hailed by those who believe in the productivist logic as a great way to immediately achieve acute increases in food production through increased resistance to climate change and disease.

Louise Gray wrote an article for The Telegraph in January 2011 with the headline 'Food prices could double without GM foods, scientists warn'. The article focuses on a report commissioned by the British Government to decide on the future of farming 'amid fears of food riots around the world as prices are already rising.' She reports on warnings acknowledging that 'mass production is destroying the environment', and lays out solutions to the complex dilemma of on the one hand having to increase production of food in order to reduce food prices and keep social unrest at bay, whilst at the same time nurturing the environment. Gray (2011) suggests that Sir John Beddington, the Government's chief scientific advisor has an answer in the form of 'sustainable intensification', which he describes as a process of 'producing more food on less land'. The article goes on to highlight that to make 'sustainable intensification' a reality, then 'this will mean looking at a number of new technologies, including GM and cloning cows'. Gray (2011) later reminds the reader of the 20th century Green Revolution in India which 'Professor Jules Pretty of the University of Essex' needs to be replicated, but with extra attention on the environment. In fact, Pretty coined the phrase "the greenest revolution" which he believes will serve 'to improve agriculture without harming nature.' In essence, the message proposed by

Gray (2011) is to use biotechnologies to increase production whilst simultaneously trying to 'retain water and reduce green house gas emissions'.

Gillis (2011), in his article for the New York Times headlined 'A Warming Planet Struggles to Feed Itself', reports on the mounting difficulty farmers face trying to fulfil the imperative to increase production, whilst grappling with the realities of climate change. The author recalls the Green Revolution's Norman Borlaug, who, through plant breeding techniques managed to increase farmers' production multifold and thereby became, in 1970, the first ever agronomist to win the Nobel Prize for feeding 'a hungry world'. Gillis (2011) stresses the importance of scientific research into biotechnologies to find crop varieties that can withstand climate change factors and at the same time produce high yields. The necessity for large increases in production are assumed if the goal is to reduce hunger and unrest: "We've doubled the world's food production several times before in history, and now we have to do it one more time," said Jonathan A. Foley, a researcher at the University of Minnesota.' The real challenge highlighted by the author is the difficulty of increasing production in volatile meteorological conditions, and here, he turns to genetically engineered plant species to withstand climactic variables.

International trade

A theory that has long been advanced by the neoliberal economists and that indeed, remains in textbooks today, is that to be economically viable each nation should specialise in the production of the good they have a comparative advantage in and exchange this good for others on the global market place.

In November 2009, Javier Blas of the Financial Times reported on several measures being discussed to solve the problem of hunger and food riots with a headline that read: "Food self-sufficiency 'is a nonsense'". The headline quoted Paul Conway's stance, senior vice-president at Cargill, who told the newspaper that "Promoting a free and open trading system whereby countries can produce what they are best able ... and surpluses can be traded across international boundaries is the right way to go." Here, the idea that African nations should strive for self-sufficiency in food production is put aside as a folly, whilst the law of comparative advantage is presented as the tool with which to dictate domestic agricultural production decisions and subsequently allow for international trade. Food dependency is not seen as problematic in this view, as long as the country specialises in those goods that they have a comparative advantage in and sell the surpluses to acquire foreign exchange.

The author of the Financial Times article goes on to reiterate that comparative advantage and therefore global trade of food is seen as the way forward by the powerful voices within the industry by reporting that even 'The Food and Agriculture Organisation forecasts that global trade of food staples will surge to 300m tonnes by 2050, up from the current 135m tonnes.' Again, here the FT (2009) news article is presenting the dominant view that to solve the problem of hunger and rioting, nations must specialise and as a direct consequence will end up importing all those food products that they have chosen not to produce locally; the result will then be that global trade in food staples will increase substantially as nations must acquire food abroad to satisfy demand.

Foreign direct investment

The proponents of the productivist paradigm look to foreign direct investment into developing nations as the main catalyst for a prospering agricultural sector. The idea is that countries should be able to attract outside governments/multinationals who set up agricultural operations in the country and thereby generate employment, increase supply of food and push down food prices.

An article published by The New York Times in April 2008 with the headline 'Across Globe, Empty Bellies Bring Rising Anger', the author Marc Lacey reports on the riots that emerged around the world as result of the sharp spikes in food prices in the 2007/08 period. Although the focus of the article is on the severity of the situation and the food riots occurring worldwide, the author points to foreign investment in agriculture as the most meaningful

solution. When talking of the social unrest in Haiti, Lacey (2008) note that 'its agriculture industry (is) in shambles, needs to better feed itself. Outside investment is the key...' reiterating the productivist idea that foreign direct investment can be a valuable solution to increasing production and solve the problem of hunger.

Similarly, in an article published in February 2011, *The Economist* suggested that agriculture needed to become more attractive to foreign investors in order to increase production of food and thereby solve the problem of food insecurity. In fact, the author suggested that to render agriculture attractive to investors, the priority must be to increase food prices even further. They state that 'The world cannot feed today's 7 billion people properly. How on earth can it feed the expected 9 billion in 2050? The starting point may sound paradoxical: high prices.' The author goes on to argue that only 'higher returns to farmers...will attract higher investment' and that, 'Somehow, returns to farmers must rise without inflicting untold misery on the poor.' Here, as in many international media reports on the 2007/08 food crisis and subsequent riots, the implicit understanding is that food production needs to increase to solve the problem. This particular article however, goes further to propose that production can best be increased through FDI, and that FDI can be bolstered by further increasing already soaring food prices.

Javier Blas, who wrote an article for the *Financial Times* in June 2012 with headline 'Food prices: Leaders seek a long-term solution to hunger pains' also suggests that food production cannot increase substantially without FDI coming into African nations. Blas (2012) is mainly reporting on the imminent G20 meeting where rising food prices will be high on the priority list and also discusses more generally the renewed position agriculture has taken as an urgent topic for policy discussion after the 2007/08 food price spikes and subsequent riots. The author reports that the G20 wants to move away from food aid programs and look to more long term solutions; the most promising being a 'deepening shift towards investment in long-term agriculture, particularly in Africa.' To those worried about private investment not having the interest of the most vulnerable at heart, Blas (2012) concludes that 'without private investment, public money may not reach those same countries either, because of budgetary constraints.' His argument is one between aid and private investment, and in the absence of anything better, private investment is the only long term solution.

Agricultural intensification

The thread holding together all aspects of the productive paradigm is the conviction that to solve the problem of hunger and the related issues of social unrest that come with it, agricultural production needs to increase dramatically.

In his article for *The New York Times* headlined 'Experts Worry as Population and Hunger Grow', MacFarquhar (2009) underlines the imperative to increase production in order to reduce hunger and avoid riots. The author notes that '... the resources and technical knowledge (are) available to increase food production by 50 percent in 2030 and by 70 percent in 2050 — the amounts needed to feed a population expected to grow to 9.1 billion in 40 years...But the conundrum is whether the food can be grown in the developing world where the hungry can actually get it, at prices they can afford.' Although MacFarquhar advocates for agricultural intensification as the answer to high food prices and hunger, his analysis is more nuanced than that typically presented by supporters of the productivist discourse as he acknowledges that it will be difficult to funnel the extra food towards those suffering from food insecurity.

Louis Doré, in his article for the *Independent*, headlined 'Society will collapse by 2040 due to catastrophic food shortages, says study', highlights the extreme strain the world is under to produce enough food for a growing population. Doré (2015) reports on a study conducted by the 'Anglia Ruskin University's Global Sustainability Institute' that found that without any changes to current agricultural outputs, 'the global food supply system would face catastrophic losses, and an unprecedented epidemic of food riots.' The author underlined the fact that there needed to be drastic and urgent agricultural policy reforms and changes in current agricultural strategies to allow for the industry to reach targets set by the FAO projected 'that global

agricultural production will need to more than double by 2050 to close the gap between food supply and demand.' The emphasis is therefore on the urgent need to increase food production to feed a growing population who are increasingly left hungry and on the verge of social unrest.

Changing use of language

Tracking changes in the use of language by the media over time could give an added insight into any changes in media discourse. The hope was to find an online database that stored words used in media articles, and through which it was possible to map word-use trends on a graph. Access to word archives, specific to media content, that could be sorted by date would allow for graphing word use frequency from their inception until the present time. For example the frequency of use over time of the phrase 'food riots' compared to terms like 'biotechnology' or 'sustainable intensification' that started being used much more recently, partly as a response to the riots. Unfortunately, after much searching, the only such comprehensive database available on the net appeared to be the 'Global Language Monitor' (2014) that requires an expensive subscription. What was available however, was a database of words used in articles for the New York Times which can be graphed for use frequency against time using the website <http://chronicle.nytlabs.com>. Although it's far from a comprehensive insight into frequency of all words and phrases used in the global print and electronic media, the database can be used as a tool to zoom in on how one specific international media outlet changed its language use in relation to the changing global food system. A further benefit of this tool is that it allows the user to click anywhere on the graph and be directed to the complete list of articles in which the selected word/phrase is present for the selected year. For example, clicking on the point where the line peaks will allow the user to read the events associated with the peak in word use; this possibility allows for insight into the context of the word use. Figure 1 to 7 show the number of articles in which specific words or phrases were used over the period of 1850 to present. Both the changes in word use and the frequency of word use can be explained by applying the food regime analysis to the vocabulary used by The New York Times. As the food riots occurred within the timespan of the 3rd food regime, this will be the regime that will provide the best analysis of media word use. However, the first and second food regimes will be delved into briefly.

Figure 1. Is essentially a timeline of food crisis episodes, indicating the number of articles using the phrase 'food crisis' between 1850-2015. What is interesting to note is that only since 1914 has the phrase 'food crisis' been used in any New York Times article. The spikes between 1914-1920 and 1940-1950 reflect the food shortages suffered by European states during the two world wars as well as the Bengal famine suffered in India in 1943. The spike around 1965 represents media articles reporting on food shortages in India as well as the US response of food aid provision to India as well as loans for purchasing of fertiliser and importing food. The following spike, around 1975 represents media reporting on the global food crisis that was characterised by first a dramatic price rise of wheat as a result of the 1972-73 U.S-Soviet grain deal which saw the USSR importing \$750 million worth of grain over three years. The direct consequences, as indicated by Friedmann and McMichael (1989) was to 'produce a price boom for (US) farmers and a foreign shortage crunch for Third World importers' with import dependent countries in the global south being faced with unaffordable wheat. Attracted by the high wheat prices, 'Other countries, not only the traditional wheat export competitors, but also Europe, began to compete, using export subsidies and all the other items in the American inventory of international commercial strategies (Friedmann & McMichael, 1989). Following the increase in wheat production, price of wheat plummeted together with the inflated value of US farmland, causing the mid-west farm crisis of the 1980s. The final spike is that of the 2007/08 food crisis, which was characterised by extremely high staple food prices due to a combination of factors. Scholars generally point to a combination of five factors: climate change, high oil prices, speculative behaviour, unsustainable levels of meat consumption and the biofuel push as leading to the 2007/08 food crisis which resulted in 854 million food insecure people. However, a food regime analysis allows us to see that the current crisis is the tip of the iceberg of a much

longer, chronic problem of global hunger. The corporate food regime, which can be applied from around the late 1980s, points to the current political context, which is and has been one of neoliberal globalisation whereby the nation-state loses centrality and relinquishes its powers to the logic of free markets and corporations. Agro-industrialisation, privatisation and corporate concentration are the agricultural forms that neoliberalism has fostered. This new global food system has resulted in a myriad of human, ecological and political dynamics; in the African context, they have served to displace smallholder farmers in favour of large industrial farms, usually owned by foreign multinationals producing for export, rendering African nations further entrenched in structural import dependence and exposing the population to global food price fluctuations. Furthermore, decisions by the World Bank and the IMF to implement structural adjustment policy in African nations has served to render farmers at a huge competitive disadvantage when operating on the same market place as European and US agribusiness who benefit from billions of dollars a year in state support. These policy decisions have resulted in rises in inequality, poverty and hunger and created rooted import dependence that lays the African population vulnerable to global staple food price spikes.

Figure 2. Shows a direct comparison between the use of the phrase “food crisis” and the phrase “food prices”. What is interesting to note is that the two are very much associated to one another in the sense that they both start appearing in articles in around 1910. The phrase “food prices” is mentioned in many more media articles than “food crisis”, however, when ‘food crisis’ is mentioned, it’s usually in conjunction with “food prices”, indicating that volatile food prices don’t invariably cause a crisis, but that when food crises do occur, then volatile food prices are a symptom.

Figure 3. Shows a comparison between the use of the term ‘food crisis’ and that of ‘food riots’. Similarly to the term ‘food crisis’ in figure 1, and ‘food prices’ in Figure 2., the term ‘food riots’ starts appearing much more frequently in articles post-1910. Although there are more articles mentioning the ‘food crisis’ than ‘food riots’ it can be seen from the graph that the two words are mentioned in tandem as their use frequency peaks and ebbs in the same time periods. It is clear from the graph therefore that food riots are directly associated with food crises in media reports published by the New York Times.

Figure 4. illustrates the very rapid increase in attention dedicated to biotechnologies since the 1980s till present. With the emergence of the corporate food regime, solutions to global food insecurity, food riots and food crisis are increasingly coming from the private sector as states relinquish their powers to multilateral institutions and trans-national corporations. The private sector, especially agro-industry experts, have invested in scientific research programmes that explore the possibilities of biotechnology in increasing yields through pest and climate change resistance. The sustained reporting by media on biotechnological innovations is an indicator of the legitimacy that the media bestows on biotechnology as a possible solution to hunger, food riots and food crises. More recently, biotechnology has allowed the conversion of plant sugars directly into ethanol through the creation of a genetically engineered e-coli bacteria. The international push for biofuel production is therefore another catalyst for the rise in interest manifested by the media in relation to biotechnologies.

Figure 5. Genetically Modified Organisms are one outcome of investment in biotechnologies and are those living things whose genetic make-up has been altered or modified through biotechnology processes. Higher yielding crop varieties have been the outcome of scientists’ work and have been presented as a means for industrial agriculture to increase output and thereby stem hunger and food riots.

Figure 6. The concept of climate smart agriculture was presented by the FAO at The Hague conference on Agriculture, Food Security and Climate Change in 2010 as an enabler to achieve the sustainable development goals set by the UN. The idea came after the realization that the propagation of industrial agriculture (also through GM crops) to increase production of food at all costs was environmentally destructive. The purpose of climate smart agriculture is to tackle climate change and food security simultaneously and is yet another variation on the recurring theme pushed by multilateral institutions which is that of increasing production.

Figure 1.



Figure 2.



Figure 3.

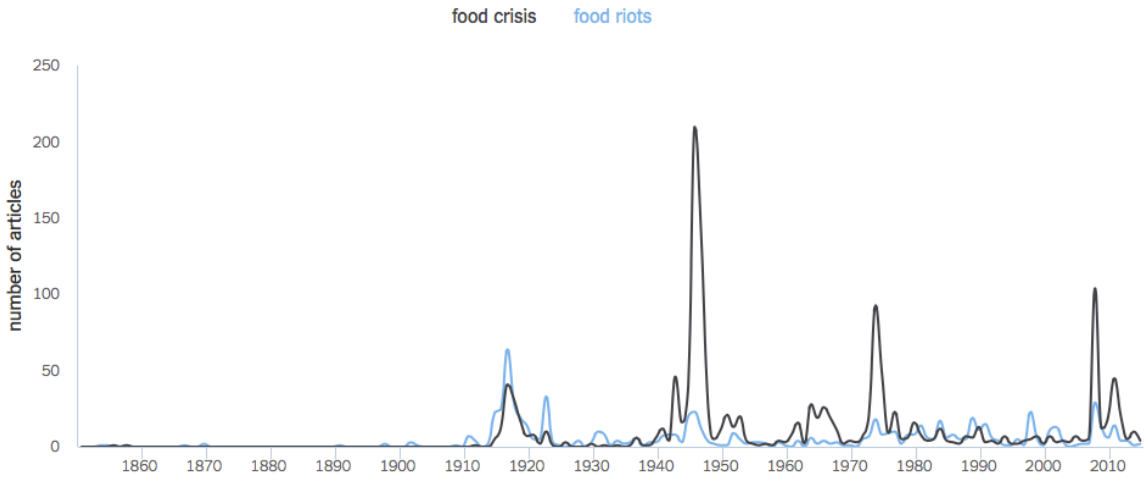


Figure 4.

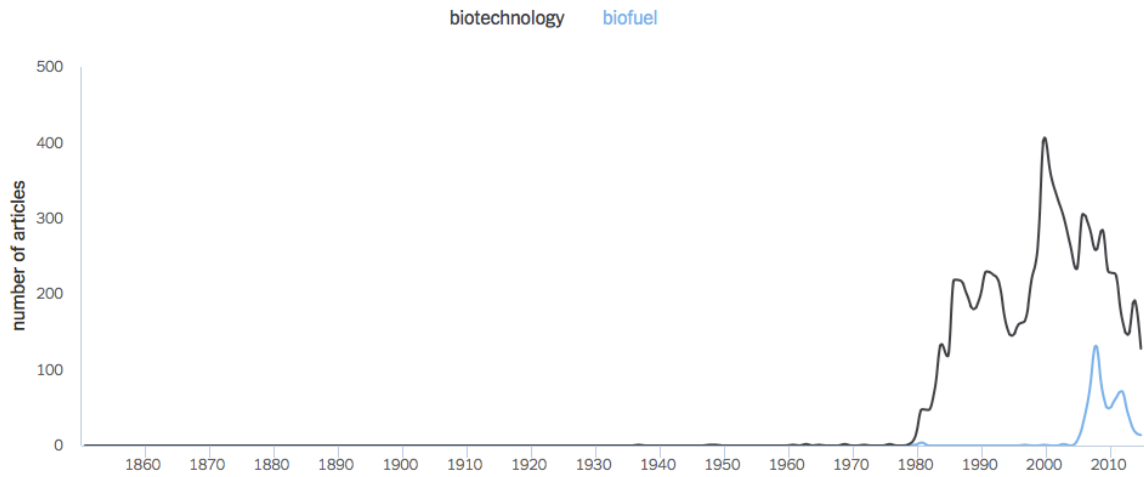


Figure 5.

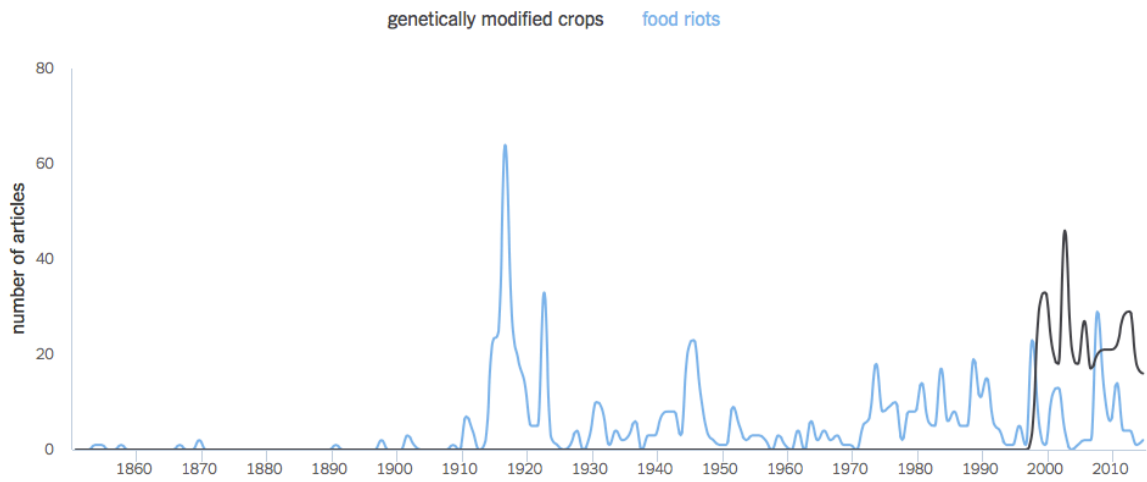
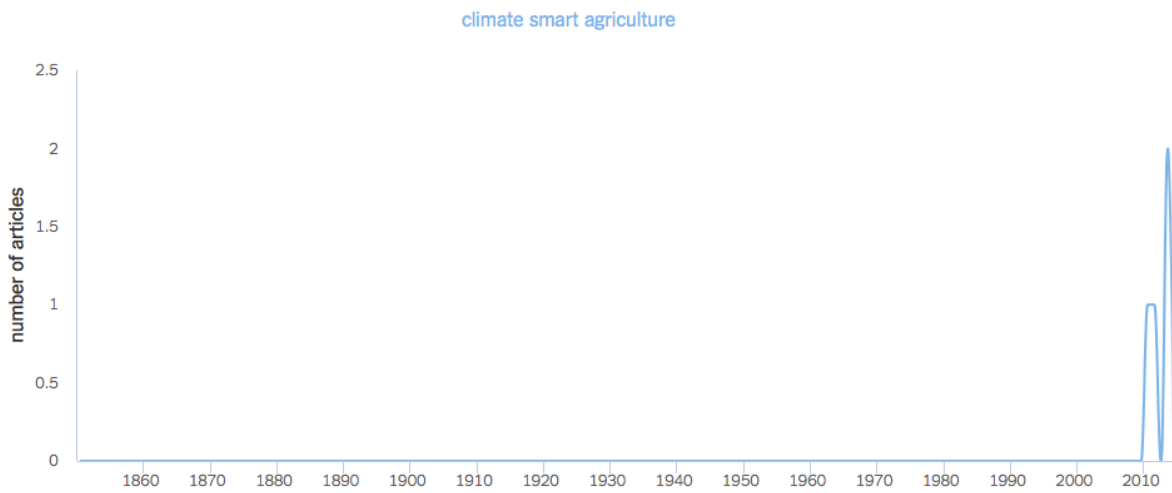


Figure 6.



Analysis of the above graphs serves to show us that although the language of food riots has been present in media reports released by The New York Times since the very beginning of available archive material, notably from the 1850s, it is only much more recently – around 1910 - that the phrase “food crisis” has become common terminology to describe an unprecedented amount of people in the world going hungry. Biotechnology, GMO and Climate Smart Agriculture is language that has infiltrated The new York Times reports only very recently, and reflects the terminology adopted by the institutions promoting the productivist paradigm as a solution to hunger and food riots, indicating that albeit inadvertently, this media outlet and others that have been dissected previously, are underpinning and propagating the discourse presented by multilateral institutions like the World Bank and the UN, as well as the EU states and the US.

Finally, it remains important to note that the language that characterises the productivist paradigm is also present in the analysis of the corporate food regime. This would point to the fact that the productivist paradigm currently constitutes the dominant food system today.

Critique of the Productivist Paradigm

Contradictions of industrial agriculture within the corporate food regime help to visualise the contributions to the food price crisis and the response from the victims in the form of widespread social unrest. The failings of the productivist paradigm have been laid bare in the form of the food crisis which is characterised by long production chains that have pulled the producer and the consumer miles apart, with profits increasingly falling into the hands of actors at the top end of the commodity (supermarkets) leaving farmers with little to nothing. These developments have been matched with large increases in number of hungry people world wide, deterioration in the quality of food available and the unprecedented, relentless devastation of the environment. Underlining these shortcomings, Allen (2012) states that the drawbacks of the productivist paradigm are that ‘productivist agriculture benefits few, reduces food security for many and used resources at an unsustainable rate.’ In essence, the solutions proposed by the paradigm simply aim to emulate the development of agriculture in the West by transposing the same industrialisation logic in the global south, as indicated by McMichael and Schneider (2011) who see it as a ‘Western’ vision of modernising African agriculture.’

In terms of productivity, Miguel Altieri and Clara Nicholls (2008) suggest that the discourse upheld on industrial farms being more efficient and productive in terms of output is misleading and that in fact, ‘research shows that small farms are much more productive than large farms if total output is considered rather than yield from a single crop. Small integrated farming systems that produce grains, fruits, vegetables, fodder, and animal products produce yield per unit of single crops such as corn (monocultures) on large-scale farms.’

Another serious issue with relying on corporations to dictate the agricultural landscape is that corporations produce what is most profitable at a given time and what pulls in the highest price. That could be soya or rice or foods with nutritious value, but it could also be tobacco, poppy seeds or sugar cane whose farming does nothing for food production and hunger mitigation.

Land rush and depeasantisation are dramatic consequences of the productivist paradigm that McMichael (2013) found are trying to be legitimised on moral grounds, defending them as a vehicle to end hunger. ‘Peaking oil and food emission mandates and stalled investment funds all find a material resolution in the land grab and are legitimised by an ideology of enclosure (global ecology) in championing humanity (food) and the environment (green fuel).’ The land rush has been legitimised and aided further by the creation of soft laws such as the World Banks Responsible Agriculture Investment Principles (RAI) designed to justify and enable enclosure and giveaways of enclosure and common lands alike. Essentially, the NIE vision for a future free from hunger is evicting ‘unproductive’ populations from their land to make way for large scale, export-led agribusiness and truncating the reproduction rights of smallholders.

Following all-round environmental destruction as result of industrial agriculture, sustainable intensification has been proposed as a way forward by the leading institutions to

reconcile increased production with environmental safekeeping. According to McMichael (2013), the concept of sustainable intensification 'is allied with the extractive food/fuel/biomass regime...as it fails to radically alter our reliance on the agri-food paradigm...'

The productivist paradigm aims to pull smallholder farmers into the market mechanism and render them more efficient through the issuing of loans, the investment in inputs and the connection with international food markets. McMichael (2013) explains that the neoliberal idea is that 'land occupied by small holders is low yielding and underutilised and that capitalisation could improve rural incomes and food security.' International institutions hope to increase productivity of smallholders by pulling them into international value chains and urging them to invest in highly technological external inputs. As highlighted by McMichael and Schneider (2011), 'the World Bank's new "agriculture for development" initiative seeks to improve small farmers' productivity with new inputs, and their incorporation into global markets via value chains originating in industrial agriculture.' These measures are dangerous and threaten the reproductive logic of small holders as debt relations will ensue due to the requirement of capital for inputs as well as dependency relations between the farmers and the agri-business supplying these inputs rendering farmers very vulnerable.

Bryseson (2000) warns that the productivist paradigm puts into motion developments that 'constitute not simply the erosion of national food self-sufficiency or food security but what some students of agricultural trends call "de-peasantization"—the phasing out of a mode of production to make the countryside a more congenial site for intensive capital accumulation.' Indeed, productivism is a threat to the peasantry and their valuable role as food provisions. Vandana Shiva (2004) comments on the changing role of the peasant: "Under globalization, the farmer is losing her/his social, cultural, economic identity as a producer. A farmer is now a 'consumer' of costly seeds and costly chemicals sold by powerful global corporations through powerful landlords and money lenders locally." So it is clear that productivism sets ominous power relations into motion that serve only to repress the peasantry further and does nothing to solve the problem of unaffordable food prices.

Conclusion

Increasing industrial agricultural production cannot solve the food crisis in African nations, as the problem is not food availability but the unaffordable prices of food for the continents poor. This is counter to how the food crisis has been presented by the media discussed in this research paper, which has tended to present the food crisis as a problem of food insufficiency to be tackled with the mainstream productivist paradigm. It is understood that the rural poor are most affected by food price increases, as they are largely deficit food producers, having to buy a portion of their food consumption on the marketplace. De Janvry and Sadoulet (2008) therefore argue that agriculture has been underestimated as a policy solution to mitigate the social impact of the food crisis and that 'for (smallholders), agriculture must be the main instrument to respond to food crisis and escape poverty.' From this perspective, policy focus on rural development to mitigate vulnerability to international food price volatility would be to find solutions geared toward increasing yield from farmed land as well as selling locally, thereby reducing import dependency and vulnerability to international price fluctuations.

In their pioneering article on food regimes of 1989 McMichael and Friedmann, writing after the demise of the second food regime, already suggest then that agriculture needed to be localised, that decentralisation needed to occur and that local production and consumption of food needed to be redirected in order to create a food system that was more effective in producing affordable food and enabling poorer strata of the world population to access affordable food. As pointed out by McMichael (2015), re-localisation of food provision is a pillar of the food sovereignty movement, together with the 'advocacy of small(er)-scale farming on agroecological principles'. Holt-Gimenez and Patel also look to food sovereignty as a more adequate response to the food crisis: 'In 1996 Via Campesina, a world-wide peasant, pastoralist, and fishers federation, launched a global call for food sovereignty—the human right of all people to healthy, culturally appropriate, sustain-ably grown food, and the right of communities to

determine their own food systems. The call both echoed and amplified the voices of social movements everywhere that are struggling for land reform, control over local resources, fair markets, neighbourhood food systems and sustainable agriculture.' The movement is a direct critique of the productivist paradigm and politicises the privatization of food.

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