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# Food anarchy and the State monopoly on hunger

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## ABSTRACT

This article applies an anarchist lens to the food sovereignty movement. It analyzes food regimes as capitalist agriculture regimes which rely on the State's monopoly on hunger, wherein the State relies on the dispossession of people from their land and food systems, the protection of property, and the primacy of capital. The interdependence of this State-capital-property trinity is violently enforced, and manufactures compliance through counterinsurgent strategies of social war. The State monopoly on hunger justifies a new offshoot of the larger food sovereignty movement, a prefigurative praxis which dismantles all food regimes to build new counter-worlds: food anarchy.

## KEYWORDS

State theory; anarchism; food regimes; food sovereignty

## Introduction

The food sovereignty movement has undergone various definitions and redefinitions, coalescing around the radical democratization of food production and provision (Patel 2009). The broad umbrella of food sovereignty, and its many iterations, need not constrain our creativity in how we interpret it – in fact, it unleashes critical political possibilities. How can we enhance food sovereignty through radical interpretations of its meaning? What possibilities emerge from a food sovereignty movement which sees growers and eaters themselves as the true sovereigns of their agri-food system – not the capitalist State?

This article carves a path for *food anarchy* by following Via Campesina's (2007) Nyéléni Declaration definition of food sovereignty: 'the right of peoples to healthy and culturally appropriate food produced through ecologically sound and sustainable methods, and their right to define their own food and agriculture systems.' Food anarchy as a distinct interpretation of food sovereignty takes this definition at face value, wherein people directly define and organize their own agri-food systems, and seize their right to food through direct action. It builds a new agri-food system of many overlapping sovereignties, within selves and communities, in the shell of the old food regime. In an organizationalist interpretation, food anarchy might include stateless forms of direct democracy on a local scale, akin to Bookchin's (1996) communalism, or Peter Kropotkin's ([1892] 1906) anarcho-communism. In an insurrectionary interpretation, food anarchists might seek to transcend democracy altogether – preferring instead to organize along lines of voluntary association through 'viral subversion' (Dunlap 2020a, 1005), challenging ideas of counter-power.

This article explores the relationship between the State, capitalism, and property, and its implications for actualizing the food sovereignty movement through the vehicle of the State. The State can be defined, in part, by its monopoly on the legitimate use of violence, force, and coercion within the bounds of a given territory (Weber 1965), crushing or domesticating other sovereignties within that claim. To acquire this power, the State protects property to secure a steady supply of capital to draw upon through taxation from an adequately submissive populace (Scott 1998). The State uses this capital to build its monopoly (Tilly 1992; 1985). To keep this cycle of capital intact, the State uses its extracted capital to wage a social war, domesticating people and landscapes to produce citizens and products in service of State power and capital (Foucault 2003; Dunlap 2014; Dunlap and Correa-Arce 2022). This subservience manufactures ‘the social relation of *statism* that the state is grounded in’ (Brock 2020, 2), which centralizes power through State force, coercion, and the material support of State services and benefits (Bakunin [1873] 1990). The complementary State-making and war-making apparatus of *militarization* and *civilianization*, and their reliance on the wage, property and state system, undermines food sovereignty and subordinates it to the State. This war relation underpins another kind of State monopoly on violence: the *monopoly on hunger*.

Food sovereignty, as a social movement, acts as a ‘counter-hegemonic framing’ (Fairbairn 2010) of the latest iteration of ‘food regimes’ – a periodized political history of capitalist agriculture on a global scale (Friedmann and McMichael 1989; McMichael 2009). Food sovereignty counters corporate agribusiness power over the food system with its proposition for radical agri-food democratization. This article follows this food sovereignty theorization, revealing how the State organizes and maintains a monopoly on hunger through food regimes. Next, the article discusses statist food sovereignty interventions, and how they have fallen short as a result of State capture by capital. Indigenous political sovereignty is discussed in relation to food sovereignty and the (de)coloniality of the State. Finally, the article demonstrates how food anarchy praxis can expand and strengthen the struggle for food sovereignty. This is not to say that all food sovereignty movements should be replaced with the movement for food anarchy. Rather, the food sovereignty movement could be expanded to weave chaotic, illegible and feral networks of revolt, insurrection, care, and mutual aid – an anarchist pathway within the broader food sovereignty movement.

## State theory and food control

This article responds to Roman-Alcalá’s (2020) call for ‘a more (state-)critical critical agrarian studies’ by exploring the relationship between the State, food regimes, and food sovereignty. The State is a particularly prescient object of criticism as widespread distrust for the government grows alongside authoritarian populism (Ashwood 2018a, 2018b; Roman-Alcalá, Graddy-Lovelace, and Edelman 2021; Roman-Alcalá 2020). Simultaneously, the 2020 uprisings against police brutality have drawn extensive criticism of the forces which maintain the State’s monopoly on violence. What does this monopoly and its pursuit entail, and how does it incorporate hunger into its mechanisms of social war?

The modern State’s primary priority is the protection of capital and property enclosure (Bakunin [1873] 1990; Foucault 2007). The State relies upon the extraction and accumulation of capital from the ruled (Tilly 1992; 1985) and keeping citizens within the

bounds of the market – controlling whether or not its citizens eat or starve (Foucault 2007; Springer 2017; Mbembe 2003). The use of force, and the ability to use it with impunity (i.e. with little legal repercussions), is central to statecraft (Weber 1965). If a citizen breaks a state’s law(s), and is caught doing so by State agents (i.e. the police), then they will face some form of violence, which may include harsh imprisonment and poverty after imprisonment, or the extraction of a citizen’s resources. This threat of violence constructs and maintains the cages of capital in which all State subjects are forced to live through various degrees of panoptic control (Foucault [1975] 1995; Graham 2011). With modern states came the rise of police, armies, militarized borders, prisons, and war-making – forms of hard counterinsurgency forced onto the citizenry as ‘protection’ (Tilly 1992; Williams [2004] 2007; Scott 1998). The threat of this violence keeps the trinity of the State, capital, and property intact.

State ‘protection’ also takes the form of *civilianization* – the incorporation of civilians and their politics into the function and maintenance of the State, nurturing loyalty for its legitimization. Civilianization incorporates citizens into the State’s bureaucracies – putting people at the helm of the machine – as well as incorporating people’s needs into public services via social programs and party politics. The civilianization process functions as a process of soft counterinsurgency (see Dunlap 2014, 2020b). Any other alternatives to the State and capital are not only overtly repressed with military might, but politically repressed by a continuous social engineering of the State’s legitimacy – a process theorized by anarchist(ic) thinkers as ‘social war’ (Foucault 2003; Trocchi 2011; Gardenyes 2012; Dunlap 2014; Dunlap and Correa-Arce 2022). ‘War makes states’ (Tilly 1992, 1985) not only through the overt violence of war but also through the normalized violence of State-imposed boundaries and controls on political life.

The social war of the State can be defined by the processes of social engineering generated by the State’s politics – ‘a war by other means’ (Foucault 2003, 11) which constructs political and economic subjects by the exertion of State power from above, and the generation of bottom-up legitimization by the ruled, through a range of social and political institutions. Social war ‘train[s] us to view the world from the perspective of the needs of power itself’ (Gardenyes 2012, 11) through the State’s offering of strategic concessions, ‘the temporary relief ... [of] bread and circuses’ (Trocchi 2011, 7), the entrenchment of State power in social relationships, and manipulation of the needs and desires of the populace, under the guise of peace, civility and order. Dunlap and Correa-Arce (2022, 462) discuss counterinsurgency as exemplary of social war, citing the *Insurgencies and Countering Insurgencies* field manual (FM3-24. 2014) which ‘openly advocates pacification by political means, employing “voting,” “education,” “town meetings,” “youth programs,” “empowerment,” “participation” and, elsewhere, “sustainable development” as devices of pacification to integrate members of a target population.’ Trocchi (2011, 7–10) defines social war as

the low-intensity war by the state against the social relationships of its own population in order to maintain its continued existence. The social war then encompasses the totality of everyday life ... The social war is a war between forms of life in which the victorious form of life subsumes the conquered one ... the concrete universal takes the form of the citizen, the *being without social relationships* [emphasis in original] ....

Together, militarized and civilianized institutions and technologies of ‘protection’ are the primary ways in which the State maintains its control over its territory – shaping sociality, regulating relationships and enforcing conduct. State socialists and communists may argue that the State’s violence is exactly the tool needed to suppress the ruling capitalist class. But taking control of the violent apparatus of the State simply creates a new ruling capitalist class, and generates ‘state capitalist’ regimes (see Friends of Aron Baron 2017; Bakunin [1873] 1990). As this article demonstrates, the ‘pink tide’ states of Latin America maintained their extractive functions and impacts in their attempts to implement state-led agrarian socialisms. Decolonial scholarship has also tended to tolerate, if not embrace, statist and (left) authoritarian organizationalist approaches to decolonization (Dunlap 2021, 2022). Such approaches do not meaningfully address the State’s imperative of capital accumulation, nor will they eliminate the centralized authority which negates the possibility of people-controlled food systems. They simply transfer that control into the hands of a new ruling class that claims to represent the people. Differences among states and their origins are important considerations (see Graeber and Wengrow 2021; Scott 2017) – the State is not the sole or main cause, or origin, of hunger. Hunger existed in pre-State societies. Still, trends toward coercive capitalism exist among modern formations of the State (Gelderloos 2017). Hunger, as Polanyi ([1944] 2001) reminds us, remains a central tool in state control and a weapon organized to enforce the imperatives of State and capital. Organizing and manipulating conditions of hunger are an essential weapon of social warfare waged by the state.

Theorizing the State *monopoly on hunger* and *food anarchy* furthers a state-critical avenue within critical agrarian studies. As Maywa Montenegro de Wit (2020) has pointed out, agroecologists have much to learn from the abolitionist movement, which has grown exponentially over the past several years. Anarchism provides a compatible framework to explore what it means to actualize abolitionist agroecology and decolonial food sovereignty, investigating the potential of dual power (Proudhon 1851; Bookchin 1996), life-affirming institutions (Critical Resistance 2021), and the viral subversion of amorphous networks (Dunlap 2020a).

## A monopoly on hunger

The State *monopoly on hunger*, embedded within its *monopoly on violence*, justifies the need for *food anarchy* as an offshoot of *food sovereignty*. It should be clarified that Weber’s monopoly on violence is highly contested by anthropologists of the State and does not wholly apply across differential geographies of food and agriculture (Sharma and Gupta 2006). States may hold varying degrees of power over violence compared to one another, and capital may not be the only motivation for every state action. This article is not meant to promote dogmatic critiques of the State; rather, it identifies and elaborates on the State’s multiple strong, worrisome patterns with regard to its ties to capital, property, hunger, and dispossession. The *monopoly on hunger* charts its own path for understanding hunger as State violence. The *monopoly on hunger* framing problematizes the State’s legitimized force of control over the food supply through its interconnectedness with, and prioritization of, capital and property. The argument proceeds from two threads: (1) the interconnectedness of the State, capital, and property, or the *State-capital-property trinity*; and (2) the social war which engineers and coerces the

legitimization of this State-capital-property trinity, waged against its citizens in pursuit of its own power.

### ***The State-capital-property trinity***

Private property and State support of capital, including agribusiness, reigns supreme at every level of government (Holt-Giménez 2017). The means to produce and consume food is extracted from us when property is privatized, and as a result, our labor power must be sold in order to feed ourselves. This reality was most gruesomely demonstrated by enforcement of enclosure through the mass elimination of peasants during the agrarian transition in Europe (Perelman 2007). Other forms of coercion existed in pre-capitalist societies, but economic coercion of this nature became a distinct feature of life under capitalism (Polanyi [1944] 2001). The enclosure movement created a violent feedback loop between property, capitalism, and the State: property underpins capitalism, and the State's use of force, coercion and violence to maintain power legitimizes property. Political subjects then become beholden to this interdependent State-capital-property trinity by the threat of hunger and poverty if they do not participate in it. Dispossession allows for capital accumulation, and dispossession is institutionalized by property, forcing the dispossessed to rely on wage labor under the looming threat of hunger: 'a picture where capitalism and the State come together ... as a dialectic of violence' (Springer 2017). The State's protection of property remains a pillar of social war articulating a combined militarized enclosure of people from resources, and a domestication of the governed into capitalism's designated mechanisms for acquiring food and land.

The wars of modern State formation have historically been waged through the two fundamental war-making relations of state formation: militarization and civilianization. As European empires fought for territory with increasingly sophisticated weapons of war, more and more capital was required to sustain and grow the technologies fighting these wars. A forced means of extraction was created to help militarize states, which we know today as taxation (Tilly 1992; Scott 1998). In order to quell revolt from the taxed citizenry, the trust, dependence, and 'consent' of the governed populace was coerced, and their needs adequately pacified, by marrying the State with domestic politics: civilians were placed at the helm of the growing bureaucracies of war- and state-making, and their satisfaction was incorporated into the State's legitimation process. War, its bureaucracies of extraction, and the continuation of capitalism to fund that extraction, formed the internal structure and civil society of the modern State (Scott 1998; Tilly 1992). These two arms of the war-making State, militarization and civilianization, are the birthplaces of counterinsurgency, from which a social war is waged.

This interconnected relationship between the State, its need to extract capital to stay in power and hold violence above the heads of the populace (and those deemed outside of it) for property to secure capital accumulation, and for peasant dispossession from the land, represent the engineering of hunger as a form of State violence and social war. This monopoly amounts to the State's concentration of the means of control over whether or not people are either hungry or satiated. Breaking up the State monopoly on hunger decentralizes and liberates access to those means of control to empower everyone who eats. The equal ability to access food and land depends upon breaking the State's concentrated capitalist control over that access. It means taking food and

land back from the State and its protection of capitalist means of eating and growing. It requires the interruption of what Ivan Illich ([1969] 1997) calls 'underdevelopment as a state of mind' – the manufactured and protected transformation of basic needs for food and land into violently privatized commodities. The State's institutionalized 'protection' extends to the protection of private property rights, providing a forcibly forged oasis of capital for the State to perpetually extract to keep itself alive.

### ***War makes States, States make war***

A common mythology of the State insists that humans 'need' the State in order to prevent what Thomas Hobbes (1651) saw as the 'state of nature,' a 'war of all against all.' Hobbes argued that without a State, humans will inevitably war with one another as a result of human nature. For Hobbes, State sovereignty prevents an assumed war between political subjects. Ironically, Hobbes's narrative is a projection of what the State itself actually is – a machine which makes war, with both other states and its own citizens, in order to maintain power and legitimacy. The State and its social relations forces, coerces and civilizes its citizens to feed themselves from within the confines of the State-capital-property trinity. Organizing hunger as a weapon of social warfare, biopolitics remains the politics of socio-ecological control. The organization of the monopoly on hunger is embedded in trinity's norms, relationships, enforcements, and enclosures which carefully demarcate and accumulate legitimacy for State power, conduct, and social relations of food production and provision.

The capitalist social relationships organized to rule food systems are at the core of food politics. The State's strategic use of political concessions via agri-food reformism, such as offerings of food stamps and land reforms as resolutions for the problems of hunger and dispossession, remains a technique of pacification. Welfare, seen through its historical contexts of development, could also be called the 'riot tax.' Capitalism – be it welfarist, neoliberal, or anywhere in between – remains stabilized as the normalized option for feeding ourselves and each other. It manifests in the grocery store, the navigation of carefully priced commodities and orderly stocked shelves, and the surveilled retail transaction as the only ways many citizens know how to obtain sustenance. It is the addictive salt and fat and sugar, the triggering of a craving by a TV commercial seen in a rare moment of solace from work (Moss 2013), the ease and cheapness of the drive-thru when exhausted, the colorful Happy Meal toy keeping the kiddo quiet. It is the nosy neighbor snitching on zoning law violations and trespassing; the fence and cameras expectantly surrounding empty fallow farmland owned by Bill Gates, Bayer-Monsanto, the Chinese Communist Party. The social war of the monopoly on hunger is the boundless diffusion of the State-capital-property trinity's infiltration; its engineering of social vulnerability and life itself.

Hunger, and the necessity of selling one's labor power in order to avoid it, is itself a weapon of capitalist social war, deployed in order to keep workers working. Economist Joseph Townsend theorized that wielding hunger as a weapon and withholding relief unless absolutely necessary to quell revolt was key to the functioning of capitalism. Hunger manufactured the wage as the only 'relief' from hunger, despite it also acting as an incentive for selling one's labor power for a wage in the first place. In his 1786 treatise 'A Dissertation on the Poor Laws,' Townsend exclaimed:

Hunger will tame the fiercest animals, it will teach decency and civility, obedience and subjection, to the most perverse. In general it is only hunger which can spur and goad them [the poor] on to labour ... hunger is not only peaceable, silent, unremitting pressure, but, as the most natural motive to industry and labour, it calls forth the most powerful exertions; and, when satisfied by the free bounty of another, lays lasting and sure foundations for goodwill and gratitude. The slave must be compelled to work but the free man should be left to his own judgment, and discretion; should be protected in the full enjoyment of his own, be it much or little; and punished when he invades his neighbour's property. (quoted by Polanyi [1944] 2001, 118–120)

The terms of hunger are trapped within the State-sanctioned sphere of capitalism and property.

[T]he person who violates the laws, breaks the social contract and thereby becomes a foreigner in his own land, consequently falling under the jurisdiction of the penal laws that punish him, exile him, and in a way kill [or starve] him. (Foucault 2007, 66)

If hungry people wanted to resist the current food regime using direct action *rather than* looking to the State, capitalism, or NGOs to provide solutions to hunger, then they risk facing violent repression and counterinsurgency campaigns. Peasants cannot squat on agribusiness private property and grow a grassroots solution to hunger without facing State violence, nor can hungry people steal food from food business establishments without risking their freedom or livelihood. '[T]he disciplinary police of grain,' Foucault (2007, 67) reminds us, 'isolates, it concentrates, it encloses, it is protectionist, and it focuses essentially on action on the market or on the space of the market and what surrounds it' (67). Carceral society (see Foucault [1975] 1995) is instrumental to imposing the present agricultural arrangement; a charged fence of State property protection surrounds the wealth of food right in front of us. We, the people and political subjects ruled by the State, may not choose to cross the fence – we may instead go to the food pantry or NGO to glean the spoils of those who are willing to throw down some charity from atop their perch of greater fortune; sign up for food stamps, follow its rules and buy only what the State is 'graciously' allowing us to eat; rent a neatly confined community garden plot; protest and pressure and petition our politicians to do something. We try to survive the social war by internalizing and normalizing the only options for satiety we are given.

We, the people and political subjects ruled by the State, may understandably see State-led resolutions for the problem of hunger like land reforms, food access programs, or participatory policy-making processes for food sovereignty, as solutions. This is quite purposefully how they are marketed to us, to distract from – and keep hegemonic – the violent structural reality behind their benefits. Relying on the State to give us these forms of satiation is reflective of the normalized violence of hunger and dispossession that we accept as routine, an everyday part of political life: that we cannot just squat on agribusiness land and grow food, or take it from grocery store shelves, without violent consequences, risking our lives and livelihoods. We may deeply fear taking such risks, paralyzed by the panoptic realities of surviving in a State-surveilled society (Foucault [1975] 1995), controlled by 'the cops in our heads' (Faun 1990). The State decides the conditions of our ability to eat or starve (Mbembe 2003), and trains us to accept these conditions and carefully allocated 'solutions' to the problems these conditions perpetuate. Rather than challenging the State's monopoly on hunger, we may be manipulated or coerced to accept what little autonomy the State *does* give us. Questioning the legitimacy of the State-

capital-property trinity to wield power over hunger and satiation is key for achieving food sovereignty.

## Food regimes and the State monopoly on hunger

How has the monopoly on hunger operated through food regimes (Friedmann and McMichael 1989)? The economic system preceding the first food regime – mercantilism – was a deliberate system of economic nationalism. It was designed to prioritize the accumulation of capital needed to increase a given state's individual political power through militarization (Ramnath 2012; Polanyi [1944] 2001). 'Mercantilism was concerned with the [governed] population as a productive force' (Foucault 2007, 97); it existed to enrich the new modern states of Europe through the conquest of colonies, and the direct extraction of capital from them to their mother countries. Mercantilist policies disallowed colonies from having any sort of political or economic sovereignty whatsoever – they were territorial extensions of the sovereign mother country. The mother country enjoyed privileged access to the capital extracted, financing the militarization required to maintain territorial power over the mother country and its colonies (Césaire [1950] 1972). Without colonialism, the mother countries of Europe would not have buoyed to their privileged positions in the global economy (Frieden 2020; Ramnath 2012). These unequal economic power relationships between the North and South prevail, creating the modern world-system of states in which the 'core' European countries aiming to monopolize violence systematically draw upon the labor and resources of the colonized 'peripheries' (Wallerstein 2004).

Food regime theory is a theory of both states and capital, and their inextricability in the political history of capitalist agriculture (McMichael 2009). Friedmann and McMichael (1989) introduce food regime theory and analysis with acknowledgement of the widespread use of capitalist development in agriculture 'to build up national agricultures in Third World countries' (93). They identify their intention to build upon 'the picture of nineteenth century European industrial specialization as the basis of the modern nation-state,' by showing that 'a condition of that specialization lay in the relation of settler agriculture to the maturing of a state system centred on Europe,' wherein '[t]wo basic processes are at work: the development of a system of independent, liberal national states, and the industrialization of agriculture and food' (94). Nation-states, the state system, and industrialized agriculture were interdependent, colonial creations.

In the first food regime (1870s–1910s), the enclosure of property and (settler-)colonialism had begun to consolidate new state powers that combined the militarization and civilianization of modern European states with the extraction of capital required to maintain them. These settler colonies would eventually become nationally independent, and pursue capital-dependent monopolies on violence of their own. The first food regime signified a congealing of the State-capital-property trinity in the agri-food system, and the transformation of the social relations of peasant agriculture to keep the trinity maintained. Foucault ([1975] 1995) details how this shift toward industrial agriculture in Europe was accompanied by the domestication of peasants into agricultural workerism as a new way of life as opposed to commoning. Criminalization of peasants engaging in their previous ways of life before the enclosure movement, like growing and eating food from the land, was an important part of reshaping peasants into workers – what was once simply the peasant way of life became theft and trespassing. Yet the transformation of peasants

from commoners into workers was contested. Criminalization became the defining distinction of the new social war of capitalist agriculture, exported from Europe to the colonies. A faction of peasants even became a 'lumpenproletariat' of criminals, who saw the political value of illegalism, direct action, and transgression of agricultural enclosure as strategies for resisting the enclosure movement, and reclaiming their way of life from the social war of capitalist agricultural expansion (Vásquez 2020).

The second food regime (1910s–1970s) indicated a new phase of global capitalist agriculture in which the United States became the new hegemon in the broader state system, and exporters of national independence into the colonized world through capitalist agriculture. 'Decolonization' meant national 'liberation' – via the modern European state. National liberation was tied to the dispossession of peasants and their agroecosystems through property enclosure and inclusion into the food regime. The second food regime embodied a time of 'remaking' the colonies as capitalist states that used capitalist agriculture to build their states. In exporting this model of state-building, the US was effectively building up their own state's monopoly on violence and hunger by continually funneling capital inward through the dispossession of foodways for property enclosure. In exporting grain and inputs to an alarming degree, it was recreating the capitalist state-building that had historically been done under mercantilism. It was also globalizing its monopoly on violence by establishing its imperial dominance across the world through its control over foodways.

Development further solidified this trajectory. In the process of its own economic development during this period, the US subsidized and overproduced a surplus of grain, which it then began dumping on former colonies as 'food aid,' effectively displacing their local food economies and engineering import dependency (Clapp 2012; McMichael 1996). Peasants, who had been made into workers by the social war of the first food regime, were displaced and robbed of their means of production in a social war of consumerism and import dependency. Rather than peasants retaining meaningful control over their ability to feed and nourish themselves, they were asked instead to be grateful for the food aid they received. Northern populations, as well, were coaxed into believing food aid, overproduction, dumping, and their associated biotechnological interventions were 'solving world hunger.' Golden Rice in the Philippines, for example, was promised by *Time Magazine* to 'save the children' facing vitamin A deficiency by modifying rice into a commodity enhanced artificially with vitamin A – obscuring the fact that access to *only* rice as a result of institutionalized rice import dependency was the root cause of vitamin A deficiency (Patel 2012).

The Green Revolution infrastructures which had created the overproduction surplus for the US were introduced to the former colonies: biotechnologies such as pesticides, herbicides, and genetically modified seeds pushed by agribusiness corporations, philanthropic foundations, and the capitalist Northern governments bankrolling them for their McCarthyist agendas. This helped develop the US economy even further, and acted as an agricultural form of counterinsurgency against communism during a tense Cold War moment. The Green Revolution remains an act of social war, backed by 'heavy propaganda' as a Punjabi farmer called it (quoted by Patel 2012, 135) – glistening advertisements and cheery media reports aimed at farmers, promising immediate hunger alleviation through the growth of yields and profits. Governments began extending lines of credit, loans, input packages, and training sponsored by partnerships between the Rockefeller and Ford Foundations and agribusiness to smallholder farmers all over

the global South in an attempt to integrate them into capitalist agriculture and state-building. This incorporation campaign only reduced hunger temporarily; hunger increased shortly thereafter, and failed to resolve issues pertaining to food distribution. The Green Revolution has also led to further dispossession, corporate control of seeds, increased farmer debt for input costs, devastated agroecosystems, and, eventually, an epidemic of farmer suicides (Lappé, Collins, and Rosset 1998; Perkins 1997; Patel 2012).

In the third, neoliberal-corporate food regime (1970s to present), the hegemony of individual states was undermined in favor of globalized free trade. Northern states have consolidated their power into one global-scale hegemon of hegemons, continuing to extract capital in a neo-mercantilist, neo-colonial manner. This extraction has been carried out through the same mechanism of State power – this time on a global scale, through the institutionalization of unequal international free trade agreements. The World Trade Organization (WTO), a state conglomerate made up of member states dominated by historical hegemons, solidified the neoliberal-corporate food regime with its Agreement on Agriculture (AoA). The AoA institutionalized the domination of the world agri-food market by corporate agribusiness. The Agreement enshrines in international law the expansion of subsidies for Northern states' agribusiness, and structural adjustment programs for states of the global South. The latter consists of policies requiring states who 'need' to develop their agricultural sectors to borrow money from international financial institutions under neoliberal conditions: they must produce outward, toward the global market, rather than produce inwardly to develop their own agri-food economies and feed their own populations (McMichael 2005). The Northern states and their alliance with corporations have together wielded their capital – and continual need for more of it – to dispossess people from the land for capital accumulation via land grabbing (Borras et al. 2011). Increased privatization and concentration of land under neoliberalism has accelerated hunger as a function of market hegemony.

Far from the neoliberal rhetoric of State retreat, the neoliberal State retreats selectively, to the extent that it benefits the states of the North and their domestic agri-food economies (Pechlaner and Otero 2010; Peck and Tickell 2002). As the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) was rolled out and meaningful protections for Mexican campesinos rolled back, the United States militarized its Southern border with impunity. In the 1990s, harsh 'prevention through deterrence' policies were instituted by the US federal government to make all but the most topographically difficult borderlands impossible to cross due to increased border militarization, while legal immigration to the US was made more difficult (De León 2015). Heightened border militarization and campesino displacement by free trade agreements increased undocumented migration, generating an easily exploited class of undocumented workers for US-based agribusiness lacking in labor protections (Walia 2013). Neoliberalization has the effect of leaving a greater proportion of people hungry; when free trade agreements and land grabbing displace farmers around the world, they lose their ability to feed themselves and their communities from the land. When they try to find work elsewhere, they are often forced by their undocumented status to work in precarious conditions for miniscule wages, risking hunger again. Often those who are desperate for food are forced to break the law in order to eat, and if they are incarcerated, they may be slotted into a life of low wages. Both displaced and formerly incarcerated people often work for low wages in the food service industry, or on large agribusiness farms (Carolan 2016). Law on multiple

scales of jurisdiction, carceral institutions, and capital routinely converge to create fortresses of force that push people into hunger and precarity.

## Institutionalizing food sovereignty? Synergies and departures

The food sovereignty movement has long fought against these food regimes – particularly the corporate food regime. Food sovereignty is a ‘counter-hegemonic framing’ (Fairbairn 2010), a social movement to counter the corporate agribusiness takeover of the agri-food system. In a Polanyian double movement dialectic, food sovereignty is meant to be the counter-force against *laissez-faire* capitalist agriculture, to re-embed it into Keynesian state regulation. Yet the interconnectedness of the State monopoly on hunger and the food regimes cannot be ignored. Does this governmentality which keeps populations trapped within the confines of capital, even in moments of reform, challenge whether or not food sovereignty can be achieved via the vehicle of the State (Foucault 2007)? What happens to the food sovereignty movement when the Polanyian re-embedding *does* take place?

Not all forms of food sovereignty are the same, and not all forms of food sovereignty mobilization are, or will be, anarchist. In fact,

[s]tate action is demanded [by food sovereignty advocates] in the form of support for affordable food prices, agrarian reform and rural development programs ... advocates reassert the need for market regulation and condemn the outcomes of international governance of liberalized markets. (Fairbairn 2010, 28)

McKay, Nehring, and Walsh-Dilley (2014) believe that engagement with the State may be a requirement for food sovereignty movements to actualize their vision. And there are very real needs for these programs and policies, at least in the short term, for as long as we are ruled by the capitalist State. Yet scholarly debates have ensued over possibilities for, and impediments to, food sovereignty within the realm of the State (Trauger, Claeys, and Desmarais 2017). The co-constitution and interdependency of the State-capital-property trinity, theorized above as the structural bedrock of the State monopoly on hunger, complicates the integrity of State-led food sovereignty solutions. Can food sovereignty truly be achieved when the State monopoly on hunger controls agri-food systems worldwide?

Several states have tried to institutionalize food sovereignty into legislation and constitutions. In Ecuador, food sovereignty was institutionalized in partnership with peasants in a participatory policy-making process. Despite some progress toward establishing a more democratic national food system, the process was fraught with negotiation with agribusiness interests within both civil society and the Ecuadorian state (Peña 2016; Giunta 2014). Flores, Ruivenkamp, and Jongerden (2018) argue that the movement for food sovereignty was ‘stripped of its essentials’ (1) by the Ecuadorian state’s attempts to institutionalize the movement. The ontological meanings of land, seed, and crops held by those in the movement were not able to be translated into a legal framework, translating them instead into privatized commodities. The food sovereignty articles would thereby ‘sustainably develop’ the peasant way of life, rather than giving peasants themselves the opportunity to define their way of life. The laws co-opted the movement’s meaning of agricultural ‘self-sufficiency’ by supporting mainly agribusiness enterprises, including intensive national biofuel production, genetically-modified seeds, export

crops, and the expansion of supermarket chains. This further implicated Ecuador in an unequal world-system of states through agricultural extraction for the benefit of mainly global North transnational corporations, rather than resolving food regime dependencies (as the food sovereignty movement demands).

In Venezuela, efforts on the part of the Venezuelan state to address hunger were made through an unprecedented expansion of food sovereignty-focused programming. The state attempted to reverse a long history of food import dependence by establishing agrarian reforms, citizen-led local *comunas* (communes), and urban food access programs, among others. These efforts did help reduce hunger in Venezuela, but at the expense of food sovereignty in several ways. While the programs were (supposedly) designed to constitute an equal partnership between the state and civil society, they ultimately centralized food distribution. Programs relied upon industrialization of local agriculture, which erased Indigenous knowledge and agroecosystems. Programs were funded by extractive petroleum revenues, a main source of revenue for the Venezuelan state, and these state-led food sovereignty efforts would not have happened without them (McKay, Nehring, and Walsh-Dilley 2014; Schiavoni 2015).

Venezuela's dependency on oil revenues from within the capitalist world-system has posed challenges for Venezuela's ability to fund social programs, as capitalist nations (such as the United States) have imposed sanctions on Venezuela to sabotage the state's ability to consistently provide such programs. After oil prices dropped and funding for social programs dwindled in 2016, a food distribution program called CLAP (Comité Local de Abastecimiento y Producción, or Local Committee for Production and Supply) was initiated by the Venezuelan state to address hunger. This program delivered food boxes directly to citizens' homes. Yet the boxes were only given to those who voted for the government and had a government ID, coercing political participation in exchange for food. Farmers within the state of Venezuela were not prioritized: 90% of the box contents were imported from neighboring countries' agribusiness farms (Pielago 2020).

Bolivia's state-facilitated food sovereignty efforts have also undermined food sovereignty by prioritizing national agribusiness production over local food security and autonomy (Cockburn 2014). Although the Bolivian regime has made an explicit attempt to move the country beyond neoliberalism through welfarist reformism, the Bolivian state has only tangentially partnered with rural social movements in doing so: namely, using national agrarian reforms to create a nationally sovereign food supply in the name of peasants' demands for food sovereignty, rather than meaningfully breaking ties with transnational agribusiness and securing peasant land tenure (Tilzey 2019). The state's attempt entailed 'placating its counter-hegemonic constituency through welfarism and anti-imperial rhetoric, and soothing the landed oligarchy through accelerated agri-food extractivism and effective exemption from the terms of the agrarian reform' (268). This, according to Tilzey, is what shifts the populist movement of food sovereignty into the realm of authoritarian populism: when movement demands are appropriated by an inescapable 'state-capital nexus.'

In Brazil, extractive agriculture has been placed above rural agroecosystems to fund social programs in the name of populism and social equity. This political history ultimately laid the groundwork for authoritarian right-wing capture of the Brazilian state (Andrade 2020). Even as states reshuffle revenue to ostensibly accommodate the social needs abandoned by neoliberalism, their reliance on capital sustains alliances with capital. In these

cases, food sovereignty is appropriated for the maintenance of state sovereignty via continued capitalist-led accumulation.

State revenue-generating extractivism are important trends in all of these state-led efforts to enact food sovereignty. In their review of Latin American progressive governments' efforts to institutionalize agroecology since 1999, Giraldo and McCune (2019) find that these governments' continual concessions to capitalist interests have foiled their revolutionary possibilities in the eyes of some rural social movements. This disillusion has splintered these movements in two directions: a State-skeptical, if not anti-statist, *autonomist* movement that views the State's marriage to capital as rendering it hopeless; and a *sovereigntist* movement, which sees the State as a useful tool for achieving agroecological movement goals. This splintering of movements on the basis of State-capital sabotage of agroecological transformation – even in so-called “friendly” governments' (Giraldo and McCune 2019) – speaks to the relevance of questioning whether or not the State can be saved.

Trauger (2017) points out that statist approaches to food sovereignty are often conceptualized through problematic lenses that do not necessarily align with the demands of food sovereignty movements themselves. Food sovereignty as a movement that responds to food price crises is one such example: this framing positions food sovereignty as a movement which can re-embed the market into the State's regulatory quarters through advocacy for national food self-sufficiency, rather than genuine individual or collective food sovereignty. This leaves food sovereignty mobilization efforts 'vulnerable to co-optation and greenwashing by global capital because of the way the neoliberal state often governs trade and its people' (36). The common framing of food sovereignty in terms of the United Nations' 'right to food' is also problematic, requiring a top-down bestowal of rights to political subjects, from a sovereign power external to the supposed food sovereigns themselves (Patel 2009). These rights were designed to stave off the effects of inequalities created by capitalism and the modern State, rather than to eliminate the inequalities completely (Trauger 2017). As a radical alternative to statist approaches, Trauger suggests 'autonomous food production,' including anarchist approaches to food sovereignty.

[S]truggles for food sovereignty confront the political realities of liberal sovereignty, namely, the territorialization of politics and economics under the governance of the modern nation state' (Trauger, Claeys, and Desmarais 2017, 5). Settler states impose a singular body of law onto a pre-existing multitude of Indigenous political systems and ways of life (Lewis 2017). Food sovereignty calls for the protection and restoration of Indigenous agroecological knowledge and Indigenous political knowledge. Indigenous political sovereignty challenges the legitimacy of statist approaches to food sovereignty, and calls into question whether or not the State is an appropriate vehicle for Indigenous self-determination (Dunlap 2021; 2022; Ramnath 2012; Galvan-Alvarez, Laursen, and Ridda 2020; Lewis 2017). State sovereignty cannot adequately encompass the many overlapping sovereignties that are ever-changing and co-evolving over time and space (Iles and Montenegro de Wit 2014; Schiavoni 2015; Roman-Alcalá 2016; Patel 2009). As these examples demonstrate, attempts to enact food sovereignty via state sovereignty have been compromised by capital-state collaboration, demobilized non-state social movements and sectors, and continued state hegemony. It is impossible to say for sure what the 'best' course of food sovereignty action is for a given people and place – we need not eschew 'food sovereignty' altogether and replace it with 'food anarchy.' Rather, food

anarchy is an explicitly anarchist path under the umbrella of food sovereignty, which food sovereignty advocates might consider owning, honing, and mobilizing with intention.

### **Food anarchy: resistance and building counter-worlds**

Offering anarchist and abolitionist visions, food anarchy advances horizontal dual power and life-affirming institutions (Proudhon 1851 [1968]; Bookchin, 1996; Critical Resistance, 2021) as well as insurrectionary anarchist, and networked abolitionist, viral subversion (Dunlap 2020a). Building alternative worlds intentionally rooted in food sovereignty principles exemplifies a dual power strategy for countering the corporate food regime. This strategy can be built through mutual aid to cultivate a popular power from the grassroots. Food anarchy also manifests through direct actions like strikes, property destruction, illegalism, and insurrection (see Sovacool and Dunlap 2022). These forms of food anarchy need not be dichotomized – they are often interconnected and wielded in tandem. Whatever approach the food anarchist adopts, food anarchy rejects reliance on concentrations of power in authoritative hierarchies to survive, and creates something new.

The strategy of building dual power counter-worlds is also central to the modern abolitionist movement. Anarchists share the abolitionist vision of creating networks of community care to keep people safe and protected. Detailing how agroecologists can learn from abolition, Montenegro de Wit (2020) argues that social institutions that appear immobile are nothing of the sort. 'What appears radical now, in terms of ... enacting agency and power in agrifood governance, can evolve into commonsense' (119). She argues that agroecologists can also learn from abolition's rejection of reformism. Anarchism also insists that hierarchical systems of domination cannot be reformed, and must be revolutionized and overthrown (Bakunin [1873] 1990; Stirner [1844] 2017; Dunlap 2020a). Food anarchy critically examines why enacting food sovereignty through the State remains tenuous, if not impossible: because to enact food sovereignty is to revolutionize the agri-food system entirely (Trauger 2017). Another lesson abolition can teach agroecologists, according to Montenegro de Wit, is divestment from systems of death, and investment instead in systems which affirm life. Food anarchy also requires divestment from systems of starvation, and investment in systems of sustenance.

Food anarchy is already happening all around us. 'When agroecologists, like abolitionists, hear that their plans are simply not realistic, the answer can and should be: in spite of everything, it is *already real*' (Montenegro de Wit 2020, 123). Strategies may embody a more social anarchist variety of food anarchy, through the organization of new counter-worlds meant to counter the power of the capitalist State with a better, people-powered replacement. These strategies might align with Peter Kropotkin's anarcho-communist vision of the food system, in which communities are the food sovereigns, governing the food system without a State or capitalism through an ethos of mutual aid (Kropotkin [1892] 1906). They may also embody a more insurrectionary or individualist variety, with a focus on self-sovereignty, direct confrontation, and freedom from the prisons of organizationalism and ideology (Crimethinc. Ex-Workers' Collective 2017; Stirner [1844] 2017). This variety might use direct action to dismantle the current order led by individuals or informal affinity groups, using strategies such as looting, arson, property destruction, or the occupation of space (Bonanno 1998 [1996]; Osterweil 2019). Food anarchy can embody a mixture of these different types of anarchy, using a

diversity of tactics commonly focused on the use of direct action to dismantle the old and build the new.

Peasants in rural Argentina, for example, have a long history of prefigurative politics and anarchistic forms of political organization in response to political economic crises. A popular uprising against neoliberalization in 2001 led to the creation of neighborhood assemblies and the seizure of factories, constituting a collaborative blend of insurrectionary and communalist tactics for achieving food anarchy. Peasants have established a strong network of anarcho-syndicalist federations. Each organization has a 'base community' which meets regularly to discuss local issues as well as those brought by delegates of other organizations that concern the community, including the people themselves in decision-making processes. Another level of organization, *Centrales Campesinas* (Peasant Centers), connect various local base communities together in a slightly larger-scale participatory governance structure (Wald and Hill 2016).

In 2013, fisherfolk in Álvaro Obregón, Mexico led an insurrection against wind energy company *Mareña Renovables* and government actors (Dunlap 2018a). After exclusion from negotiations, non-existent consultations, losing access to the sea and wind turbine foundation construction killing off the fish that people relied upon for sustenance (Dunlap 2018a, 2019a; Dunlap and Correa-Arce 2022, 459), Zapotec and Ikoot people initiated a militant struggle for their land, sea and cultural integrity. This triggered an insurrectionary rupture and struggle for achieving food and political sovereignty alike. This struggle reveals the complications of militant struggles, demonstrating how state and companies actors work to recuperate political struggle, but also how counter-power and organization can be energy, material and organizationally intensive (Dunlap 2018b, 2019b). Peoples' concern for the land and sea, networks and militant direct action demonstrate insurrectionary food anarchy, and creates reflections on new organizational possibilities to struggle and sustain political and food autonomy.

In the global North, the Occupy the Farm movement took public agricultural research land back from the University of California-Berkeley's plans to develop it into a shopping centre through direct action (Roman-Alcalá 2018). Food Not Bombs, an anarchistic direct action organization with chapters around the world, cooks free meals and gives them away freely. Food Not Bombs flourished from feeding protestors at the Battle for Seattle demonstrations at the World Trade Organization in 1999 – an anarchistic extension of the food sovereignty struggle which occurred there (Williams 2017). From Food Not Bombs came Food Not Lawns, an organization which emphasizes guerilla gardening, dumpster diving, and building community around growing food wherever possible (Flores 2006). In Atlanta, Georgia, land defenders are fighting the Atlanta Police Foundation's destruction of the Atlanta forest for the construction of a police training facility using a range of tactics: the blockaded occupation of the forest, building robust mutual aid infrastructures, destruction and stoppage of bulldozers, and demonstrations, among others (Scenes From the Atlanta Forest 2022; Defend the Atlanta Forest 2022). Mutual aid based food recovery and distribution grew exponentially in cities all over the United States during the COVID-19 pandemic, and have remained lifelines for many in its political and economic aftermath. Food anarchy also flourishes in the mutual aid that we all engage in all the time – when we feed ourselves, our families, and our friends in the simple spirit of love and togetherness. As anarchist theorist David Graeber (2009) put it: 'in most important ways you are probably already an anarchist.'

## Conclusion

This article builds a case for *food anarchy*, a new offshoot of food sovereignty which is radically against all forms of food regime rule and domination – particularly the State *monopoly on hunger*. The article theorizes the monopoly on hunger as part of the State's characteristic monopoly on violence, reliant on a dispossessive *State-capital-property trinity*. The interdependence of the three underlie the logic of the State, which organizes the conditions of land dispossession and hunger. Since the State's monopoly on violence is maintained by forging regular access to capital and its accumulation, it also relies on the enclosure of property. This enclosure dispossesses people and their foodways from the land, forcing people to sell their labor power in order to eat.

The trinity maintains its power through a legitimation process of social war – the civilianization of the governed which engineers and coerces support for the trinity. Together, the trinity and its social war comprise the State monopoly on hunger. To demonstrate how the monopoly on hunger stifles food sovereignty, the article discusses how the monopoly governs food regimes. The contradictions and problems with institutionalizing food sovereignty are detailed, with an eye toward problematic policies of the past in Latin American 'pink tide' states and the contradictions between state sovereignty and Indigenous political sovereignty. Cases of the former are reviewed, revealing a pattern of hegemonic extractivism and authoritarianism corrupting state-led food sovereignty mobilizations. Finally, the article discusses strategies with which the food sovereignty movement can actualize its *food anarchy* offshoot by building counter-worlds and viral subversion, including a review of cases in both the global North and global South.

Growers and eaters alike have mobilized against the monopoly on hunger in various ways – from the creation of communes and councils, to the insurrectionary fight for foodways, to disruptive direct actions, to simply loving one another, food anarchy encompasses a broad range of revolutionary reclamations of the right to define the agri-food system. The abolition of carceral society is but one pillar of useful State-critical learning for agroecologists, as prisons and police of various kinds permeate all aspects of the governed world-agroecology. This article advances a deeper understanding of this permeation, and what it means for the food sovereignty movement.

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