



**There is No Alternative... Is There?
Organic Food Provisioning in Jamaica**

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List of Acronyms

CARDI	Caribbean Agricultural Research and Development Institute
CSA	Community Supported Agriculture
FiBL	Research Institute of Organic Agriculture
IfoAM	International Federation of Organic Agricultural Movements
IMF	International Monetary Fund
JOAM	Jamaica Organic Agriculture Movement
NOP	US National Organic Program (NOP)
RADA	Rural Agricultural Development Authority

Abstract

In this paper, I examine the relationship between inside and outside meanings of organic agriculture in Jamaica to understand how they constrain, complicate and sometimes contradict each other and contribute to some of the tensions present in the envisioning and practice of alternative food initiatives in Jamaica. These contestations arise from differing interpretations of who organic is or should be for and differing understandings of what organic is an alternative to. I use these juxtapositions to highlight some of the possible implications this has for the re-working of production and consumption relationships around food. I also show how various actors' deployment of the different meanings of organic leads to an uneven distribution of benefits from the material and cultural economies associated with organic provisioning. Finally, I examine how the diverse meanings of organic agriculture in this Global South context, further complicate a straightforward, already problematized, reading of organic provision as active opposition to the problems associated with industrialized food provisioning, derived mainly from Global North contexts such as the US or Europe. Broadly-speaking, this framing associates organic food provisioning with local resistance, and pits it against global forces of neoliberal capitalism. The different meanings of organic agriculture in Jamaica, however, highlight that in many respects the global and local are mutually constitutive in the process of shifting food production and consumption relations. This raises questions about whether the Global North/South dichotomy is appropriate as scholars and activists seek to envision more equitable alternatives to the conventional food system.

Relevance to Development Studies

The broad context of this paper is the issue of food provisioning in Jamaica and how alternative food initiatives such as organic provisioning are being understood and taken up in Global South context that is heavily constrained by debt and and poverty. This has relevance to development studies because of the persistence of disproportionate rural poverty despite development interventions and more specifically in Jamaica because agriculture still has the opportunity to be a source of rural livelihoods. Also issues related to food and agriculture are increasingly not just rural issues, as broader populations become aware of the dangers that chemical and other input-intensive industrial agriculture pose to their health and the environment.

Keywords

Alternative food initiative, alternative food network, Jamaica, organic

Chapter 1: Introduction

In this paper, I examine the relationship between inside and outside meanings of organic agriculture in Jamaica to understand how they constrain, complicate and sometimes contradict each other and contribute to some of the tensions present in the envisioning and practice of alternative food initiatives in Jamaica. These contestations arise from differing interpretations of who organic is or should be for and differing understandings of what organic is an alternative to. I use these juxtapositions to highlight some of the possible implications this has for the re-working of production and consumption relationships around food. I also show how various actors' deployment of the different meanings of organic leads to an uneven distribution of benefits from the material and cultural economies associated with organic provisioning. Finally, I examine how the diverse meanings of organic agriculture in this Global South context, further complicate a straightforward, already problematized, reading of organic provision as active opposition to the problems associated with industrialized food provisioning, derived mainly from Global North contexts such as the US or Europe. Broadly-speaking, this framing associates organic food provisioning with local resistance, and pits it against global forces of neoliberal capitalism. The different meanings of organic agriculture in Jamaica, however, highlight that in many respects the global and local are mutually constitutive in the process of shifting food production and consumption relations. This raises questions about whether the Global North/South dichotomy is appropriate as scholars and activists seek to envision more equitable alternatives to the conventional food system.

1.1 Food Politics, Alternative Food Initiatives and Organic Provisioning

There is widespread and growing awareness that something is very wrong with the global food system. The reality of roughly a billion people going hungry while another billion are overweight (Patel 2007: 1), many farmers not being able to feed themselves, and up to 400 billion dollars of food being thrown away per year (Nixon 2015) point to fundamental contradictions. The persistence of chronic hunger in parts of the world, epidemic of diet-related health issues worldwide due to increasing consumption of meat, fat, sugar and salt, and the persistence of poverty among many farming communities are symptoms of structural issues in the global agrifood system. Industrialized agriculture is also poisoning soil and waterways with chemicals and having adverse effects on human health as food safety scares such as *E Coli* outbreaks in the US, 'mad cow disease' (BSE) in the UK and melamine-contamination of baby milk powder in China become more commonplace. These environmental, health and social justice issues are all interconnected and have contributed towards the increasing salience of politics around food production, provisioning and consumption (Goodman et al. 2012). The increasing awareness of and interest in social issues that shape the food system, manifests in diverse ways, ranging from the mass appeal of Eric Schlosser's expose of the American industrial food system – *Fast Food Nation* (2001) to the increased marketing of

Fair Trade, 'natural' and certified-organic foods. Each month, new products that are touted as 'beyond Fair Trade' (Fair Chain coffee!) or 'beyond organic' hit supermarket shelves, attempting to capitalize on consumers' supposedly growing consciousness and reflexivity. As Guthman writes, 'There is little doubt that this emerging food politics feeds on the centrality of food, as both biological necessity and cultural linchpin of human social life' (2002: 295).

Social action framed as resistance to the industrial food system is sometimes characterized as a food movement, alternative food initiatives, or alternative food networks. Scholars across various academic disciplines of sociology, geography, anthropology and cultural studies have approached the varied strands of these forms of social action with different framings and have reached diverse conclusions about their potential to push for social change. Some scholars, theorizing about the 'Radical' strand of the food movement, as characterized by Holt Gimenez and Shattuck (2011), have focused on food politics as a particularly prescient form of social activism of this historical moment, highlighting movements such as the global peasant movement *La Via Campesina* as a harbinger of a new kind of radical politics. Its advocacy of food sovereignty fundamentally 'revalues agriculture and food' (McMichael 2006) and highlights food as 'a focus of contention and resistance to a corporate takeover of life itself' (McMichael 2000: 32). Other scholars such as Guthman (2007, 2008c), Allen (2004), Allen et al. (2003), Goodman et al. (2012) have critiqued the politics of re-linking production and consumption, more in the vein of Holt-Gimenez and Shattuck's 'Progressive/Food Justice' stream of the movement, which is especially relevant in the Global North where 'faceless', 'placeless', 'food from nowhere' (McMichael 2009: 147) has become the norm. While they are often framed as re-embedding social relations in the marketplace and offering better terms for producers, critics have characterized the growth of niche markets in the Global North for organic, Fair Trade, local, quality and geographically-indicated products as 'a narrow and weakly politicized expression of middle- and upper-class angst' (Goodman and Goodman 2009: 208).

In addition to analyzing various strands of the food movement along their political lines, visions, and possibilities for transformative change, scholarship is also broadly divided between Global North and Global South contexts. The failures of corporate, industrial agriculture look different in the Global North and South, in many ways because of existing inequalities in the world system between former First and Third Worlds, colonizers and colonized. Agrifood initiatives in these different contexts have therefore taken different approaches according to the way problems are perceived. In the Global North, initiatives have focused on reconnecting and developing more intimate linkages between farmers and eaters, promoting organic and ecological farming practices and community-building food projects (Allen 2004). Some of these elements are present in Global South contexts, but there, reformist efforts by activists and scholars have focused on expanding Fair Trade networks or making sure Fair Trade certification schemes empower small-scale farmers. The danger, however, is that agribusiness is usually quick to capitalize wherever certification has opened up relatively easily identifiable and delineated marketplaces. More radical groups have advocated for land reform in support of small-scale farmers' rights to stay on the land, questioned the logic of integrating small-scale farm-

ers into global commodity chains and lobbied for government policies that support small-scale farmers' livelihoods and protect them from the dumping of Northern agricultural surpluses accumulated by subsidized Northern corporate agriculture (Baker 2013: 12). Therefore, the scholarship on alternative food initiatives and networks has tended to focus on Global North contexts and Fair Trade networks linking Global North consumers, activists and NGOs with Global South producers (Abrahams 2008, DuPuis et al. 2005, Freidberg and Goldstein 2011, Goodman et al. 2012).

Among alternative food initiatives, one that has become readily visible especially in the US, Canada and Europe, which generate over 90 percent of global sales, is organic agriculture. In 2013, this market was worth 72 billion US dollars (Willer and Lernoud 2015: 25). Due to the growth in certification schemes and their increasing availability in mainstream supermarkets, organics constitute one of the fastest-growing segments of the food industry (Raynolds 2004: 725). The annual publication, *The World of Organic Agriculture*, published by the European-based International Federation of Organic Agricultural Movements (IFOAM) and the Research Institute of Organic Agriculture (FiBL) and organizations like the Soil Association, a UK-based organic advocacy NGO, still refer to the organic *movement*, but since the institutionalization of standards, though organizations like IFOAM and the US National Organic Program (NOP), organics has strayed far from its movement origins and today can be just as accurately described as an industry or a sector of the agrifood market.

In this study, I use the term 'organic' mostly to refer to the food and products that have been certified according to particular codified standards. Certification enables marketing of products as certified organic, usually with the accompanying logo of the certification body. These standards are based on a set of allowable (and not allowable) inputs and regulations governing various stages of the production process and importantly, are enforceable through inspections. Examples of standards include avoidance of certain synthetic pesticides and fertilizers, avoidance of genetically modified seeds, use of land that has been free from the prohibited chemical inputs for a specified number of years, maintenance of detailed farm records to facilitate auditing by inspectors and practices to minimize harmful effects on wildlife. In essence, organic labelling is a way to create marketplace guarantees for consumers to justify the associated price premiums (Pratt 2009).

Organic farming can in fact be traced back to a holistic philosophy of agroecological farming practices, where agroecology is understood as the the use of 'ecological concepts and principles for the design and management of sustainable agroecosystems, where external inputs are replaced by natural processes such as natural soil fertility and biological control' (Altieri and Nicholls 2012: 2). Organic as a set of practices emerged in the 1920s based on the notion of accepting the natural order and working with its laws through natural methods of maintaining soil health and fertility (Conford 2001). This ecological approach to sustainable agriculture has also been referred to as 'farming in nature's image' (Soule and Piper 1992) and, characteristic of the back-to-the-land hippies of 1970s US communes, emphasizes self-sufficiency (Belasco 2007).

Although the term ‘organic’ may look straightforward on a box of salad greens, it is a contested concept; ‘the impossibility of a natural, readily apparent, and undisputed definition of the “organic” should be clear’ (Guthman 1998: 146). Standards necessarily compromise a more holistic vision of organic since they only focus on production processes. ‘The very existence of agribusiness participation in the sector points to the fact deeper meanings of organic farming are not codified in existing rules and regulations (Guthman 2004b: 308). For example, according to the original, more holistic tenets of organic farming as practice, agribusiness’ practice of ‘organic monocropping’ should, by definition, be impossible. The existence of standards may seem to make the boundary between organic and non-organic obvious and well-defined, but who sets those standards and decides what criteria are included or excluded is a political question.

Research on organic agriculture as a form of alternative food provisioning has focused mostly on the Global North since it originated in the US and Europe as a diverse movement reacting against unsustainable and unhealthy agro-industrial food provision and those two regions continue to constitute its primary market (Raynolds 2000: 299). Certification schemes also arose in the Global North first as growers sought to protect their price premium while expanding their markets. The US state of California has played a particularly important role in the growth of organic agriculture and its subsequent conventionalization by corporate agriculture as it is the ‘birthplace of organic regulation and currently the center of world growth in organic production and consumption (Guthman 2003: 137, 2004). Organic agriculture in the South has expanded mostly in response to demand from Global North markets, though there are some important emerging markets in the Global South like China, where a growing middle class is seeking organic produce mostly as a response to food safety concerns (Si et al. 2015). This flow of organic commodities from South to North has boomed as Southern countries increasingly provision Northern consumers with counter-seasonal fresh produce, tropical produce (such as bananas, coffee and cocoa) and processed foods (Raynolds 2004). Latin America and the Caribbean is an important region for certified-organic production due to the importance of production sites particularly in Argentina, Mexico, the Dominican Republic that ship to the major Northern markets (Raynolds 2004: 725).

1.2 Organic Agriculture in the Caribbean and Jamaica

The state of organic agriculture in the Caribbean is very heterogeneous. For the most part, production in Caribbean countries is very low, evidenced by the fact that *The World of Organic Agriculture* (Willer and Lernoud 2015) barely mentions any Caribbean countries except the Dominican Republic, which is a top exporter of organic bananas, cocoa, coffee and a pioneer in exporting mangos (Raynolds 2008: 161). According to Raynolds, this can be traced to the preservation of low-input peasant farming practices because of ecological and economic factors, which resulted in producers practicing de facto organic farming

before formal certification. NGOs and government also helped to encourage organic farming practices and production for export (Raynolds 2008). While the Dominican Republic might be a leader in the Caribbean in terms of export-oriented organic agriculture, with all its attendant dependency on foreign markets and potentially eroding rents, which I explain in the next chapter, Cuba provides an example of a Caribbean country that managed to make sustainable, organic farming methods the foundation of the island's entire farming sector. This transition from dependence on chemical-intensive farming methods happened under great duress in the early 1990s after the collapse of the Soviet Union and under the US embargo. This cut off Cuba's supply of basic foodstuffs, oil, fertilizers and pesticides, effectively forcing the country to dramatically reform its agricultural system towards low-input agroecological methods focused on self-sufficiency (Funes et al. 2002, Weis 2007).

For the food import-dependent Caribbean countries, whose small farmers are also dependent on buying chemical inputs, and that do not face the pressures Cuba did to reform, the picture is more mixed. Jamaica's recent history is indicative of the Caribbean's experience with structural adjustment and neoliberal capitalism, particularly the negative effects that this has had the agricultural sector and increasing its dependence on foreign imports. Examining the Jamaican case, given its similarities to other Caribbean countries in terms of dependency on foreign imports, foreign markets for commodities, and foreign tourists, could help us to flesh out the picture of organic agriculture in the Caribbean. Also, although organic agriculture in Jamaica is marginal – in 2013, 0.1 percent of its agricultural land was under certified-organic production, and there were 80 certified-organic producers in the country (Lernoud et al. 2015: 236) – the efforts are coming from civil society, which also might be more indicative of the broader Caribbean experience, where governments are more often not taking a pro-active role in terms of supporting small farmers' livelihoods and encouraging self-sufficiency in food production. For example, the Jamaica Organic Agriculture Movement (JOAM) is spearheading efforts to develop Jamaica's organic agriculture sector and is a way in which ordinary citizens are taking it into their own hands to create alternatives to the industrialized food system or to enable sustainable livelihoods based on agriculture, a sector which has become increasingly marginal.

Looking at the movement on the margins in a marginalized place reveals the agency of people who are often portrayed as hapless victims of neoliberal capitalism. Examining the framing of organic provisioning in Jamaica also highlights the tensions and contradictions, some of which reinforce neoliberal logics. It also reveals challenges specific to Global South contexts that are not explored in the literature on alternative food initiatives in the Global North.

1.3 Jamaica: Debt, Diets and a Declining Agricultural Sector

Jamaica, which lies less than 1000 kilometers off the coast of Miami, has been described as a ‘consuming appendage of the US economy’ (Witter, as quoted in Weis 2004: 475). The way that its economy and development have been shaped and battered by its subordinate position to the US and other economic powers has been powerfully illustrated in the 2001 documentary *Life and Debt* by Stephanie Black. The film shows the effects of the IMF and World Bank mandated structural adjustment policies instituted from the 1980s onwards on the lives of ordinary Jamaicans. Cuts in government spending, increased interest rates, currency devaluation and decreasing wages led to increased unemployment, violence, rise in food costs, deterioration of public services like education and healthcare and increased income inequality (see also Weis 2004). The film highlights a number of poignant examples from the agrifood sector. Small farmers from Jamaica’s breadbasket region are increasingly unable to sell their onions and potatoes because of cheaper imports from the US. Milk powder from the US and Europe, where governments subsidize their dairy sectors, has been dumped in Jamaica, leading to a precipitous decline in the dairy industry. Another example shown is of a Jamaican chicken plant run out of business by chicken neck, back and ‘dark’ meat sold cheaply in Jamaica by US companies as the market for ‘white’ breast meat grows back home.

The Caribbean has been historically associated with the export of various edible commodities such as bananas and sugar since the days of plantation slavery, but, as the above examples show, the region is ironically now heavily dependent on food imports and therefore vulnerable to disruptions in global supply chains. In the wake of the terrorist attacks on New York and Washington DC on September 11, 2001, several Caribbean nations faced chicken-meat shortages because US airspace was shut down for more than a week, which also grounded flights that brought broiler chicken eggs from the southern US state of Georgia to the region. Prices quickly increased as chicken meat became scarce (CMC 2010). The director of the Caribbean Agricultural Research and Development Institute (CARDI), cited this as a reason why the region should focus on self-sufficiency in terms of food provisioning.

The ‘meatification’ of diets with its attendant rise in diet-related diseases is another pressing issue facing the country (Weis 2004). One columnist for a major newspaper has called for a ‘food movement’ in Jamaica: ‘Notwithstanding any existing laws, politics and regulations, it seems that this is a sensible, practical and effective method to push back against a dietary-cum-lifestyle-related health problem besetting the country, arising out of government inertia, sheer ignorance and a minimal sense of personal responsibility in relation to the food we consume’ (Pryce 2011). Another encouraged more nutrition education while acknowledging that poverty can limit people’s choices in terms of purchasing healthier food, and emphasized the need to educate Jamaicans about buying local foods to help decrease Jamaica’s approximately one billion dollar food import bill (Sinclair-Maragh 2014). In the Jamaican context, the link is generally drawn between eating locally-grown produce (which generally means domesti-

cally grown), a healthier diet and reducing Jamaica's food import bill. Since the issue of national debt is so pressing in Jamaica, it is not surprising that it makes an appearance everywhere, from popular song lyrics, to documentaries such as the one described above. Debt has been recognized by commentators and analysts as connected to the issue of food imports since the foreign exchange spent on food imports could be used to service Jamaica's debt. From 2008 to 2011, debt servicing accounted for close to half of total government expenditures, while education and health only received 20 percent (Johnston and Montecino 2012: 1).

Understanding the predicament of Jamaica's agricultural sector 'in a time of neo-liberal infatuation', as Jamaican academic Meeks puts it (2007: 61), is useful because it highlights the particular challenges of reforming the agrifood system, revitalizing agriculture in Jamaica and making it viable for small farmers, who make up around 20 percent of the labor force. Small farmers also face historical inequalities related to the country's history of plantation slavery. Small farmers, defined as those with farms of five acres (about two hectares) or less constitute just under 80 percent of the farming community and tend to be farming in the rugged interior of the island. Large-scale farms, generally producing export crops, account for less than one percent of the total number of farmers but occupy close to 40 percent of fertile, coastal farmland (FAO 2003). According to Meeks:

...Jamaica remains mired in a certain routine associated with peripheral non-oil-producing economies. Broadly speaking, these states rise and fall to the rhythms of the world economy, responding negatively or positively to the cost of fuel, the prices for their primary products and the dynamic of the developed-centre economies. The outlook is generally one of deteriorating terms of trade and gradual or rapid decadence, though hypothetically there are possibilities to move up, even as the general tendency is to move down. Neo-liberal economic policies have opened up the economy to the world, serving to largely undermine its agricultural foundations... (2007: 63)

Analysis of the potential and trajectories of Jamaica's alternative food initiatives, must be placed within a broader understanding of historical and current challenges facing the country at a macroeconomic level and facing the agricultural sector at a structural level. Examining the potential pitfalls or illuminating points for hope necessarily involves unpacking the political-economic implications of organic, but it also involves understanding the meanings people make of organic production and consumption in their everyday lives. Guthman reminds us that 'what people believe about what they eat shapes how it goes down. Taste, it can therefore be surmised, is necessarily individual and social, gate-keeping and learned, and neither wholly structured nor wholly chosen' (2002: 297). Taste here refers not so much to literal taste, but to what food means in terms of cultural economy – the cultural and symbolic meanings of food (Guthman 2002: 297).

1.4 Analytical Framework

Inside and Outside Meanings

In this paper, I will use Sidney Mintz's concept of inside and outside meanings to tease apart the different ways that organic agriculture and the consumption of organic produce in Jamaica are understood, framed and experienced. Mintz first elaborated on the difference between inside and outside meanings in his seminal work, *Sweetness and Power* (1985), in which the Caribbean also plays an important role. The book is a gripping historical narrative of how sugar consumption in the West, and in particular Britain, rose rapidly from 1650 to 1900 as it became commoditized in its transition from luxury good to fuel for the working classes. Plantation sugar production in the West Indies and its trans-Atlantic trade also enabled the growth of powerful capitalist interests, both in the colonies and industrializing Britain. Sugar production made the fortunes of some in the British capitalist classes who invested and operated these colonial enterprises, but it also nourished and consoled the emerging proletarian classes in the mines and factories (1985: 61). Mintz deliberately avoids totalizing explanations for the growth of sugar production and consumption and does not offer any causal explanations, noting that it was impossible to identify and isolate a single convincing reason that drove the dramatic rise in consumption of imported foods like sugar, tea and tobacco (1995: 4). He also makes an important contribution by bringing in the agency of those at the bottom of the hierarchy as he explains how the emerging proletariat made sense of changing modes of work, and rhythms of life. At the same time, however, he reminds us that the agency of those at the bottom is exercised in an arena shaped by forces beyond their control: 'slave and proletarian together powered the imperial economic system that kept the one supplied with manacles and the other with sugar and rum; but neither had more than minimal influence over it. The growing freedom of the consumer to choose was one kind of freedom, but not another' (1985: 184).

For Mintz, inside meanings are related to the personal, everyday, emotional aspects of people's consumption habits, these broadly tend to be associated with culture. Outside meanings are associated with institutions and structures of power, which shape the economic, political, social and environmental aspects of consumption (1996: 20). Mintz eloquently asks:

Where does the locus of meaning reside? For most human beings most of the time, the meaning believed to inhere in things and in the relationships among things and acts are not given, but, rather, are learned. Most of us, most of the time, act within plays the lines of which were written long ago, the images of which require recognition, not invention. To say this is not to deny individuality or the human capacity to add, transform, and reject meanings, but it is to insist that the webs of signification that we as individuals spin are exceedingly small and fine (and mostly trivial); for the most part they reside within other webs of immense scale, surpassing single lives in time and space (1985: 157-158).

Changing consumer tastes were not simply a matter of the evolving 'inside meanings' that working class Britons gave to the shifting eating and work habits in their daily lives associated with sugar consumption, but also had to do

with ‘outside meanings’ – ‘the wider social significance of those changes effectuated by institutions and groups whose reach and power transcend both individuals and local communities: those who staff and manage the larger economic and political institutions and make them operate’ (Mintz 1995: 6). Outside meanings tend to set the terms for the creation of daily, inside meanings (Mintz 1996: 20-21). Mintz mentions in particular that he uses the term outside meaning to avoid ascribing to members of a society ‘a homogeneity of values and intentions that they almost certainly lack’ (1995:7).

When examining the relationship between broader social structures and the everyday agency of people, especially ordinary people, whether they are the descendants of former slaves irreparably torn away from their homelands, or the proletariat that powered the rise of Britain as a capitalist world power, we inevitably run into the question of power. Power shapes the development of inside meanings, regardless of how intimate they may seem to us in daily life. In his work, Mintz draws on the scholarship of fellow anthropologist Eric Wolf, who reminds us that ‘Meanings are not imprinted into things by nature; they are developed and imposed by human beings. Several things follow from this. The ability to bestow meanings — to ‘name’ things, acts and ideas — is a source of power’ (1982: 388). In the context of the sugar trade, the British elites’ ability to claim that sugar had become a necessity for the working classes, which sealed the change in its meaning, facilitated their accumulation of profits because it justified the expansion of sugar markets (Mintz 1985).

Civil society, governments and agribusinesses seize power when they give meanings to certain actions or counter-movements such as framing organic agriculture as opposition to industrial provisioning or organic agriculture as a form of green consumption that embodies a reflexive environmentally-conscious consumer. McMichael, drawing on Mintz’s work above reminds us that when inside and outside meanings converge, there can be a ‘powerful new identification of the availability of foods with the global order... consumers buy into the corporate and imperial relations that organize the production and consumption relationships (McMichael 2000: 23-24). These moments of convergence are also moments of contestation, because there are usually different meanings being pushed by different actors at the same time. These moments can represent a possible shift in global agrifood relations; food regime analysis gives us an analytical tool to understand the contestation between different meanings of organic as connected to broader processes of capital accumulation.

Food Regime Analysis

Food regime analysis provides a frame or an ‘optic on one or more historical conjunctures’ (McMichael 2009: 148) with which to situate developments and possible trajectories in the Jamaican food system. Food regime analysis attempts to theorize how food provision and consumption have been co-determined in the broad arc of capitalist development. McMichael, who formulated the concept with Friedmann in 1989, argues that the food regime ‘can be considered to be simply an analytical device to pose specific questions about the structuring processes in the global political-economy, and/or global food

relations, at any particular moment' (2009: 148). According to Friedmann, a food regime is a set of implicit rules that govern the global system of food provisioning (2005). Food regimes are historical and 'sustained but nonetheless temporary constellations of interests and relationships' (Friedmann 2005: 228). Since food regimes are shaped by often unequal and contested relations between states, businesses, people and ecologies, they are stable for only relatively short periods, which are followed by periods of transition and instability, where various actors jostle with each other over the way forward (Friedmann 2005: 228). Each food regime is characterized by a specific set of complexes – webs of production, consumption and distribution that link various actors in the food system together through flows of specific agrifood commodities. Food regime analysis aims to provide a 'world-historical' perspective (Friedmann and McMichael 1989: 93). This alludes to its connection to world-systems theory, which takes as its unit of analysis the capitalist world economy as an integrated 'historical social system' (McMichael 1990) in an effort to understand dynamics of capital accumulation and how they relate to development dynamic and relationships between core and periphery.

The first food regime, the 'colonial-diasporic' food regime, in place from 1870 to 1914, was centered on European imports of wheat and meat from settler states of the US, Canada, New Zealand, Australia and Argentina (Friedmann 2005). Manufactured goods, labor and capital, particularly for transcontinental railways and shipping lines, flowed from Europe to the settler states in return. This took place in the context of British hegemony in the world economy, the culmination of colonialism in Asia and Africa and the establishment of the system of nation-states. Friedmann and McMichael argue that 'a truly international division of labour emerged as settler states replicated European agricultural production – and industry – on a more cost-efficient basis appropriate to the large-scale provisioning of the growing European working classes' (1989: 96). Tropical imports such as cotton, rubber, tin and copper played an important role as raw materials for industry and other commodities such as tea, coffee, sugar and bananas became articles of mass consumption by industrial workers (Woodruff, as cited in Friedmann and McMichael 1989: 98). The end of the first food regime was marked by World War I, the Great Depression and the ecological catastrophe of the 'Dust Bowl' in North America in the 1930s (Friedmann 2005: 237).

The second food regime, the 'mercantile-industrial' food regime, emerged in 1947 and lasted until 1973, under US hegemony in the world economy and the consolidation of the international state system with the independence of former colonies in Asia and Africa (Friedmann 2005, Friedmann and McMichael 1989). Subsidized grain exports from the US were first sent to Europe as part of the postwar Marshall Plan, then to the Third World under Public Law 480. Another important development was the growing power and transnational nature of agribusiness capital, linked to the fact that the US 'modeled and supported major state involvement and industrialization of agriculture' (2005: 242). These transnational agribusinesses created agrifood complexes such as intensive meat production through the grain-fueled livestock complex and 'durable foods' complex that sought to substitute tropical exports like sugar and vegetable oils with industrial derivatives of temperate grains; these complexes were

characterized by ‘increasing separation and mediation by capital of each stage between raw material inputs and final consumption’ (Friedmann and McMichael 1989: 113). The second food regime ended in the food (and oil price) crisis of 1974 and the competitive dumping and looming trade wars between the European Economic Community and the US. An additional factor was the tension between the mercantilist and industrial elements of the second food regime, as transnational corporations tried to find ways around national regulatory frameworks and to move towards a globally integrated agrifood sector’ (Friedmann 1993: 39).

While McMichael theorizes that a corporate food regime has been consolidated and characterizes neoliberal capitalism, Friedmann argues that

...the lineaments of a new food regime based on quality audited supply chains seems to be emerging in the space opened by impasse in international negotiations over food standards. Led by food retailers, agrofood corporations are selectively appropriating demands of environmental, food safety, animal welfare, fair trade, and other social movements...A new regime seems to be emerging not from attempts to restore elements of the past, but from a range of cross-cutting alliances and issues linking food and agriculture to new issues. These include quality, safety, biological and cultural diversity, intellectual property, animal welfare, environmental pollution, energy use, and gender and racial inequalities. The most important of these fall under the broad category of environment (2005: 227, 249).

The emergent ‘corporate environmental’ food regime is driven by agrifood corporations and appears to be organizing food supply chains along two differentiated pathways that provision transnational classes of rich and poor consumers according to different food safety and health standards (2005: 251-252). This is visible in the US, for example, in the ‘choice’ consumers have between Walmart and MacDonaldis on one hand and Whole Foods Market (a premium retailer specializing in organic and local foods sometimes referred to as ‘Whole Paycheck’) on the other. Governments and inter-governmental organizations are embracing minimal standards, while agrifood companies offer ‘quality’ products to consumers that adhere to standards above the floor set by government and international organizations. Friedmann’s analysis is particularly useful because she places the emphasis of her analysis on the transition between food regimes; she argues that changing frames and language help us to identify the shape that the new food regime might be taking. Friedmann also focuses on the jostling between different actors that strive to shape the dominant paradigm, noting that ‘while the rise of “quality” agrofood systems may herald a new “green capitalism”, it may serve only privileged consumers within a food regime rife with new contradictions’ (2005, 257). Friedmann locates the key tension in ‘green capitalism’ as this: ‘states, firms, social movements, and citizens are entering a new political era characterised by a struggle over the relative weight of private, public, and self-organised institutions’ (2005, 259). The struggle concerns the definition of ‘public’ in our agrifood systems and how to democratize them.

Situating the meanings and possible trajectories of organic agriculture within food regime analysis, as a 'lens on broader relations in the political history of capital' (McMichael 2009: 148) and in the context of a possible emerging corporate-environmental food regime will allow me to draw the connections between local, micro-level developments in Jamaica and global processes. This is relevant because of Jamaica's openness to outside influences not just in recent times due to contemporary processes of globalization, but for the 500 years since Columbus brought sugar cane to the so-called New World from the Spanish Canary Islands and sparked the region's integration into the emerging world economy via plantation slavery (Mintz 1985: 32).

Situating analysis at the level of global, capitalist agrifood relations can sometimes mean that narratives of individual and community agency are lost in the narrative of crushing corporate power. This tendency may be exacerbated in discussions of marginalized groups such as small farmers or island-nations at the periphery of global geopolitics. But, drawing on Friedmann's emphasis on contestation during moments of crisis and change in food regimes (2005) and corollary that there are no certain trajectories, I attempt to look at how the actions of individuals and communities at a local level, and how they frame them, may reveal important contradictions that point to cracks in the system and therefore opportunities for change.

Agency at the Margins

To keep agency in mind in my analysis, I draw on the work of anthropologist and historian Michel-Rolph Trouillot whose work focused on the Caribbean. In his ethnographic study of a banana-producing village in Dominica, *Peasants and Capital: Dominica in the World Economy* (1988), Trouillot sought to counter the tendency in world-systems analysis, ascendant in the 1980s, to focus on 'metanarratives about the structure of global forms of domination' (Agard-Jones 2013: 183). In the book, he asks: 'Is there life beyond neocolonialism? Can we make sense of what dominated people say and do in their daily lives without keeping silent about their forced integration into the international order and yet without reducing their lives to the fact of that integration?' (1988: 181) For Trouillot, world systems theorists were missing the microlevel analysis — 'a sense of the agentive capacities of ordinary people, even in the face of tremendous and persistent inequalities' (Agard-Jones 2013: 185). He sought to refocus the analyst's gaze on the local dynamics of global power, or 'global history in local contexts' (1993: 121) in order to reckon with agency while keeping in mind the forces of the international order (Agard-Jones 2013: 185).

Another of Trouillot's important contributions to the social sciences concerns scale and units of analysis. He urged scholars to look at the system and centers of power from the perspective of 'small places' — not just researching them, but also looking out at the world from their vantage point (Agard-Jones 2013: 183). Focusing on the objects of power at the margins, and not just the center, as I attempt to do in this study of a relatively marginal agrifood initiative in what could be considered a marginal place, is important because studies like this make an important contribution in their own right to understanding the system as a whole. When trying to understand the processes at work in 'small places', the tendency can be to overemphasize the power of global forces.

Trouillot reminds us that putting our attention on the agency of ordinary people on the margins first can paint a more contextualized, fine-grained and varied picture that brings us down from the ‘synoptic aerial view of the heavy armour of capital at work’ (Watts 2009: 263). Perhaps it also shows us where there might be some hopeful ways forward.

1.5 Research Question

My research question centers around the following:

How do the various inside and outside meanings of organic agriculture constrain or complicate each other and affect its potential to bring about substantive changes in the food system in Jamaica?

Sub-questions:

- Who benefits from organic in terms of material and cultural capital/economies?
- Does the ability of particular groups to deploy and frame different meanings of organic reproduce inequalities?
- How are some of the outside meanings of organic related to the context of broader processes of change in the global agrifood system, such as the possibility of an emerging corporate-environmental food regime?

1.6 Methodology and Methods

In contrast to positivist and naturalist epistemologies that understand objective truth to be observable from the physical and natural worlds, and where social science is understood as an objective process of representing and explaining social phenomena (Hammersley and Atkinson 2007: 10), I employed an ethnographic approach that rejects the notion that objectivity is attainable. Gadamer argues that ‘we can only ever understand something from a point of view... to want to avoid one’s own concepts in interpretation is not only impossible but a manifest contradiction’ (as quoted in Cerwonka 2007: 25). Positivism and naturalism are inadequate to the task of social research because they ignore its fundamental reflexivity; every researcher is part of the social world being studied and necessarily understands the world through participant observation (Hammersley and Atkinson 2007: 18). An ethnographic approach that recognizes that knowledge production is situated, partial and embodied is particularly relevant as I attempt to understand the meanings given by people to practices of organic food provisioning. It also takes historical and geographical specificity into account, which is relevant since I seek to put inside and outside meanings, local and global forces in conversation with each other.

Since I was trying to understand the meanings people make of organic consumption and production, I employed qualitative methods such as semi-structured interviews and participant observation rather than quantitative methods. I found contacts initially from searching the internet for information on alternative food initiatives in Jamaica and then through JOAM members through snowball sampling. However, due to the limited time and finances

available for fieldwork, I was only able to spend three weeks in Jamaica. While I attempted to take an ethnographic approach to interviews and participant observation, the time limitations meant that I also had to rely heavily on other sources of data such as academic literature, newspaper and blog articles, and other forms of secondary data.

When approaching JOAM members and others affiliated with organic agriculture initiatives for interviews, I did not explicitly state that I share their concerns for environmental, health and social justice issues (heterogeneous as these views are). But I think this was implicit when I indicated my interest to study local food movements in Jamaica. My intention was to approach JOAM members and others involved in alternative food initiatives and hopefully through this research offer an outsider's perspective that might help spur critical debate. I think this openness might have encouraged JOAM members and other farmers to be open with me as well and it might have been easier to share struggles and conflicts with an outsider since the community working on these issues is quite small.

I assured my informants that I would maintain their confidentiality and that they would remain anonymous in my research paper. Some of the interviews were recorded, after the informant granted permission, but not all as in some cases I felt that requesting permission to record would cause the informant to respond less freely.

1.7 Scope and Limitations

I do not claim that my findings can be generalizable to represent some kind of objective reality in Jamaica, represent other contexts or extrapolated to pertain directly to other places, although I do take examples of literature from other contexts, particularly the US, as critiques and starting points for debate. Since the agrifood industry is global and food regime analysis is also global in scope, some of the observations and inferences made from local to global scales could be also taken as learning points for other Caribbean countries facing similar pressures as Jamaica. The various organic initiatives in Jamaica are still marginal, but they are worth examining because interest in them appears to be growing. They also receive funding from development agencies like USAID and other donors. Because they appear to be similar to alternative food initiatives in the Global North, they could be read from a Global North perspective as a sign of 'hope' that there is resistance to industrial food provisioning in Jamaica. The active members of the organic initiatives tend to be relatively privileged in Jamaican society; my reliance on interviews with them was partially because of their leadership positions, but also because it was easier to communicate with them and I was able to contact them from abroad, in advance of my arrival in Jamaica.

This study is not intended to be a comprehensive overview of alternative food initiatives in Jamaica, nor an in-depth study of a particular organization or

community. Although this topic would greatly benefit from an in depth examination of state policies and institutions role in the food system, this paper does not delve deeply into the role of the state or state institutions. While some of my analysis uses empirical data as a point of departure or thought-provoking starting point, the data collected was limited in terms of the time I spent in Jamaica and the number of people I was able to speak to. I conducted 17 semi-structured interviews and several more unstructured ones as well. I also undertook participant observation at a number of farms associated with JOAM or the Ujima Farmers' Market, which were my first points of contact. I also attended the Denbigh Agricultural Show, the 'oldest, largest and most dynamic Agricultural Show in the English Speaking Caribbean' according to the Jamaican government (Jamaica Agricultural Society 2015) over three days, early in my trip, to make contacts. I visited the parishes of St. Andrew, St. Elizabeth, St. Thomas, Clarendon, St. Mary, St. Ann and Westmoreland.

I was also somewhat limited because I tried to go through women, or to approach women first, to avoid misunderstanding and any gender-based harassment, which can be common in Jamaica, particularly for a woman traveling alone. This paper is focused on understanding meanings as understood by people undertaking various food initiatives in Jamaica.

1.8 Organization of Research Paper

In chapter two, I look at how the inside meaning of organic provisioning as environmentally sustainable and healthy may be complicated by initiatives to create an organic industry through codification of standards, following the example of Global North markets, where the organic industry is well-established and growing. I bring in critical literature from the Global North context, and California in particular, that explores some of these contradictions, and I argue that alternative food initiatives that focus on provisioning organic and 'local' food, run into particular problems in Global South contexts that have yet to be fully explored by the existing academic literature. In chapter three, I examine the connection between consumption of organic and 'healthy' foods, often vegetarian, and identity construction. For Jamaica's middle and upper classes, who are at the forefront of the organic consumption trend, organic consumption can be seen as part of a repertoire of appropriation of Rastafari, an originally countercultural movement that has become integrated and valorized in modern Jamaican identity. In chapter four, I conclude by providing some reflections on the construction of organic in Jamaica.

Chapter 2: Organic – Inside Values vs. Outside Markets

2.1 The Expanding Organic Industry and its Critiques

There has been a rapid growth in the global availability and demand for organic produce over the past two decades, with revenues increasing almost five-fold since 1999 (Willer and Lernoud 2015: 25). The US, Canada and Europe, which have been the historically dominant consumer markets, currently generate over 90 percent of global sales. In the US, consumer sales of organic products has been growing at about 11 percent per year since 2012 and continued growth at over 11 percent is forecast for 2015 (27). In Europe, sales of organic products increased by 6% from 2012 to 2013 (Willer and Lernoud 2015: 26-27). Certified-organic produce may be an increasingly familiar sight on supermarket shelves, with consumers assuming that they understand what the labels mean, but in the context of the global agrofood system, certified-organic products are still a relatively small market. Worldwide, certified-organic products still represent less than one percent of total food sales; in the US and Canada, the sector makes up a slightly larger share of 4 percent. Organic food is perceived as the provenance of the elite, ‘yuppies’ or middle-upper classes due to the associated price premiums; whether the premium is justified due to a higher cost of production and whether it is reasonable, is a matter beyond the scope of this paper. However, it is clear that despite the perception that organic consumption is a major trend among the urban, educated middle-upper classes, it is still marginal in terms of global food production that is still very much dominated by conventional, industrial agriculture.

Reasons for organic consumption differ from region to region, with mainstream industry publications acknowledging that organic means different things to different consumers. Research by Organic Monitor shows that in the US, consumers are motivated by perceptions that organic food is healthier and more nutritious than conventional food, while in Europe environmental concerns are more of a factor. In China and other parts of Asia, organic is associated with high quality and increased food safety (Sahota 2015: 123). Worldwide, consumers tend to associate certified-organic food with food safety and quality, even though organic certification is not based on explicit health claims (Raynolds 2004: 732).

Coupled with increasing demand, production is also expanding as more countries in the Global South bring agricultural land into organic production in response to the growing demand mentioned above. Six more countries began producing certified-organic food in 2013, compared to 2012, bringing the total up to 170 countries (Willer and Lernoud 2015: 13). Countries in the Global South have become important producers of organic crops, mainly counter-seasonal fresh produce, tropical products or processed foods, but their domestic markets for organic products are still small (Raynolds 2004, Sahota 2015:

120). At present, countries in the Global South are mostly capitalizing on the appetites of so-called ‘conscientious’ consumers to earn valuable foreign exchange for debt-payments or national economic development.

The historical development of Global South organic exports can be understood in relation to what Friedmann calls a “green” environmental regime’, that ‘reshapes accumulation of capital through altering production practices so as to reduce harmful environmental effects and satisfy cultural shifts in demand for “green” commodities’ (Friedmann 2005: 230). In the Global South, the turn away from import substitution via industrial farming, which was associated with the rise of the Green Revolution, was driven by structural adjustment policies of the sort that had such a devastating effect on Jamaica. Countries instead prioritized ‘non-traditional’ exports such as fruits, vegetables and flowers and re-emphasized traditional tropical commodity crops (Friedmann 2005: 251). Some countries such as the Dominican Republic responded by promoting their organic export sector. In the Dominican context, small farmers were able to benefit and eventually dominate the organic export sector due to institutional support, their existing low-levels of chemical use, and the promotion of formal organic practices by foreign NGOs and organic advocates (Raynolds 2008: 166). This is not to say that the strategy taken by the Dominican Republic was a panacea for rural poverty; as I explain in the next section, small-scale producers are facing increasing challenges. In contrast to the Dominican example, in the 1980s the Jamaican government ‘touted commercial agriculture as the means to economic rehabilitation’ (Critchlow 2005: 152), but programs to promote large-scale commercial agriculture primarily for export were a failure due to mismanagement and political clientelism (Critchlow 2005: 152-158). Traditional export sectors continued to be propped up by the government despite their declining competitiveness (Weis 2004).

Although traditional practices of low-input, sustainable agroecological farming have existed for thousands of years, the historical antecedents of the modern organic movement can be traced to developments in Europe and the US in the 1920s and 30s. These were linked to obscure and diverse social movements as well as more mainstream influences such as Anglican theology’s ideas of natural laws and reverence for nature and the context of the agricultural depression of the interwar years and the Dust Bowl era in the US (Conford 2001). The modern organic movement is traced to the founding work, among others, of the British agricultural scientist Sir Albert Howard (Heckman 2006). In the 1940s, based on many years of research in the West Indies and India, he published a book on the importance of using waste materials to build and maintain soil fertility — a concept that would become central to organic farming (Heckman 2006: 144). The founding of the Soil Association in the UK in 1945 was crucial as it would eventually become the leading organic certification body in the UK. According to Goodman et al. ‘These foundational ideas coalesced into a powerful critique of industrial society and its reckless exploitation of nature and passionate advocacy of small-scale, locally-centered organic husbandry and its contributions to ecological and human well-being, nutrition, health, and the vitality of rural life’ (2012: 57). It was in the 1960s that the on-going search for an irrefutable scientific foundation for organic farming would become secondary to ‘a normative discourse couched in Gandhian moral terms’ (Good-

man et al. 2012: 58). There was a continued emphasis on the importance of local food-grown and processed food, while the original 'far-Right, fascistic and elitist trappings' were quietly abandoned (check Reed 2001: 141). Conford argues that the strong ecological philosophy underpinning the development of principles of organic agriculture, beginning in the 1920s and 30s, point to the organic movement's importance as the forerunner of modern environmental and antiglobalization movements (2001).

In the US context, due to its association with the countercultural, hippie movement of the 1960s and 70s, 'food politics became a sort of left politics' (Guthman 1998: 136). Guthman points out that social critics (such as Eric Schlosser and other writers that take up similar themes), academics, 'diehard natural food consumers' and 'foodies' alike read organic food consumption as an 'active' opposition to the industrial food system characterized by 'a conscious reflexivity' (Guthman 2003: 46). She also goes on to critique this reading because it neglects class and gender issues that complicate a 'moral positioning of organic food in binary opposition to fast food'. Access to these supposedly more reflexive foods is complicated by their connection with gentrification and class differentiation and there is an 'uncomfortable parallel between the growth of organic food... and the contraction of particularly female body ideals' (Guthman 2003: 55). The rise of the organic industry has also happened on the backs of the same marginalized labour force that keeps conventional agriculture and the fast food industry running (Guthman 2003).

A number of other critiques to the organic industry have emerged, notably the conventionalization thesis of the late 1990s, which posits that codification of organic standards has resulted in the bifurcation of the organic system of provisioning whereby large-scale producers may practice organic monocropping and other practices that violate the ethos of organic farming if not the standards required for certification (Goodman et al. 2012: 137-138, Buck et al. 1997). The mainstreaming of organic in this manner puts price pressures on smaller producers and forces them to rely on local and direct marketing channels such as farmers' markets and community support agriculture schemes that are more 'economically marginal' (Buck et al. 1997: 12-13). Guthman's in-depth study of organic farmers in California adds nuance to the conventionalization thesis and important context-specific analysis of a state historically and economically important to organic agriculture (2004 agrarian dreams). Her study crucially also highlights the contradictory dynamics set in motion by the codification of organic standards. While organic farmers might view the standards as an important guarantee of access to the organic price premium, a form of rent (Guthman 1998), 'The creation of monopoly rents (in the form of created scarcity) points to the fundamental paradox of organic regulation, which, while designed to create more farm value, introduces a climate of competition that either erodes the rent or shifts it to other players (ie. retailers)' (Guthman 2002: 303). Put another way, 'On the one hand, rent has allowed small scale producers to prosper in otherwise inhospitable markets; on the other hand, it is based on legally constructed barriers to entry (in the form of organic certification) and socially constructed preciousness, hardly a recipe for the spread of sustainable agriculture (Guthman 2002: 296, emphasis added). This argument has important implications in the case of Jamaica.

2.2 Meanings of Organic

In Jamaica, the increasing acceptance of the inside meaning that consumption of organic or ‘clean food’ is better for consumers’ health (since there are less pesticide residues) as well as the environment, has created a market for organic food and food marketed as produced without chemicals. This is evident from the response to the Ujima Farmers Market in Kingston evident from media reports, which I elaborate on in the next section, and was a sentiment generally shared by JOAM members (Partners of the Americas 2014, #3, personal interview, 7 August 2015, #8, interview 11 August 2015, #1, personal communication, 27 October 2015, Williams 2015a, 2015b). This awareness is not just among the urban elite, I found and observed that some small farmers, even those that are not connected to the Jamaican Organic Agriculture Movement (JOAM) also have an awareness of this (#16, personal interview, 12 August 2015). Part of this awareness comes from farmers’ harkening back to farming practices that preceded the heavy promotion of pesticide and fertilizer usage in the 1970s by agencies such as the Rural Agricultural Development Authority (RADA) (#13 personal interview, 13 August 2015, #9 personal interview, 17 August 2015). The JOAM Organic Farming Handbook also notes that practical concerns might have pressured farmers to abandon more sustainable, traditional practices: ‘Many farmers, especially smallholders in Jamaica, have for long been using more or less sustainable forms of land use. However, increasingly rapid changes of economic, technological and demographic conditions may force farmers to seek short-term profits and pay less attention to keeping their agriculture in balance with nature’ (Helberg 2003: 7). In this context, the inside meaning of organic consumption appears to be centered around health and environmental concerns, much as it is in the US or Europe.

In Jamaica, as in many parts of the Global South, efforts to create alternative food provisioning systems are nascent, which means that outside meanings of the concept of organic are still being contested. Consumption of certified-organic products continues to be marginal, and there are only 3 certified organic farms listed on JOAM’s website (‘Jamaica Organic Agriculture Movement’). There is one farmers’ market in Kingston, the Ujima Natural Farmers Market, and one more being planned (#3, personal communication, 4 August 2015) that bring together notions of organic and ‘local’ by offering organic produce (most is not certified) and some processed products and crafts sold directly by farmers and artisans from the parishes surrounding Kingston.

JOAM is one of the primary and most visible organizations advocating for organic agriculture in Jamaica. It is a non-profit, non-governmental volunteer-run organization established in 2001 to succeed the Jamaica Organic Growers’ Association, that became defunct in the same year. Its mission is ‘to facilitate the development of a sustainable and economically viable organic agriculture sector in Jamaica while maintaining organic integrity, promoting health, environmental consciousness, and social responsibility’. The organization’s main objectives are to promote and facilitate the industry for organic agricultural products, disseminate organic farming techniques to promote better environmental and human health, ‘assist in the conversion of willing producers to or-

ganic production and certification’, and to ‘promote research and development of organic farming techniques and seek to establish demonstration farms’. In recent years, the organization’s efforts have focused on lobbying for government support for their certification program, which was launched in 2004 (‘Jamaica Organic Agriculture Movement’, n.d.). JOAM has also organized a Green Village exhibition at the annual Denbigh Agricultural Show for a number of years as a form of outreach.

Despite JOAM’s efforts and earlier ones stretching back to 1990 (National Organic Agriculture Steering Committee 2005), the Jamaican government has not adopted a coherent overall policy towards either the promotion of organic as a sector or towards the principles underpinning organic agriculture as a whole, which has prevented an institutionalization of the outside meaning of organic so far. A recurring anecdote that JOAM members mentioned to demonstrate the government’s indifference was the common occurrence of RADA officers handing out bags of chemical fertilizer after hurricanes to help farmers’ get back on their feet, which disregards the needs of farmers trying to follow organic farming practices (#4, personal communication, 31 July 2015, #13, personal interview, 13 August 2015). This is in contrast to the neighboring Dominican Republic, where the government promoted non-traditional agricultural exports more generally beginning in the 1980s when structural adjustment and other neoliberal policy measures led to a shift in state support towards agricultural and industrial export sectors. When the economic importance of the organic export sector became clear, the government began to implement direct policy support, which eventually led to the Dominican Republic having one of the largest organic sectors in Latin America and the Caribbean and almost two percent of agricultural land allocated to certified organic production, the second highest in the region (Raynolds 2008: 168). A comparison of why the Jamaican government did not follow a similar policy trajectory despite facing apparently similar economic pressures in the 1980s is beyond the scope of this study, but what bears noting here is Raynolds’ analysis that rising quality expectations and the industrialization of organic practices in the mainstream, certified-organic market have undermined the profitability of organic exports and are marginalizing small-scale producers that were traditionally dominant in the Dominican organic sector (2008). This is one possible threat that small farmers could face if an organic sector were ever to take off in Jamaica. As yet, this is a remote possibility as the domestic market for certified organic produce in Jamaica is limited and there has been little concerted government support for organic exports despite the occasional appearance of calls in the media for the government to take action (Stewart 2012). While there is currently little risk of co-optation by agribusiness employing industrial practices in violation of the underlying principles of organic agriculture, there is always the potential for that if the market for certified-organic products were to become lucrative enough. In the meantime, the calls by JOAM as an organization for certification to be made a priority are highlighting tensions within the ‘movement’ as well as the broader group of Jamaicans that is keen to capitalize on organic agriculture.

The tensions within JOAM can be linked to the group’s heterogeneity. There are about three hundred members (Tandon 2015), ranging from small farmers,

a minority of whom are certified organic, to academics, business owners, professionals and small farmers' groups. One member, characterized the founders as primarily from academic backgrounds, 'clique-ish' and implied that they were somewhat removed from small farmers' realities. This member characterized Jamaicans interested in the organic movement as belonging to three categories: firstly, professionals of the diaspora who come back to Jamaica disillusioned with other jobs and were unfamiliar with farming practices; secondly, existing farmers who want to convert their farms to organic; and thirdly, young people who want to start farming and are interested in organic techniques for the environmental and health benefits (#3, personal interview, 4 August 2015). Some JOAM members have also lived abroad, in the US or Canada, which is not uncommon in Jamaican society more broadly. Almost everyone I met in Jamaica had friends or family 'go foreign' as migration is referred to in Patois. A number of JOAM members and other small farmers had lived and worked abroad for significant periods before moving back to Jamaica, often with the intention of contributing back to Jamaican society. Due to access to capital, land and education, many of the farmers that are a part of JOAM cannot be considered representative of the 'average' small Jamaican farmer, though this is not directly related to the size of their land-holdings.

The main divergence of opinion within JOAM and among those promoting organic farming concerns the importance of certification. Some members, generally including those who are already certified, are adamant that certification should be a priority and emphasize the importance of building trust with consumers. They tend to frame certification as a moral obligation to be truthful and that organic labelling means that produce is in fact organic. However, one farmer admitted doubts over whether it was worth pushing for certification even among JOAM members and expressed feeling almost 'condemned' by other farmers for 'going through the entire system' of certification: 'I sometimes wonder if we shouldn't just all say sustainable? ...I have been to an AGM where I am saying that if you want to call and market your produce as organic you need to be certified, and I have been shouted down and told "we don't need certification, we can farm and call our produce whatever we want to call it" and that is true because we don't have the government support' (#13, personal interview, 13 August 2015). In this view, the primary problem is with the lack of standards enforcement in Jamaica. Due to JOAM's efforts, the National Organic Standard has just been passed and JOAM plans to hand over the organic certification authority to the Bureau of Standards, but that work is still on-going and successful implementation is hardly guaranteed given all the stops and starts this process has faced over the past decade (#13, personal interview, 13 August 2015). Other JOAM farmers, however, were not convinced that certification was worth the cost, even if they were sympathetic to the desire to build trust with customers through the label (#6, personal interview, 8 August).

It is worth noting that in California as well, which was at the forefront of the US organic industry, private growers led the push for codification of organic standards. They were motivated by the desire to protect consumers from false claims and to differentiate the quality of their product in an overt way, motivations also expressed by JOAM members. The first private certifying organiza-

tion in California, California Certified Organic Farmers, was founded as early as 1973 by a group of farmers when ‘the first tentative claims of “organically grown” produce began to multiply in the marketplace (CCOF Certification Handbook, as cited in Guthman 1998: 141). Its purpose was to alleviate confusion among consumers and to prevent fraud by verifying growing practices of member farms, thus creating relationships of trust with ‘knowledgeable’ consumers (Guthman 1998: 141). As Reed notes, it is the ‘alliance between producers and consumers that is the generative basis of the organic movement’ (Reed 2005: 234, cited in Goodman et al. 2012: 59). The codification of organic standards in order to guarantee price premiums has the potential to cement outside meanings of organic in Jamaica as a lucrative industry at the service of existing class interests, that only produces healthy and ‘clean’ food for the middle to upper classes or even for an export market, dependent on the consciences and tastes of Northern consumers. As Friedmann notes of the emerging corporate-environmental food regime, ‘This combination of basic public regulation [which in Jamaica is linked to lack of capacity] underpinning higher private standards differentiates citizens – all of whom benefit equally from public regulation – into consumers – only some of whom can afford expensive quality standards’ (2005: 255, Jamaica 2005).

This view expressed by the JOAM farmer above also implies that there is a clear and indisputable difference between organic and non-organic. However, creating enforceable standards always requires simplification that may necessarily leave out important holistic elements that underpin the ethos of organic agriculture as it was originally envisioned. For example, standards prohibit synthetic or industrially produced chemical fertilizers, pesticides and herbicides from being used as inputs, which seems straightforward at first, but there are still numerous grey areas. For example, is the manure of animals raised on industrial feed considered an organic input? Could a fertilizer made from ‘natural’ ingredients sourced from disparate locations be considered unproblematically organic given that amount of energy taken to transport the component ‘natural’ ingredients? (Guthman 1998: 145). ‘There exists a gradient of practices between organic and conventional agriculture; any boundary drawn between the two is subject to interpretation and is thus a source of political struggle, as is apparent in the debates over the [US] federal standards’ (Guthman 1998: 146).

2.3 Organic and Local in Jamaica: Global South Particularities of Alternative Food Initiatives

In the US, the theses of conventionalization and bifurcation ‘envision a binary trajectory of structural change in organic agriculture, with the “mainstream” integration of large-scale, specialized producers contracted to supply national supermarket chains and organic stores, as well as international retailers, and a rump of holistic “movement” farmers or “artisanal” growers engaged in direct selling in localized markets (Goodman et al. 2012: 138, Guthman 2004). Guthman observes that direct marketing in local food systems emerged in part as a response to the competitive dynamics unleashed by the codification of organic standards as a barrier to entry. Initiatives like farmers’ markets, Commu-

nity Support Agriculture (CSAs) and “beyond organic” certification (based on locality or other valued qualities) ‘can be seen as strategic attempts to re-establish barriers to entry to maintain producer rents, particularly by smaller producers excluded from the mainstream’ (Sligh and Christman, Brown and Getz, as cited in Goodman et al. 2012: 142). In Jamaica, conventionalization may not be a threat (as yet), but the need to sustain local farm livelihoods results in the implementation of similar initiatives.

The Ujima Farmers Market, which began in 2014, is an example of such an initiative. It is held every two weeks in an upper-class Kingston neighborhood, perhaps tellingly in an open air space almost directly across from a Burger King, and sees about 100-150 customers each week it runs with typically between 10 and 20 farmers participating (JD personal correspondence, 3 November 2015, weekly email flyers). Its mission is to provide farmers in the parishes surrounding Kingston, producers, crafters and artisans with a venue to ‘provide a variety of fresh naturally grown (pesticide free) produce and related products directly to the consumer. The market encourages direct communication between consumers and growers, fosters social gathering and community building, and promotes nutritious food choices’. The market itself as an institution also serves as an informal assurance of quality since the vast majority of participating farmers are not certified. The market was also envisioned as a way for graduates from the organizing farm’s organic farming and permaculture training courses to have a direct outlet for their produce afterwards (The Source Farm n.d., Partners of the Americas 2014), but the typical small farmer faces several barriers such as illiteracy, difficulty engaging with classroom-based learning and lack of resources, which makes successful use of the knowledge from the training courses challenging. This critique is acknowledged by some involved in these initiatives (#11, personal interview, 7 August 2015).

Allen et al.’s critique of re-localization initiatives in the US (2003) is relevant here. They assert that ‘the practices of new institutional forms of food re-localization fall significantly short as prototypes of more equitable food access and wider understandings of social justice. Although often only implicit, this vein of “realism” in US scholarship is based on perceptions of AFNs [alternative food networks] as narrowly partisan, sectional organizations whose fundamental, overarching aim is to ensure the economic viability and social reproduction of farmers and local food interests. In Jamaica, marginalization of farmers is very real so the critique that AFNs privilege the rural communities and farmers over other sectors of society like the urban poor is perhaps less relevant. It appears, however, that access to channels like the farmers market and the ability to tap into it as a means of social reproduction is currently limited to relatively privileged small farmers. However, these ‘back-to-the-landers’ who are affiliated with or members of JOAM, also struggle to make ends meet. I was told by a number of JOAM farmers with access to education, funds and diaspora-networks that they are only just able to break even from their farm operations, and like other small farmers need to have other sources of income, usually off-farm jobs, to sustain themselves (#13, personal interview, 13 August 2015, #5, personal interview, 9 August 2015). Some of these farmers are certified-organic while others are uncertified but follow organic practices. One JOAM member shared that by the time he pays for gasoline to drive his pick-

up truck to and from the farmers market in Kingston to sell his salad greens and other produce, he hardly has any money left to show for his efforts (#5, personal interview, 9 August 2015). Small farmers in Jamaica face structural challenges, which include lack of access to markets, poor infrastructure like roads, lack of access to irrigation that is exacerbated by recurring droughts, farm theft, and quite simply poverty. These dynamics highlight the limitations of both organic production and localization to be a vehicle of transformation in the Jamaican food system. However, they have been under-explored in the AFN literature because academics have mainly focused on Global North contexts. This is unsurprising since the majority of AFNs are located in the Global North.

Freidberg and Goldstein, in their critical study of a short-lived organic vegetable box scheme in Kenya, remind us of the ‘need to appreciate the macro-historical and socioeconomic contexts that inform on-the-ground practices and understandings of alternative food’ and that ‘regionally specific histories of incorporation into the global food system have given rise to distinctive normative ideals and practical challenges in alternative provisioning’ (2011: 24-25). They suggest that AFN literature should look more closely at particular contexts in the Global South, including underlying issues of poverty and lack of infrastructure that are typically not faced in the Global North. These factors might be indicative of why so-called ‘alternatives’ fail to resonate or be feasible in Global South contexts. They suggest that what needs to be addressed is more than just the status of foodways, methods of provisioning or even health outcomes, but the historical injustices that manifest in a country becoming dependent on food imports, while its farmers struggle to provide for themselves, and to a seemingly intractable food system that exposes farmers to toxic pesticides and citizens to residues of the same pesticides in their food. Freidberg and Goldstein also refer to Guthman’s research on food deserts in the US to highlight that issues with food provisioning can simply be the symptoms of underlying issues related to broader social justice concerns such as class or race (2008a, 2008b); ‘AFN proponents tend to see the food desert as the basic problem, rather than as a visible symptom of deeper ills — i.e., poverty, racism, shortsighted urban planning — which farmers’ markets and community gardens cannot by themselves cure’ (2011: 31). In Jamaica, the difficulties small farmers face in using organic certification to their benefit and their inability to afford organic food that is currently being sold, are social justice issues in themselves but also point to deeper underlying issues involving class, rural marginalization and Jamaica’s position in the world economy.

In Jamaica, localization of food production has particular resonance due to the country’s dependence on food imports and its subordination in the world economy, especially in the aftermath of the 1970s debt crisis. In countries such as Jamaica, specific historical and macro-economic issues associated with Global South contexts shape understandings and framings of localization of food production along different logics than in the Global North. In the Global North, efforts to ‘re-localize’ food provisioning can be understood in the context of the conventionalization thesis and critiques that organic provisioning has become industrialized (Goodman et al. 2012). In Jamaica, localization of food production is closely connected with the country’s on-going struggle to

service its debt. Jamaica currently spends just under one billion US dollars on food imports (Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries 2015), primarily cereals and cereal preparations, fish and meat, and dairy products (FAO 2003). The need to localize food production is often expressed by local commentators, government and multilateral organizations like CARICOM in terms of ensuring food security and alleviating dependency, especially in the event of hurricanes or other unforeseen circumstances that might disrupt food shipments, such as September 11, which led to a ‘near-food crisis’ in some Caribbean countries (Beckford and Campbell 2013: 184). In the local media, localization of food production to reduce food imports is also connected with helping the country to retain precious foreign exchange that it needs to service its crippling government debt (Fisher 2011, Sanders 2014). It was due to the debt crisis of the 1970s and the ensuing structural adjustment policies of the 1980s that Jamaica’s agricultural markets were liberalized, leading to the flood of (often subsidized) imports from the US (Weis 2004, Talbot 2015). The documentary *Life and Debt* shows then-Prime Minister Michael Manley at a rally in 1973, exhorting the public, ‘When you see what all the food from abroad costs, you realize that the food production to feed ourselves in Jamaica is not only a matter of opportunity for you, it is a matter of survival for the nation’ (2001). The oil price slump and world food price rises in the same year

The launch of the ‘Eat Jamaican’ campaign, with the attendant slogan ‘Eat What We Grow, Grow What We Eat’ should be understood in this historical context. The Ministry of Agriculture and Jamaica Agricultural Society launched the campaign in 2003 in a bid to increase local production and to encourage consumers to make healthier choices by eating local produce, and it is featured in headlines of local newspapers annually. In the face of tremendous economic pressures facing Jamaicans, and in particular the rural poor, the campaign is unlikely to have any transformative effect; no one I spoke to in Jamaica could point to any tangible outcomes of the campaign. This is not surprising since the campaign has not been accompanied by concerted state policy to reform the agricultural sector away from open markets and free trade. Tackling the structural causes of Jamaica’s food import dependence would require ‘strategic delinking from the global food system’ supported by state-led agricultural import substitution (an approach taken by the Manley government in the early 1970s before the debt crisis hit Jamaica in force), but this would contravene WTO rules (Talbot 2015: 54). It is also worth remembering that organic should not be conflated with ‘local’, as certified-organic production for export is being touted in some quarters as a development strategy.

In sum, the inside meanings of organic in Jamaica can be characterized in three ways. Firstly, the general meaning of organic food as more environmentally sustainable and better for the health. Secondly, as a form of producer guarantee of standards couched in normative and moral terms (Goodman et al. 2012: 58). Thirdly, as a form of certification that creates a barrier to entering the market, thus safeguarding a price premium. The outside meanings of organic, as relates to economic, social and political factors are not solidified yet in Jamaica, but if JOAM’s push to create an organic industry is eventually successful, it might have unintended consequences, as the US experience demonstrates.

At present, the market created for organic produce by the increasing acceptance of these inside meanings, and the fact that this marketplace currently caters mostly to urban elites, and in fact is supplied by small farmers that are relatively privileged points to the emergence of ‘class-based diets’, which is part of the corporate-environmental food regime. However, this space has not (yet) been coopted by agribusiness, so there is still room for certified small producers or those using organic practices to retain control of this market. However, to be a force for transformative food system change, they would have to engage with the broader public and the severe economic challenges facing consumers in order for ‘chemical-free’ food to be not just the privilege of urban elites.

In the Jamaican context, the issue is not, as in the US, the privileging of farmers over farmworkers in the agrifood sector or large farms taking over, as much as it is about different classes of small farmers, where this class stratification is linked to dependence on farm income and access to education, capital and linkages abroad in terms of people and ideas. Selling to consumers directly takes marketing skills that most farmers may not have easy access to because of the traditional dependence on higglers (middle-men) who buy produce at the farm gate. Small farmers lacking those resources lack access to alternatives like farmers markets or selling certified or uncertified produce. Also, JOAM and several farmers and farmers’ groups affiliated with JOAM have received funding from USAID or Caribbean development agencies. I suspect that they receive these funds because of the assumption that these organic practices are a tool for development for Jamaican farmers, in addition to being better for the environment and health of consumers/eaters.

These examples show that access to the discursive spaces of alternatives through the deployment of certain meanings, such as discourse around organic, environmentally sustainable agriculture, which replicate those in the Global North, gives some farmers, usually the ones with education and existing resources, access to additional resources such as funds from development agencies. For some farmers’ groups, the presence of outsiders like regular Peace Corps volunteers was integral for them to secure grants and external funding (#4, personal interview, 18 August 2015). These Peace Corps volunteers had access to the same discursive spaces as well as practical skills needed to write successful grants. The ability to make use of certain meanings enabled more privileged farmers or farmers’ groups supported by development agencies of some kind to gain access to additional resources.

This is related to the tendency I observed in myself of looking for alternatives that looked familiar, as in ones that replicated practices and frames I had seen in the US or Europe. The problem with this is that it assumes an initiative is ‘alternative’ or ‘oppositional’ based on its similarity to alternatives in a completely different context. Freidberg and Goldstein acknowledge that bringing in alternatives to communities in Global South countries that have their own his-

tory of experiences with failed and misconceived development projects is problematic and this experiences is worth learning from in the Jamaican context (2011). In one of the few other studies on alternative food initiatives in the Global South, Si et al. examine the 'alternativeness' of initiatives like farmers' markets and CSAs in China, and compare them to alternatives in Global North contexts and come to the conclusion that their 'alternativeness' is 'uneven'. I would suggest, echoing Pratt, that alternatives should be judged on their own terms, and on the basis of what participants define as oppositional (2009). This would take their values as a starting point, rather than the values espoused by Global North alternatives. Also, to better understand the agency at the margins, it is necessary to look at local, context-specific factors that may shape the alternatives that people advocate for.

As previously mentioned, context specific constraints are also crucial to small farmers' abilities to tap on alternative food initiatives as a source of income. Perhaps what is most urgently needed for small farmers in Jamaica is tackling the structural issues that cause rural poverty. These can likely only be done with government support, which already hints at the limited potential of market-based initiatives like organic-certification or famers' markets as an alternative marketing channel.

Finally, Goodman et al. advocate for the importance of reflexive politics, which could be helpful in the Jamaican context (2012). If organic agriculture and its promotion were to be perceived as process rather than standards based, then it might not be reified, which leads to energy being channelled towards the process of defining standards. In the process of discussion, the tensions between different meanings could be raised and addressed, opening up perhaps a more democratic space for more and a wider spectrum of farmers to benefit from organic agriculture.

Chapter 3: Organic Identities – Production, Consumption and Identity Construction

3.1 Organic Production and Rastafarian Identities

Organic farming, in the broad sense of natural farming practices, ‘farming in nature’s image’, without chemical pesticides or fertilizers (Soule and Piper 1992), has deliberately been kept alive by Rasta farmers in Jamaica despite the current prevalence of heavy pesticide use (Schnakenberg 2011, Goucher 2014). Rastafari is a countercultural socioreligious movement that emerged in Kingston’s ghettos in the early 1930s — ‘a modern Afro-Caribbean cultural phenomenon that combines concepts from African culture and the “Caribbean experience” (social, historical religious and economic realities) with Judeo-Christian thought into a new sociopolitical and religious worldview’ (Murrell 1998: 4). Chevannes argues that Rastafari finds its origins in the worldview of the Jamaican peasantry, the direct descendants of the Africans forced into slavery after the arrival of Columbus. The majority of early Rastafarians came from the ‘landless and small cultivator class of peasants’ (1995: ix, 44) who moved to Kingston to take up menial and low-paying jobs, some with harsh working conditions reminiscent of slavery (Chevannes 1995: 75). Edmonds argues that ‘Any interpretation of the significance of Rastafari must begin with the understanding that it is a conscious attempt by the African soul to free itself from the alienating fetters of colonialism and its contemporary legacies’ (1998: 23). Rastafarians have attempted to ‘step outa Babylon’, the idiom for the systems of oppression that they wish to dismantle, by ideologically delegitimizing the ‘international colonial-imperialist complex’ that ‘conspire[s] to keep the black man enslaved in the Western world and which attempt[s] to subjugate colored people throughout the world’ (Edmonds 1998: 23-24, Owens, as quoted in Edmonds 1998: 24).

The inside meaning of organic for Rastas, as an embodied resistance to Babylon’s corrupting forces and artificiality, makes organic farming practices a moral and religious imperative. Their resistance to Babylon is embodied in livity — the strict Rastafarian lifestyle that ‘covers the totality of one’s being in the world’ (Lewis 1998: 155) and consists of adhering to certain dietary practices aimed at healthy living, preservation of nature and particular ritualistic and ceremonial practices (Murrell et al. 1998: 448). One aspect of livity is expressed in adherence to *ital* living, which can be understood as ‘a commitment to using things in their natural or organic states’ as a way to resist the artificiality of Babylon and ‘return to nature’. The word *ital* comes from vital with the v removed to emphasize T, which in Rasta thought signifies the unity of the divine with humanity. *Ital* living typically involves a vegetarian diet, avoidance of tobacco, alcohol and other drugs (except for ganja, which is considered a therapeutic herb) and manufactured products, especially canned foods. Some strict Rastas avoid caffeinated beverages and are vegan; the ideal proscribes any kind of chemically-treated food, which would prohibit the use of chemical fertilizers and pesticides (Edmonds 2003: 60). Another strict interpretation eschews the use of salt. Different reasons have been suggested for this. One claim is that it

is part of a wider Africa-derived ritual avoidance of salt as the use of salt was associated with preventing the spirits of Africans from returning back to Africa (Goucher 2014: 150). The view that a strongly salt-based diet was introduced on the estates by a 'plantocracy' as part of a 'European plan to thwart their desire to repatriate to Africa and to corrupt their minds with colonial thoughts' led to the Rastas' association of unsalted food with self-preservation, African roots, and hope (Hutton and Murrell 1998: 46). Other scholars point to the association of salt with 'dead' foods, processing and preservation (Higman 2008: 405). Many Rastas value self-sufficiency and take pride in living off the land as a way to avoid contact with the corrupting influence of Babylon, exemplified by globalization, and use growing techniques such as intercropping (Goucher 2014: 150). Many Rasta farmers would call their farming practices organic, or 'I-ganic', since they are ostensibly free of chemical inputs, but they would also resist the imposition of standards, which for them would be a manifestation of the power of Babylon seeking to undermine their self-sufficiency (#13, personal interview, 13 August 2015, #1 personal interview, 15 August 2015).

Though some Rastas choose to live in closed communities with limited contact with outsiders as a way to resist the corrupting influences of Babylon, and some Rasta farmers may focus on growing food for self-provisioning, other Rastas engage in livelihoods connected to mainstream society that also tap into their beliefs. This may include giving 'bush tours' of organic Rasta farms that share knowledge of therapeutic herbs, giving tourists usually cloistered away in an all-inclusive resort access to an 'authentic' Jamaican experience. Some sell 'chemical-free' produce to resorts that feature in farm-to-table dinners, sometimes at the farm itself, catering to tourists and Jamaica's elite (Banks 2014). There are also *ital* restaurants catering to urban professionals, or *ital* food tours for tourists in Kingston. The apparent integration of Rasta elements into livelihoods dependent on tourism, an industry dependent on the consumption whims of tourists mostly from West — the core of what most Rastas understand as Babylon, raises questions about whether the Rasta culture of resistance is being commodified by Rastas themselves and by private interests or government tourism promotion agencies seeking to capitalize on the cultural appeal that Rastafari has for tourists. Many Rastas are aware of this and take measures to limit their communities' exposure to the tourist gaze even if they do give tours as a source of income, others are selective about what ethnomedical healing practices they share with tourist clients and are sensitive to allegations that they are 'selling culture' (Dickerson 2004: 130). But the fact is that these sources of income, from tourists, can be crucial for rural Rasta farmers who often still struggle to make ends meet (#16, personal interview, 12 August 2015, #1, personal interview, 15 August 2015).

3.2 Organic Consumption and Class Identities

The commodification of organic, *ital* foods and foodways and their capacity to generate income, depends on them taking on particular inside meanings for other sectors of Jamaican society that have the disposable income to buy fresh produce at the farmers' market, spend on farm-to-table dinners, or eat outside the home in *ital* restaurants. Jaffe identifies a class project she refers to as *ital*

chic, seen in the form of Rastafarian symbols and aesthetics used to market restaurants, hairstyles and products like clothing, cosmetics and candles, by tapping on Jamaican elites' desire to feel 'comfortably nationalist' or 'locally grounded'. *Ital* chic merges an eco-friendly stance with a back-to-the-roots ideology, colored by a strong black consciousness' and 'often alludes to an imagined Africa in its "return" to pre-global, pre-colonial ways of life. It also has as tendency to draw on ideas of a rural "old-time Jamaica that cannot, by definition, be precolonial but nonetheless successfully conveys the desired conjunction of nature, local culture, and the authentic' (Jaffe 2010: 33). Jaffe does not elaborate on this, but the notion of 'pre-global' is problematic in the Caribbean context, which has been subject to global forces and flows of people, commodities and capital for the past 500 years.

Ital food, once associated with marginalized and 'dirty' Rastas considered a threat to social order, has become valorized among Jamaica's middle and upper classes because of its association with health, sustainability, and authentic, traditional forms of living, that have become a marker of an elite and cosmopolitan identity and lifestyle. Jaffe argues that '*ital* chic consumption can be seen as central in the reconfiguring of identities and belonging to the Jamaican nation. It can function as a conservative class strategy that offers middle-class Jamaicans a way to acquire the moral and cultural capital associated with Rastafari without having to critically examine their own class position or deal with poverty and social exclusion — a combination of appropriation and distancing that at times requires something of a balancing act' (Jaffe 2010: 34). Jaffe leaves out this important historical context in her argument, but the fact that Rastafari came to have moral and cultural capital at all, was because it was subject to 'cooptation and commodification' by political and commercial interests in the 1970s. Political parties wanted to win over the lower classes by tapping on the emancipatory imagery of Rastafari, the music and culture industries wanted to cash in on reggae music's surging international popularity, which was propelled by artists like Bob Marley, and Rastafari began to be packaged as 'culture tourism' (Edmonds 2003, Nettleford, as cited in Edmonds 2003: 94).

There have been efforts to link the inside, Rastafarian meaning of organic as a form of natural farming practices that embodies resistance against Babylon, and the outside meaning, tied to the commodification of Rastafari and its practices for elites' political and economic gain. In one town that distinguishes itself the 'home of community tourism', a resort run by a prominent community member promotes farm-to-table dinners and agrotourism, advertising that they source from local farmers. This also involved setting up the *Ital* Farmers Organic Association and trying to promote Rastarian organic practices more widely among small farmers in that community (Banks 2014). Academics and commentators have studied and made proposals for how tourism and agriculture can be better linked to benefit small farmers; currently the linkages are weak (Schnakenberg 2011, Rhiney 2008) Tourism in Jamaica consists mostly of all-inclusive resorts, dependent on imported food due in part to its lower costs and the difficulties of sourcing from local farmers due to requirements of consistency and quality (Dodman and Rhiney 2008, Rhiney 2008). One paper advocates a 'Rastafari-inspired approach to ecotourism' that would capitalize on Rastas' status as 'Jamaica's culture bearers' in the tourist imagination, combin-

ing it with Rastafari's ecological sensibilities, to create a new niche tourist market in Jamaica (Nangwaya 2007).

Rastas have preserved organic farming techniques and resist the linkage with outside meanings associated with organic certification, but it remains to be seen whether they will similarly resist the cooptation of *ital* foodways and practices by the tourism industry. In some cases, through the use of web-based platforms like Airbnb or their own websites that enable Rastas to rent out rooms in their homes, and promote *ital* cooking and lifestyles as well, or in locations where community-based tourism enables direct contact with tourists, Rastas are able to retain more control over how their practices are commodified, but in other cases where they work with resorts or marketing is controlled by elites, it remains to be seen whether this convergence of meanings will address or reproduce inequalities.

If organic and *ital* food risks being coopted by elites, fast, industrialized and non-organic food still continues to be associated with the lower classes, in ways reminiscent of Global North contexts. Guthman reminds us that 'It is striking that fast food and organic/slow food continue to be posed as binary, even organic assemblages, if you will, of taste, body type, social consciousness, class, mode of production, and so forth. Sometimes termed tendency and counter-tendency, sometime hegemony and resistance, one of the problems with these oppositions is they impart a good deal of subjectivity on to the organic or slow food eater while the fast food eater is treated as a mindless dupe' (2003: 55) Organic consumption among elites in Jamaica can be framed in moralistic, normative ways as this quote from a JOAM farmer indicates: 'We've been called elitist, we've been called selling produce that most people can't afford... well my answer to that is if you would eat less but eat better food, you'd be able to afford it...this whole bellyful mentality... it doesn't work that way for me, if I eat one salad I'm happy for a few hours... I don't need to have a whole plateful of food, but it's just a different way of thinking about food...' Questions of access are overshadowed by moral coding or the notion that organic and natural as inherently good. 'In this way, organic food consumption is an expression of how people internalize the meaning of nature, by which consuming more "naturalized" commodities somehow legitimates what is effectively class-stratified consumption (Marsden and Wrigley, as cited in Guthman 1998: 148) The quote above, for example, neglects the fact that if one does not know where the next meal is coming from, eating a 'bellyfull' might be the only logical thing to do. The connection between poverty and fast food consumption is being made by local media, but it usually still tends to focus on the choices, good or bad, of the consumer. For example, in an article on organic and *ital* food entitled 'Rastafarians Are the Original Gwyneth Paltrows of This World' (Banks 2014), the writer states that despite the slowly growing popularity of *ital* food, 'Back in Jamaica, food prices and a widespread lack of nutritional education means that many people will still choose deep-fried meat over callaloo [a leafy green vegetable, usually amaranth] stew. But revolution has to start somewhere.' The author implies that it is due to ignorance of nutritional value that people would opt for fried chicken rather than *ital* food.

One way of problematizing the notion that consumers simply chose fast food because it tastes good and we are inherently programmed to like it unless we 'know better', is by looking at historical context. In his history of Jamaican food, Higman explains that Jamaicans' love of salt can be traced to the period of slavery and the planters' purchase of the 'refuse saltfish' that was not salable elsewhere and its provision, as one of the few rations, to slaves (Higman 2008: 325). After the abolition of slavery, it continued to be a food of the poor, because of its low cost and the preferences established during slavery (Higman 2008: 406). He suggests two reasons for why Jamaicans crave salt, one being that hard labour in the tropical sun caused a physiological need for salt, the other was that the majority of Jamaicans came from West Africa, a salt-deficient region of the world (Higman 2008: 410). The historical context shows that taste can be determined by factors beyond personal control and that framing food choices in moral or normative terms is problematic and can serve to reinforce class hierarchies in terms of privileging access to healthier, organic foods, instead of making access to healthier food a right for all. This would serve to contribute towards the solidification of class-stratified consumption of 'green' foods that is characteristic of the corporate-environmental regime.

In this chapter, I have shown how outside meanings can put inside meanings at risk in the case of understandings of organic agriculture among the Rastafari movement. I also show that, reminiscent of the US context, the inside meaning of organic, natural food as inherently good neglects the broader issues of power and class that prevent the poor Jamaicans from accessing healthier foods and that it is not simply a matter of choice.

Chapter 4: Reflections on Alternative Food Initiatives in Jamaica

In this study, I have attempted to examine different inside and outside meanings of organic agriculture, understood mainly as a standards-based certification scheme focused on allowable inputs, in the Jamaican context and how they might constrain and complicate each other. The aim of doing so was to see how the meanings people make in their personal lives, in daily consumption or production of organic food – the inside meanings – are in dialectical relationship with outside meanings – the political, economic and social meanings that come to be attached to the same actions. Through this examination, I sought to show where there were possibilities for co-optation and where there might be some room for organic agriculture to be transformative in terms of providing an alternative to industrial food provisioning for a broad segment of society. I also tried to put the converging, or diverging inside and outside meanings in the broader context of global agrifood relations, by situating them with the lens of food regime analysis, in particular the question of whether there is an emerging corporate-environmental regime. This possible emerging food regime is marked by agribusiness' co-opting of social movement demands related to the environment, food safety, and social justice (Friedmann 2005).

Jamaica's food system and any alternative food initiatives must also be understood in the context of the recent historical and macroeconomic challenges facing the country and the crisis facing Jamaica's agricultural sector in the wake of IMF and World Bank-mandated structural adjustment policies of the 1980s. This includes the context of Jamaica's crippling sovereign debt, which continues to have negative effects on its economy, the decline in the agricultural sector due to liberalization of agricultural markets and the rise in diet-related diseases that at some point could be a public health threat.

I have shown that in Jamaica the increasing prevalence, among different sectors of society, of the inside meaning that consumption of organic or 'clean food' has health and environmental benefits has created a market for organic agriculture. Given the push of NGOs such as the Jamaica Organic Agriculture Movement (JOAM) for certification, it opens the door for co-optation by agribusiness as has occurred in contexts like California (Guthman 2004). In Jamaica, the outside meanings of organic agriculture have not yet solidified because there is resistance from some JOAM members and other farmers who do not see the economic value of certification and since standards are not currently being enforced. Overall, the Jamaican government has not adopted a coherent policy towards organic agriculture, which is another reason why the broader social and political-economic meaning of organic, as relates to certification has not yet emerged. It is possible however, that JOAM's push for there to be more certified organic farmers will create a situation where class-based diets are cemented, and only the Jamaican elite are able to consume organic, chemical-free produce. I also found that JOAM members who were strong advocates

for certification held the belief that 'organic' was a clear and easily definable category, which is problematic in itself.

I argue that there are certain particularities of Jamaica being in a Global South context that can contribute to broader understandings of alternative food initiatives and the barriers to entry for small farmers. One is that there are barriers to entry in terms of farmers having access to discursive space - language to frame and the ability to make use of alternatives channels modelled after Global North contexts such as farmers' markets, to sell products directly to consumers. This is in addition to the context specific material barriers they face like lack of infrastructure etc., the lack of government support for agriculture in the wake of agricultural liberalization etc. This points to the need for class-based analysis of alternative food initiatives, such as farmers markets and for further research on how class, or differing levels of access to education, capital and land affects small farmers' abilities to tap into these initiatives, and for consumers to have access to healthy, 'clean', 'chemical-free' food.

Outside meanings can also put inside meanings at risk in the case of understandings of organic agriculture among the Rastafari movement. Reminiscent of the US context, the inside meaning of organic, natural food as inherently good neglects the broader issues of power and class that prevent poor Jamaicans from accessing healthier foods. It is not simply a matter of choice.

Although there may seem to be many warnings in this study about the possibility for co-optation, it might be possible for spaces for reflexive politics to open up where different groups such as JOAM and others pioneering alternative food initiatives engage in dialogue that focuses on process rather than definition of standards that seek to include some and exclude others. This conversation could be the beginnings of a way forward that opens up a space to debate different meanings of 'organic' and for there to be a broader conversation about who these alternatives can and should be for.

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