




Towards a Dignified Food Security?

Discourses of Dignity, Development and
Culture in New York City and Bogotá

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*This thesis is submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy.*



Abbreviated Dissertation Summary

In light of a severe, changing and globally implicative New Food Equation marked perhaps above all else by the dynamics of a new, bimodal food insecurity and the simultaneous rising importance of cities, new approaches to address food security at urban scales suggest promise. But as such efforts are relatively *new*, the discourses and activities of urban actors are understood to only a limited extent. Moreover, while attention to food security *per se* is robust and growing, attention to the discursive and narrative dimensions that ultimately construct both the real nutritional achievements and the real experiential implications of such policy is not. In this research, I apply analytical methods informed by the interpretive, critical and ethnographic traditions to understand (some of) the cultural, ideological and philosophical particularities of these new dynamics and contexts, examining the cases of two large cities in the North and South, New York City and Bogotá. Tandem to the empirical work, I explore the philosophical tenets that ground food security efforts in the two studied cities and more generally, and I finally settle upon the purposefully normative appeal for motion towards a new concept: *dignified food security*.

Contents

Abbreviated Dissertation Summary	iv
Contents	v
Executive Summary	ix
The PUREFOOD Programme	xiv
Author's preface	xv
Acknowledgements.....	xvii
 <u>Chapter 1.....</u>	 <u>1</u>
 Introduction: A new food insecurity	 1
Introduction	2
The context: A global portrait of crisis, cities, and food.....	3
Research questions	8
The case studies	9
<i>New York City</i>	9
<i>Bogotá</i>	12
Social and theoretical relevance.....	21
The remainder of this study	25
 <u>Chapter 2.....</u>	 <u>27</u>
 Methodological considerations	 27
Opening remarks: The research philosophy.....	28
<i>The interpretivist tradition</i>	31
<i>Critical realism</i>	32
Research design.....	33
<i>Global methodology: The case study</i>	33
<i>Data access methods</i>	36
Fieldwork: NYC.....	39
Fieldwork: Bogotá	40
<i>Analytical methods</i>	42
Interpretive methods	42
Discourse analysis.....	43
Anthropology, ethnography and analysis-through-writing	45
<i>On rigor and quality</i>	48
Ethics.....	50
Summary: The <i>how</i> of this research	50
 <u>Chapter 3.....</u>	 <u>53</u>
 Food security: A grand challenge	 53
Introduction	54
Food security: A contemporary 'grand challenge'	54
Generalized thematic shifts.....	58
<i>From production-side to consumption-side: The shift to 'access'</i>	59
<i>From quantity to quantity and quality</i>	61

<i>From poor-country to all-country</i>	64
<i>From rural to rural and urban</i>	65
Summary: Bases for understanding food security	66

Chapter 4..... 68

The contested discourse space	68
The food security discourse space: Defined by disagreement.....	69
Prominent discourses: General frameworks for understanding food security	71
<i>Productivist (or neo-productivist) framework</i>	72
<i>'Place-based' or context-dependent framework</i>	74
<i>Right To Food (RTF) framework</i>	74
<i>Livelihoods and food security framework</i>	80
<i>Food and Nutrition Security (FNS) framework</i>	81
The omnipresent pillars: A survey of visual food security representations.....	83
Summary: The current food security discourse space	91

Chapter 5..... 93

Perspectives on development	93
The development literature: An introduction.....	94
Conventional, capitalist, neoliberal or modernization development perspectives	95
Common alternative visions	98
Radical critique and the postdevelopment perspective	100
Special place of hunger, nutrition and food security in development	106
Summary: The variable ideation of development	109

Chapter 6..... 110

The discourse package of food security	110
Introduction	111
The 'discourse package' of food security.....	112
The analysis.....	113
Looking ahead	114

Chapter 7..... 117

The capitalist development discourse	117
The capitalist development discourse and its dominance in NYC.....	118
<i>Credence in the market</i>	122
<i>The food system as economic generator</i>	127
<i>Faith in technology, science and expert knowledge</i>	131
Summary: Capitalist ideology's firm hold on NYC.....	135

Chapter 8..... 138

The human development discourse	138
Introduction	139
The express human priority	140

Preferentiality or prioritarianism	144
Dignity	146
Summary: The permeation of human development discourse in Bogotá.....	157

Chapter 9..... 158

Development and human rights158

Introduction: The transformative power of rights	159
Human rights in Bogotá: The big picture	159
The right to food.....	162
Agency, participation, democracy and empowerment.....	169
Summary: Visions of the right to food	172

Chapter 10..... 174

Two developments at once?174

The co-existence of development discourses in Bogotá.....	175
Ambiguity of the discursive co-existence.....	180
An example of ambiguity: The PMA.....	184
Summary: Negotiating <i>development</i>	188

Chapter 11..... 190

Culture and food security: An introduction190

Introduction	191
Culture and food security	191
Food culture or <i>foodways</i>	195
The bogotano particularity.....	197
Summary: Culturally particular food securities, Part I	208

Chapter 12..... 209

A culture of anomies209

New York City and the obstinacy of anomie	210
Reconnecting and reeducating	215
Rewarding 'good behaviour'	217
Summary: Culturally particular food securities, Part II	219

Chapter 13..... 220

The cultural construction of food policy220

Food-health narratives: Culture's glaring incursion into policy	221
Beyond food itself: Culture that 'goes all the way down'	226
Summary: Framing the cultural dimension of food security	228

Chapter 14	229
Towards dignified food security?	229
A renewed invitation to philosophy and normativity	232
Human rights and dignity: Sublime substance, controversial arguments	233
<i>A focus on human dignity</i>	237
<i>Dignity and the Catholic intellectual tradition</i>	241
Dignified food security	243
<i>Making dignity real</i>	245
<i>The agentic priority</i>	248
<i>Articulating a new vision of food security</i>	249
Summary: A new construct for food security	251
Chapter 15	252
Final thoughts	252
Introduction	253
Limitations of this project	254
Value of this project and recommendations for ulterior research	255
References	259

Appendices

Appendix A

Glossary of terms 283

Appendix B

Principle data sources 286

Appendix C

Photos 289

Appendix D

Publications 303

*Convergence in Diversity: New York City school food
and the future of the food movement304*

*At the crossroads: new paradigms of food security,
public health nutrition and school food ...322*

Appendix E

Project funding 339

Executive Summary

Towards a Dignified Food Security?

Discourses of Dignity, Development and Culture in New York City and Bogotá

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Key words

Food and nutrition security, development, postdevelopment, discourse, urban food systems, human rights, human dignity, anthropology of food

Abstract

In light of a severe, changing and globally implicative New Food Equation, marked perhaps above all else by the dynamics of a new, bimodal food insecurity and the simultaneous rising importance of cities, new approaches to address food security at urban scales suggest promise. But as such efforts are relatively *new*, the discourses and activities of urban actors are understood to only a limited extent. Moreover, while attention to food security *per se* is robust and growing, attention to the discursive and narrative dimensions that ultimately construct both the real nutritional achievements and the real experiential implications of such policy is not. In this research, I apply analytical methods informed by the interpretive, critical and ethnographic traditions to understand (some of) the cultural, ideological and philosophical particularities of these new dynamics and contexts, examining the cases of two large cities in the North and South, New York City and Bogotá. Tandem to the empirical work, I explore the philosophical tenets that ground food security efforts in the two studied cities and more generally, and I finally settle upon the purposefully normative appeal for motion towards a new concept: *dignified food security*.

Funding

This work was done in partial fulfilment of the requirements of a Doctor of Philosophy (Ph.D.) at Cardiff University. The author was a member of the PUREFOOD programme, a Marie Curie Initial Training Network that connected partners at seven universities in an effort to train early-stage researchers in the socioeconomic and sociospatial dynamics of the peri-urban and regional foodscape. It ran from 2010 to 2014 and was funded by the European Commission's Seventh Framework PEOPLE program (Grant Agreement Number 264719).

Supervisors

1st Supervisor: Dr. Kevin Morgan, Cardiff University

2nd Supervisor: Dr. Alison Brown, Cardiff University

3rd Supervisor: Dr. Juliet Kiguli, Makerere University and PUREFOOD partner

PUREFOOD Coordinator: Dr. Han Wiskerke, Wageningen University

Thesis synopsis

Research objective

The overall objective of this research is to understand how narratives of ‘food security’ are constructed in two contemporary cities in the midst of a new and changing global food-and-health context.

Research questions

1. How do the particular development ideologies that predominate in New York City and Bogotá affect each context’s food security discourses?
2. How do the particular cultures that predominate in New York City and Bogotá affect each context’s food security discourses?
3. In what ways can comparison and contrast between – and joint reflection on – the two case studies of New York City and Bogotá illuminate new opportunities for the construction of food security discourse in bases of development ideology and culture?

Research methodology

In attending to the ways in which governments and stakeholders construct food security, this research draws its methodological inspirations from interpretivist, critical realist and ethnographic traditions to understand and frame the food security discourses in New York City and Bogotá as particular constructions. It uses documentary analysis, semi-structured interviews and participant observation as data access methods, and critical discourse analysis and analysis-through-writing as primary analytical ones. Two of the project’s particular methodological aspects leave distinguishing marks: the participation demanded of the researcher – me – in the research process; and an unrelenting insistence on my own reflexivity in that effort.

Content Summary

Chapter 1

Introduction: A new food Insecurity

In this chapter, I introduce the New Food Insecurity context from which this research derives; present the research questions; introduce the case studies selected, New York City and Bogotá; discuss the social and theoretical relevance of this research; and preview the remainder of the dissertation.

Chapter 2

Methodological considerations

In this chapter, I frame the philosophical underpinnings and methodological structuration of this research, describing the general research paradigm, ontology and epistemology that ground the study; the interpretivist, critical realist and ethnographic traditions from which it draws important philosophical and methodological inspiration; the data access methods (documentary analysis, semi-structured interviews and participant observation) and analysis methods (critical discourse analysis and analysis-through-writing) that it employs; and the ethical considerations that it stimulates.

Chapter 3

Food security: A grand challenge. A review of the literature, Part I

With the onset of a 'New Food Equation', food security is one of today's 'grand challenges'. Policymakers and researchers agree that assuring food security is imperative and urgent, and in recent years both communities have dedicated to its address heightened attention, research, and resources. But what food security is – and all the more so, what should be done to assure it – remains tenuous ground. The discourses used to characterize the nature of the challenge and justify the approaches employed to meet it are many, diverse, dynamic and evolving; they are also extremely conflicted and contested, and the specificities with which these conflicts are borne and resolved wield major implications for policy choices and the human wellbeing outcomes that result from them. In this chapter, I depict the varying discursive heritage of food security, reviewing the literature and theory issued from several – sometimes divergent – perspectives. I review how food security is emerging as a very contemporary 'grand challenge'; show how the nature of this challenge is both extremely contested and decidedly new; and discuss the generalized thematic shifts that have occurred in the discourse on food security during the past half-century.

Chapter 4

The contested discourse space. A review of the literature, Part II

Following an overview of food security's conceptual evolution in the last chapter, I continue, in this chapter, to elucidate the actual food security discourse space. Perhaps most notable among its characteristics is that this is a contested space, disputed among scholars, practitioners and policymakers with varying perspectives; indeed, this disharmony is what frames the necessity and currency of discursive research studies such as this one. In this chapter, I review the dissonance and dissension in contemporary food security theorization.

Chapter 5

Perspectives on development. A review of the literature, Part III

In this chapter, I review several important perspectives from the development literature that carry particular relevance in this study of food security, including the conventional family of development philosophies, characterized variably as capitalist, neoliberal or modernization approaches; and several alternative visions, including sustainable development, the capabilities approach the rights-based approach, and the radical critique to conventional conceptualizations – including the variant most important to this study, the postdevelopment perspective.

Chapter 6

The discourse package of food security: An introduction to the analysis

In this chapter, I propose the theoretical framework that grounds this project's analysis and situates its findings in response to the originating research questions, suggesting that two chief contextual realities underlie the food security discourses in New York City and Bogotá: the culture of the contexts, and the development discourses that are embraced within them. In the two cases, the cultures and the dominant development discourses are very different, and likewise their resulting food security discourses. In this chapter, I suggest the fundamental, definitional roles that these two factors perform in creating the cities' food security realities and offer some conceptual provisions in preparation for the close examination of the New York City and Bogotá research findings that follow. In Chapters 7 through 10, I proceed to address Research Question 1, considering how the cities' development ideologies shape their food security discourses; and in Chapters 11 through 13, I address Research Question 2, considering how the cities' cultures do so.

Chapter 7

The capitalist development discourse. New York City and the priority of the economy

This chapter begins a response to Research Question 1, examining the relationship between food security discourses and development ideologies. Here, I consider the capitalist development discourse, drawing mainly on the case study of New York City, where – indeed – this discourse makes an impressive mark. First, I illustrate the dominance of the capitalist development discourse (with particular attention, of course, to its precipitation in the food security discourse), exposing its general and generalized manifestation throughout the city's public and extra-public communications and practices. Next I probe three aspects of the capitalist discourse that emerge with particular salience: a supreme faith in market mechanisms as solutions to food system problems; leverage of the food system as an economic generator meant to favour consequent food security; and the recurrence to technology, science and expert knowledge as keys to food system progress.

Chapter 8

The human development discourse. Bogotá and the priority of the person

In this chapter, the research continues its response to Research Question 1, examining the close relationship between the development discourse and the food security discourse. Here, I examine the human development discourse, drawing mainly on the case study of Bogotá, where the perspective expressly dominates food security efforts (and most social programming). I illustrate the dominance of the human development discourse in Bogotá and discuss how two of its central aspects, preferentiality (or prioritarianism) and dignity, manifest importantly.

Chapter 9

Development and human rights. The right to food

In this chapter, the research continues to address Research Question 1, examining the close relationship between the development and food security discourses. Here I emphasize how a core element of the human development paradigm, human rights, is precipitated in social practice. The chapter focuses on Bogotá, where human rights themes are express, profuse, and robustly endorsed; it describes the tangible food security product of this focus in the city's discursive embrace of the Right to Food, and the imperative that this framing creates for food security practices that honour principles of participation, democracy and empowerment. Examples taken from New York City provide relief-giving salience.

Chapter 10

Two developments at once? Skirmishes for discursive domination

In this chapter, I conclude the examination of Research Question 1, and its emphasis on the discursive liaison between the development and food security paradigms, by showing how Bogotá's discursive landscape, differently from New York's, is ambiguously governed: while the human development discourse is well pronounced and widely celebrated, a legacy of capitalist practice often continues in its realized dominance of food security questions.

Chapter 11

Culture and food security: An introduction. The bogotano particularity

In the next three chapters, the research responds to Research Question 2 by exploring the intercourse between culture and food security and illuminating how the specific cultural landscapes that construe different contexts play a foundational, inescapable and omnipresent role in determining the material and constructed natures of food security within them. Here, I

broach the extent of culture's importance for food security and explore several of the cultural particularities that manifest in – and help to create – Bogotá's discourse.

Chapter 12

A culture of anomies: The New York particularity

In this chapter, the research continues to address Research Question 2 by examining a selection of the particularities that characterize New York City's food culture – which, contrary to the claims of some critics, is not only extant but verily definitive, at least in terms of food security. In a much more pronounced way than Bogotá's, New York's dominant foodways are recognized formally in the government's food policies, and the express treatments given to cultural features in the city's food security programming are ones that reinforce also the tight connections between culture and the development discourse.

Chapter 13

The cultural construction of food policy

In this chapter, the research closes its address of Research Question 2 by exploring one particular component of foodways, food-health narratives, that well illustrates the cultural specificity to which food security discourse is subject. Indeed, the question What is healthy? interests not only dieters but also – critically – planners, and it interests also scholars for the commentary that its response offers upon the culturally embedded particularity of food security discourse. I close the chapter with a brief observation on some of the other – myriad – ways that culture and food security likewise intersect.

Chapter 14

Towards dignified food security? Conclusions and reflections*

This research has revealed many glimpses of how actors in New York City and Bogotá construct food security, and I have concentrated the analysis on the ways that these build on and intercourse with social and political discourses that derive from development ideology and culture. This chapter builds upon the findings of the previous seven chapters to address Research Question 3, engaging an intently reflexive lens to enrich the empirical analyses undertaken thus far and proposing a new construct with which we might understand food security. I first argue that the integration of philosophy and normativity with the study of food security (and matters of policy generally) proves not simply to be instrumentally advantageous but rather essential to the social relevance of such matters; and I discuss the philosophical questions underlying the concepts of human rights and dignity. Finally I propose a new concept that might help communities to achieve – that is, to construct – more relevant and ultimately more 'successful' food security discourses: dignified food security.

Chapter 15

Final thoughts

At the close of this research project, I reflect upon the course and worth of its evolution, its limitations, and its particular contributions. In doing so, I invite future researchers to assume the effort to think more expansively and critically about food security work and to pursue the means to make it ever more dignified.

The PUREFOOD Programme

This research developed within the PUREFOOD programme, a Marie Curie Initial Training Network designed to train early-stage researchers in the socioeconomic and sociospatial dynamics of the periurban landscape; to link food system scholars, practitioners and government actors into relational communities of practice; and to enlarge the bodies of empirical data and theoretical work on sustainable food systems in the context of a changed and changing food geography. The situation of *this* research in the PUREFOOD programme is clear in its choice of spatial scale (cities); its widely visioned appreciation of food system governance and practice; and its diversely inclusive disciplinary and methodological approaches.

This research is heavily indebted, in both intellectual and practical senses, to the joint PUREFOOD effort and to the many, diverse contributions of its individual members. It also makes particular contributions *to* the broader PUREFOOD project in its insistence on the importance of development ideology and culture as foundational discursive determinants of food security – and food system function generally – and urging ideational foci where practical ones often dominate. While other projects in the PUREFOOD effort focused – very productively – on more immediately tangible questions related to short-food supply chains, public procurement and urban food strategies, this project cast light on the discursive constructs that stand as underlying fundamentals *to* all such practices.

Author's preface

Welcome.

Like my approach to this entire project, my intent in the writing of this text is to be reflexive and discursive: indeed, in the philosophy I adopt here, the *writing of the research is* part of the research, and I celebrate the possibilities that this creates. I expect that my writing style is – in the order of dissertations, in any case – unconventional. I am active, as much a participant in this research as informants are, and discursive not only with the ‘data’ but also – and importantly – with you, the reader.

I invite you to journey in this project along with me, and I hope you will accept: *you are very welcome.*

Several notes on style are worth registering at the start: my writing is very much *mine*, and its particularity reflects several important positions (that also reveal themselves in the research content itself). You might revel in this personality or guard against it, according to your prospect, but my textual presence in this project is unavoidable. A few early explanations might help to frame my stylistic choices.

I use an active, first-person narration in the best way that I can. My perspective is that, while some things simply *happen* – yes, *it rains*¹ – many more things happen *because someone or something causes them to happen*. I am keen to capture that causality – that power, that agency – here. Indeed, in the analysis, I myself seize the power to act – *I observe, I analyze, I reflect* – and you will see my presence not only in the content of this work but in the text itself.

Throughout this writing, I mostly implicate and responsabilize myself, where *I* must assume the bulk of accountability for the observing or reflecting; but I implicate also *you*, since *we* – the collective, social *we* – are ultimately coambulant, conversant intellectual wayfarers. There is, of course, quite some overlapping space in attributing pronouns: sometimes, for example, it will be the case that what I imagine to be our common literary heritage is not actually shared, and it really ought to be *I* charged with the interpreting; likewise, you may be more invested in ‘my’ analyses than I acknowledge in a solitary *I*. Remove and insert yourself as you fit: take this simply as a convenient framing note. In any case, the first-person perspective in this text is essential: just as things, for the most part, do not simply *happen*, things do not simply *get thought*. People think them: *I* think them; *we* think them.

Inasmuch as this *is*, finally, an openly discursive text, I have left a trail of additional material that might interest (or pique) one reader or another. I address at length the several themes that I have extracted as the foci of this analysis: development ideology, culture, dignity and food security. But many more matters arose during the research that I could not treat here but that *do* deserve (much) further consideration. Indeed, I hope that some researchers will find these unpursued matters as engaging as I do and take them up for deeper treatment. I have

¹ Of course, it might be that the *sky pours forth water*, and that this, in turn, happens *because* God or Tlaloc or Zeus or some other deity commands it, and that this happens *as a result of* the priest's prayer, and so on. But I am content here to permit doubt regarding these latter matters creep into the phrase at hand and rely on the conventional construction of this sentence. *It rains.*

endeavoured to flag such issues, at least as they appear interesting to me, and to include references to key sources that interested researchers might turn to as a starting point for fuller inquiry.

Hence I arrive at what is surely the most characteristic aspect of my style, footnotes: I use them lavishly. I have appreciated the way that several authors – Patel, Steele, and Sachs, most notably to me – have used footnotes, adding them not only to make immediately imaginable elaborations but also to explore original ideas and transdisciplinary connections, engage in normative reflection, and, especially with Steele, confer upon the text what can only be described as a convivial commentary. I write here with my own style, to be sure, but my extensive, multiply purposed use of footnotes owes much to these authors' examples. The footnotes may be where I have enjoyed this project most, where I have availed most plentifully in the privilege of intercouring with the content and with the reader. In any case, the text can be read without ever consuming a footnote, and indeed I invite casual readers to do just that: the essence of the work, I hope, is carried in its body text. Readers with either great interest in the themes I address or curiosity regarding the ulterior connections that I find in them, on the other hand, are very welcome to linger in the footnotes' expanse.

Finally, at a less interesting but technical level, I have made several formatting choices that I hope will make this text more serviceable to the reader. I use British spelling, but the most American-accordant variant of it; I have divided the text into short, coherent slices – more book-like than dissertation-like, in the end – hoping that this will make for a more approachable (and ingestible) read; and I have used a modified Chicago 15th B referencing style, modified so as to leave more relevant bibliographic information to the interested reader (such as, for example, website addresses) and remove meaningless additives that lent nothing of substance to the entry.

As I finish the initial part of this project, then, I repeat my invitation to accompany me on the remainder of it: the intellectual journey that we, writer and reader, marry to commence here. *You are most welcome*, and I thank you in advance for the gifts of your company: your comments and sequelae will be this project's continuation.

- Leah M. Ashe, 2015

Acknowledgements

The number of people who touched this project, and touched me through it – or who touched *me*, and through me touched the project – is very large. *Thank you all, and thank you sincerely.*

As I review this project at its completion, I see a long trail of people who have intervened here and there, with a story, a coffee, a truly seminal conversation, a help with the copier, or a place to live; it's through these people that the project took its final shape. *Thank you all, and thank you sincerely.*

Despite the pleasure I take in language, I fail utterly – and I will continue to fail utterly – to express well the affective dimension generally, and especially the deep obligation that I feel to all who have been companions on the trail. Thus my acknowledgements here are necessarily inadequate. To all those who have touched this project, and to all those who have touched me, *thank you, and thank you sincerely.*

I am grateful also for the institutions that have given me opportunities I never could have imagined: PUREFOOD, Cardiff University, the Rotary Foundation, the Università di Bologna and the University of Notre Dame – and the people who have made them great.

I must at least recognize – *name* – several people whose impact on this project has been impactful (whether they know it or not). Lani Trenouth, Leo Dvortsin, Gina Villarreal and Arthur Getz. Meena Fernandes and Tiina Honkanen. Margaret Pasquini and José Eslava. Thomas Forster and Jan Poppendieck. Susan Smith, Alison Brown, Matt Leismeier and Andrew Edwards. Davide Domenici, Antonella Campanini, Massimo Montanari and Xavier Medina. Diana Riboli, Thanasis Vitiniotis, Eleonora Tobar, Laura DiSarno, Angela Likoudis, Despoina Stamatopoulou, Silke Pietzsch, Elena Fierli, Elisa Dani, Jenny Petoumenou and Iren Akishina.

And, in an even more fundamental way, I must recognize the handful of people who have truly *made* me, as a doer and as a thinker: Paul Carney, Steve Batill, Martin Stone and Matthew Potts at Notre Dame, and Kevin Morgan at Cardiff. And, of course, Dad.

Thank you all, and thank you sincerely.

To Paul Carney and Kevin Morgan, two mentors who each became much more.

Destitution, or imposed poverty, undoubtedly hurts, degrades and drives people into desperation. In many places, hunger and misery cry out to heaven. Indeed, few development concepts find their proof in such a glaring reality. Yet poverty is also a myth, a construct and the invention of a particular civilization. There may be as many poor and as many perceptions of poverty as there are human beings.

- Rahnema (2010, 174)

The right to food can only be ensured if we care about the actual subject, that is, the person who suffers ... Interest in the production, availability and accessibility of foodstuffs, climate change and agricultural trade should certainly inspire rules and technical measures, but the first concern must be the individual as a whole.

- Francis (2014, 1-3)

Chapter 1

Introduction: A *new* food insecurity

*The old ways have been smashed, the new ways are not viable.
(Sachs 2010, xviii)*

Abstract

In this chapter, I introduce the New Food Insecurity context from which this research derives; present the research questions; introduce the case studies selected, New York City and Bogotá; discuss the social and theoretical relevance of this research; and preview the remainder of the dissertation.

Introduction

Perhaps the most prominent theme in the recent agri-food literature is that of sustainability. But, as Anderson (2008) rightly observes, ‘sustainability per se is an empty goal ... unless *what* will be sustained and *for whom* are specified’ (593). In light of major contemporary dynamics that have thrust issues of global environmental change (GEC), radical social inequality and widespread political instability to the forefront, what might serve as the strongest response to Anderson’s challenge is that – at least first and foremost – *food and nutrition security* is what must be sustained (and, more to the point, first established) for *everyone*.

And indeed, food security has emerged as a rapidly rising concern in both policy and academic arenas. But though it might seem to represent an unambivalent, transparent premise – no one is *against* food security – it is in fact everything but. On the contrary, food security is (like sustainability) a hotly contested concept, and each distinct framing carries with it dramatically different prognostic, diagnostic and motivational contents which determine its translation into policy and action (cf. Mooney and Hunt 2009). Very roughly, and sufficient as a starting point here, *food and nutrition security*, as I use the term in this text, refers to a situation in which all people, at all times, have sufficient, safe, and nutritious food *available* and *effectively accessible* to them, and about which they are able to express some degree of *cultural or individual preference*.

Until recently, efforts to address and assure food security – however defined – were executed primarily at the scale of national and international policy. With the dawn of a ‘New Food Equation’ (NFE), however, *cities* have risen to the fore as important food systems loci, and municipal bodies have emerged as key actors in food policy generally and in food security policy specifically (Morgan and Sonnino 2010). It is worth remarking briefly on the historical particularity and characteristic circumstance of this new context.

Morgan and Sonnino (2010) name the current confluence of several severe (and severely negative) global food system-impacting circumstances as the ‘New Food Equation’ (NFE). Specifically, they identify five ‘disquieting trends’ whose interplay defines the new terrain: the 2007-2008 food price surge and consequent increase in levels of hunger and malnutrition; an increase in food insecurity; the implications of food security upon national security; the (increasing and negative) effects of climate change on agri-food systems worldwide; and the heightening tenor of land conflicts (209-210). There are, of course, numerous further aspects – some addressed more completely by other authors referenced in this text – and in my use of the

phrase ‘New Food Equation’, I intend to include the totality of these. For our purposes, it is sufficient to recognize the NFE as new, multi-faceted, widely implicative and severe in consequence.

In the midst of this New Food Equation, then, both the immediate impact and influential reach of large ‘world cities’ and iconic ‘model cities’ are massive: New York City’s policies, for example, affect at the very least the city’s own *eight million* residents – more than the populations of Ireland and Palestine combined, for example –, and the city’s celebrity status gives it voice and trickle-out power that penetrate the policy of many other cities in the United States and throughout the world.² However, the many aspects of novelty and dynamism inherent to this situation – and their implications upon the already contested discourses – have created a phenomenon that, while of extreme topical, practical and theoretical importance, maintains important thematic lacunae within the academe and intensifying but substantively immature efforts in practice.

This research hopes to fill, in a small and particular way, the extant lacuna by examining the food security discourses in two major cities selected from across the North-South divide, New York City (NYC) and Bogotá. Specifically, it presents research findings that have made clear two particular aspects of the food security discourse that, while often unacknowledged (or undetected altogether), in fact determine the fundamental character of food security policy and practice: a society’s dominant ideological perspectives on development and its prevailing culture. A comparative treatment of these aspects’ characters in each of the two cases brings relief to each experience and begins to explore the opportunities for comparability, contrast and learning across the North-South divide.

The context: A global portrait of crisis, cities, and food

Examining the global food scenario affords a distressing view of the opportunities with which people worldwide have to *be well*³. The essentiality and multifunctionality of food mean that the

² For example, past NYC Mayor Michael Bloomberg chaired the C40 Cities Climate Leadership Group, a network of 63 of the world’s cities (‘megacities, innovator cities, and observer cities’) united in the effort to promote sustainability generally. Similarly, in 2013, the city’s school system, the largest in the nation, united with the five next-largest school systems (Los Angeles, Chicago, Dallas, Miami, and Orlando) in an Urban School Food Alliance that collectively serves over 2.9 million meals daily to leverage collective buying power in order to fashion healthful and sustainable market changes. Bloomberg himself, following his retreat from the mayoral role, was appointed in 2014 by UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon as UN Special Envoy for Cities and Climate Change, a position in which he aspires to leverage the municipal leadership experience of NYC to the benefit of other cities and nations working to address climate change.

³ Many scholars and activists describe these (and similar) measures as markers of ‘human development’ and ‘progress’, and I defer to their language where it is necessary. However, such terms are, in my view,

ubiquitous assurance of food security – and here I choose to very broadly understand what has become a highly contested concept (Mooney and Hunt 2009) to include, as Lang (2010) does, *all* aspects of diet-related health (95) – and the integrity of the food systems that sustain it are at the very core of human wellbeing. Indeed, food is *not* simply another commodity, but rather something ‘intrinsically significant to human functioning’ (Morgan 2009, 342) that is fundamentally and exponentially more valuable. Despite this centrality, however, the assurances one might hope for are largely absent, and the operating food system might (at best) be described as dysfunctional. Even a cursory glance at the statistics reveals a food system fraught with dramatic human inequity and ecological imbalance:

- 842 million people are undernourished (UN 2015);
- 1 billion people are overweight, a further 475 million are obese, and non-communicable diseases now cause ‘more deaths than all other causes combined’ (United Nations General Assembly 2011, 1);
- 2.6 billion people live on less than \$2 per day (UNDP 2010, 96);
- 30% of greenhouse gases emitted globally are attributable to the food system (Foresight 2011, 28); Climate change is considered ‘unequivocal’ and its anthropogenic causes, ‘very likely’; its effects are expected to impact ecological, food, water and health systems and lead to increased incidence of hunger and malnutrition, especially in poor countries and among poor groups within countries (Pachauri and Reisinger 2007).

At the same time, the global population is rapidly urbanizing, and this demographic shift is accompanied by changing dynamics of poverty and wellbeing. The world’s urban population surpassed its non-urban population for the first time in 2008, and more than five billion people are expected to live in cities by 2030. The gap between rich and poor is large and growing in rich and poor countries alike; in the United States there are forty cities, including NYC at the lead, disgraced by Gini coefficients above 0.50 (UN Habitat 2010a, 80; see also Kurtzleben 2011). Furthermore, there are major inequalities in hunger, health, and education, and, of special note, ‘significant differences in food security across socioeconomic groups’ in urban areas (UN Habitat 2010a, 101).

Scholars and analysts observe in this context the dawn of a new era of the global food situation. This new era is variably tagged but commonly portrayed as one of veritable crisis with poor

poor signifiers of the realities to which they point; and, to the extent that they imply a particular understanding of what development and progress (and so on) comprehend, they misdirect our attention and disorient our human sympathies. What I wish to understand – in these figures and more generally – is how well people are able to live in relation to and as a consequence of their ‘food-worlds’. I develop this understanding in the later chapters of this dissertation, but it is important to indicate at the outset that even our collective framing of food security and its component issues often entails problematic assumptions.

tidings for individual and state wellbeing (Morgan and Sonnino 2010; Von Braun 2007; Lang 2010; Johnston 2010; Barling, Sharpe, and Lang 2008). Some grapple with this instability as a question of food regime transition (McMichael 2009; Burch and Lawrence 2009; Friedmann 2005); I rather adopt Morgan and Sonnino's (2010) label of the 'New Food Equation' (NFE), for its forthright assertiveness as much as its descriptive accuracy, to reflect the nature and dynamic of this new context. The fundamental reality underlying this label – and those used by other scholars – should not, however, be underappreciated: the world food scenario, implicating countries rich and poor alike, is in a state of crisis.

Given the contemporaneous phenomenon of global urbanization, 'cities find themselves at the forefront of the NFE' (Morgan and Sonnino 2010; cf. Forster 2011; Maxwell and Slater 2003). Urban areas – especially large, diverse ones – face special challenges to food system sufficiency that rural areas and more homogenous demographics do not. Some of these challenges arise from the fact that the urban poor do not have access to many of the food coping resources that rural populations do and must therefore depend primarily upon the market (in all its unpredictability) for food (e.g., DeMarco, Thorburn, and Kue 2009). Cities also more visibly juxtapose the twin crises of hunger and obesity and, particularly in 'world cities' such as New York and Bogotá⁴, reflect challenges related to the cultural heterogeneity and diversified food needs of their residents (Morgan and Sonnino 2010; Anderson and Cook 1999). As a consequence of this centrality, cities 'are emerging as prominent food chain actors' (Sonnino 2009, 432), and urban food systems have become a matter of recent and growing – but still well insufficient – interest and attention. A range of academic and other literature (e.g., Dixon et al. 2007; Forster 2011; Pothukuchi and Kaufman 2000; Cohen and Garrett 2010) testifies to this emerging prominence, and several cities (including, i.a., Toronto, London and Belo Horizonte) have been lifted as exemplars for various signs of urban food system reform (see, e.g., Blay-Palmer 2009; Reynolds 2009; Rocha and Lessa 2009).

In the midst of this new context, there is likewise a new dynamic of food (in)security. To use the words of Lang (2005), 'the old food policy paradigm is running out of legitimacy ... today's food world is more complex and 'messier' and requires a paradigm shift' (736). Indeed, the new global food scenario is complex, and its specific manifestation in a 'new food insecurity' (Ashe and Sonnino 2013a) make it not only 'messy' but also urgent: a threat to rich and poor countries

⁴ In the A.T. Kearney (2014) *Global Cities Index*, New York City is ranked first, 'as in every previous edition' (3) of the index; Bogotá is ranked at number 52 in the general compendium and listed seventh in the ranking of *Emerging Cities*. The *Global Cities Index* measures the "global engagement" of cities 'across 26 metrics in five dimensions: business activity, human capital, information exchange, cultural experience, and political engagement' (22). Measures include, i.a., the number of headquarters of global corporations; the foreign-born population; the broadband subscriber rate; the diversity of culinary establishments; and the number of major think tanks (14).

alike and a catastrophe comprising problems of food quality and quantity, availability and access, production and consumption. Perhaps the most remarkable feature of this new food insecurity is its bimodality: in brief, its manifestation in two (perhaps superficially paradoxical) modalities: a first, of undernutrition, and a second, of over- and malnutrition, or – to use the words that permeate the more popular addresses of the same theme – of hunger and obesity (Figure 1):



Figure 1: The new bimodal food insecurity (Source: Author)

The most remarkable feature of the new food insecurity is its bimodality: its manifestation in the – perhaps superficially paradoxical – first modality of undernutrition and second of over- and malnutrition, or, to use the words that permeate the more popular addresses of the same theme, of hunger and obesity.

The novelty and dynamism of all the situations framing this context – the NFE, the ‘messiness’ and urgency of a new food insecurity within it, and the generally rising importance of cities – mean that emerging urban-led food security efforts have yet to be well studied, and the particularities of their contexts, discourses and cultures likewise too little probed. There are ranges of literature that have begun to address to the emerging importance of urban food systems more generally (e.g., Dixon et al. 2007; Forster 2011; Pothukuchi and Kaufman 2000); the *measurement* of food security and food access in both rural and urban areas (Sparks, Bania, and Leete 2011; Schafft, Jensen, and Hinrichs 2009; Becquey et al. 2010); and the predominant variations of food security paradigm and discourse (which we discuss in detail in later chapters). But there is little that has examined the impactful intersection between the new food insecurity, the rising urban protagonism and the extremely specific and contingent discursive and cultural character of food security policy and practice: and this is the lacuna that I hope to (begin to) address in the present research.

In this effort, one of the most fundamentally troubling points at hand, and one particularly relevant in the midst of the new and newly prioritized context, is the uncertainty with which we *understand* food security itself: its very conceptualization and framing are highly variable and

contextually dependent, and – importantly – these constructed foundations (and their practical implications) are often overlooked and obfuscated. In other words, *that* food security is of concern is little contested; but *what*, precisely, food security *is*, however, is another matter altogether. Maxwell (1996) counted over 200 definitions of food security in his review; if we include the definitions that have emerged in the intervening years and even *some* of the descendent concepts of food security, the figure will now sum at least into the several of hundreds.

Likely the most oft-cited (and conventional contemporary) definition of food security is that negotiated during the World Food Summit: ‘when all people, at all times, have physical and economic access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food to meet their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life’ (FAO 1996). This is often framed via three food security ‘dimensions’ of food availability, access and utilization; indeed many current models, including those that assume more intentionally systemic and alternative approaches, nonetheless feature as central components what have become these three ‘default’ analytical dimensions. It is important to acknowledge that nearly all models and definitions of food security have come to at least appreciate, if not prioritize, issues of access in addition to more historically privileged issues of production (a fact that becomes extremely relevant in the new food security context of urbanism and bimodality).

Newer and intentionally alternative discourses – particularly relevant in urban contexts where consumers are largely separate from the productive landscape (Yngve et al. 2009; DeMarco, Thorburn, and Kue 2009) – pose thorny but important theoretical questions and create equally important societally practiced outcomes. For example, whether authorities recognize a *right to food* and a *right to health* bears heavily not only upon questions of theory but also upon how a state understands its responsibility to assume measures *addressing* food insecurity. (e.g., Anderson 2008; Marks 2001; Wheeler and Pettit 2005; VeneKlasen et al. 2004; IDS 2003; Piron 2002; De Schutter 2010; Rideout et al. 2007; Haddad and Oshaug 1998) It likewise creates a conceptually potent liaison between food and health: if citizens have not only a right to food but also a right to health, surely they have also a right to the quantity and quality of food *which enables health* (and perhaps also a right to remediation in the case that the quantity and quality of accessible food instead enables only the contrary, as might be argued in the case of the ‘food deserts’ dotting many urban areas in rich countries). In a related but very different vein, more radically divergent discourses such as postdevelopmentalism challenge conventional notions of food security (and their related practices) altogether on charges of colonialist and ethnocentric practice that serve only to debilitate minority actors.

Thus far, however, there has been relatively little query or confrontation of the highly particular food security discourses that are unfolding in the present and very new context of an emerging and globally implicative NFE, the new food insecurity inherent to it, and aggressive municipal-level governance efforts to remediate it. This research attempts fill the gap. It responds to specific calls that earlier research has made for better understanding the mobilization around different food security framings and their various associated sociocultural and power contexts (Mooney and Hunt 2009); for understanding, within the context of the NFE, the new role of urban governance for food system security and sustainability (Morgan and Sonnino 2010); and for performing discursive analyses that elucidate the underlying constructs of dominant societal institutions such as food security (Escobar 1995).

It applies analysis methods informed by the discursive, critical and ethnographic traditions to better understand the particularities of development ideology and culture that shape the food security discourses in NYC and Bogotá; and, at the same time that it explores the specific discourses of the two case cities, it also offers perspective relevant at much larger scales, since peri-urban food systems (and the discourses that govern them) are in many ways microcosms of national and international food systems (and the discourses that govern *them*).

It must be made explicit, too, what this research does *not* address: it does not address the functional effectiveness of NYC or bogotano policy (at least if this is to be measured according to conventional measures such as, e.g., average caloric consumption, weight status, or similar); it does not address the policy-making interactions of specific local, national, and international actors; and it does not address the host of other questions that might be asked about food security policy, policymaking, or efficacy.

What it *does* address is the *construction* of food security *discourse* and the context- and ideology-specific particularity with which this occurs. In accordance with the discursive priority, the thesis is presented in a thematic rather than geographic way.

The project aligns study according to three research questions.

Research questions

1. How do the development ideologies that predominate in New York City and Bogotá affect each context's particular food security discourse?
2. How do the cultures that predominate in New York City and Bogotá affect each context's particular food security discourse?

3. In what ways can comparison and contrast between – and joint reflection on – the two case studies of New York City and Bogotá illuminate new opportunities for the construction of food security discourse in bases of development ideology and culture?

The overall objective of this research is to understand how narratives of ‘food security’ are constructed in two contemporary cities in the midst of a new and changing global food-and-health context.

The case studies

This research examines two cities, New York City (USA) and Bogotá (Colombia) that (each) reflect two central elements of the NFE: each city exposes striking incidence of a fully bimodal new food insecurity; and each city commits considerable municipal effort to confronting it, both by originating innovative food security policy and by annexing the precipitates of larger food movement dynamics. Moreover, the selection of New York and Bogotá from across the (usual) North-South divide draws heightened opportunities for both relief and comparison, and the distinctiveness of food security’s ideation in the two cities creates a fertile territory for capturing the concept’s construction. Practitioners and scholars repeatedly name both cities as leaders in their particular food security approaches and within their geographical frames of reference – but, while New York’s celebrated food system reform activities have drawn ample research attention, Bogotá’s similarly outstanding ones have not. This research joins the two cities, and their tremendously consequential practices of particular food security discourses, under one research lens.

New York City

New York City is perhaps the ‘world city’ *par excellence*. It is a hub of international commerce and politics and a symbol of capitalist power; its 8.4 million residents make it the largest and densest city in the United States; and its cultural diversity is extreme (e.g., 184 languages are spoken by the city’s schoolchildren). But at the same time that New York is an icon of wealth and power, it is also a place rife with poverty and deprivation; the inequity made patent by the food security statistics is compelling:

- 47% of households with children face challenges affording food (Food Bank for New York City 2009);
- 80% of school meals recipients qualify for free or reduced price meals (Kwan, Mancinelli, and Freudenberg 2010, 7);

- 57% of adults are overweight or obese; 21% of elementary schoolchildren are obese, and 18% are overweight (Egger et al. 2009); and black New Yorkers are three times more likely to die from diabetes than white New Yorkers (Karpati et al. 2004);
- 3 million New Yorkers live in areas in high need of access to fresh food retail outlets; in some neighbourhoods, 20 to 25% of people report eating no fruits or vegetables at all on a given day (Brannen 2010, 52);
- 1.6 million New Yorkers received food stamp benefits in 2009 (Waas 2010, 1-2), with only two thirds of those eligible for food stamps participating (Food Bank for New York City 2011, 6); 1.3 million New Yorkers rely on soup kitchens and food pantries (ibid.);
- Nationwide, 25% of households with children living in principal cities were counted by the national statistical service as food insecure (Coleman-Jensen et al. 2011, 13).

In the face of these challenges, New York City has become in many ways the convergence point of a blossoming US food movement that combines citizen and institutional activism with rising political prominence and priority. At the national level, recent policy efforts have promoted numerous high-profile reforms that tackle food-related wellbeing from multiple perspectives, including improvements to the National School Lunch Program's nutritional standards and the promotion of local purchasing schemes in federally funded programmes. First Lady Michelle Obama's choice to pursue the 'Let's Move' campaign against childhood obesity as a focal effort speaks volumes about the increased priority that the (current) Obama administration has given to food and health issues generally. Publicity over impending federal cuts to food stamp benefits and rising awareness of the great social inequality in the United States⁵ have also given rise to the considerable quantity and diversity of media and public-fora attention to issues of hunger, food insecurity, poor food access and the severely low wages of the 'working poor' (a category that comprises many people working within the food chain) (NYCFPC 2013b).

Meanwhile, within New York City, advocates for food system reform have mobilised much support both popularly and politically (Morgan and Sonnino 2010). Politically, the release of

⁵ New York City is the most unequal large city in the United States. Its Gini Index – the most common measure of income inequality, with indices of 0.50 or higher considered as 'high' – of 0.512 (US Census Bureau 2014) indicates its international standing among such cities as Lagos, Buenos Aires and Mexico City that are renowned for their inequity. At a national level, the United States also fares poorly. According to rankings compiled by the CIA, the Gini Index of the United States, 0.45 (CIA 2015) ranks it worse than Iran, Nigeria and Nicaragua (among many others). According to data from the OECD (2015), the United States has a Gini index of 0.41, the fourth highest among member countries. America's gross inequality can also be appreciated in more comprehensible terms: in 2014, 'Wall Street bonuses were double the earnings of all full-time minimum wage workers' in the United States (IPS 2015, 3). Statistics such as these suggest of course suggest another possible framing of the context: *perhaps there is a problem not only of poverty but also one of wealth.*

several significant reports and strategies and Mayor Bloomberg's⁶ aggressive public health policymaking⁷ demonstrate food's emerging status as an issue for municipal policy and action.⁸ The creation of the Mayor's Task Force on Obesity represents both the systemic public health emphasis of the Bloomberg administration and the breadth of the efforts to tackle the food security challenge (or at least one modality of it); the group included (in 2012) members from across the city's departments, including Parks and Recreation, Planning and Sustainability, City Planning, Design and Construction, Human Resources, Health, Buildings, Transportation, Environmental Protection, and Education, as well as the city's food policy coordinator and several auxiliary members. Hunger and obesity are jointly addressed by movement and municipal efforts around school food, urban food deserts, urban agriculture and – again and perhaps most prominently – Bloomberg's aggressive public health policymaking.

The NYC 'food movement' in collectivity has united a wide variety and large number of actors; Freudenberg et al. (2011) characterize it as an '*emerging social movement*' (633) and describe its wide subscription and breadth:

It includes parents who want healthier school food for their children; chefs trying to prepare healthier and more local foods; churchgoers for whom food charity and justice manifest their faith; immigrants trying to sustain familiar, sometimes healthier food practices; food coop members longing for community as well as fresh food; food store workers wanting to earn a living wage while making healthy and affordable food more available; residents of the city's poor neighbourhoods who want better food choices in their communities; staff and volunteers at 1200 food pantries and soup kitchens concerned about food insecurity; health professionals and researchers worried about epidemics of diabetes and obesity and the growing burden of food-related chronic diseases; elected officials; agency staff and policy makers who want to seize

⁶ Note that this research concluded its NYC phase in 2012 (with informational updating but no subsequent fieldwork since). Michael Bloomberg served as NYC mayor from 2002 to 2013 and was one of the most influential to hold that post in recent history, and it is largely the consequences of his mayorship that this research considers. He was succeeded as mayor in 2014 by Bill DeBlasio, and DeBlasio's ensuing food policy actions – in dialogue with those realized by the many others in the policy and activist communities in NYC and nationwide – will determine how NYC's foodscape changes in the coming years. Bloomberg, for his part, followed a short post-mayoral stint dedicated mostly to philanthropy by a 2015 return to run Bloomberg LP, his financial software, data and media company, full-time. As his website framed the transition, it was, for Bloomberg, 'Back to Business' (Bloomberg 2015).

⁷ The Bloomberg-era public health efforts include legislation that banned trans fats use within the city's establishments; required calorie labelling on restaurant menus; introduced 'Green Carts' (mobile fruit and vegetable vendors) to underserved areas; and massively expanded of the city's farmers market system. One failed initiative, an attempt to introduce a size limit to sugar-sweetened beverages sold in the city, was far *too* aggressive for many – earning the mayor the epithet of 'Nanny Bloomberg' – and was ultimately overturned by a court. (See Chapter 7.)

⁸ I.a., Manhattan Borough President Stringer's reports *Food in the Public Interest* (Stringer 2009) and *FoodNYC: A Blueprint for a Sustainable Food System* (Stringer 2010) advocate for the entire food system to be reconsidered and reprioritised on the city's political agenda. The New York City Council released *FoodWorks* (Brannen 2010), a vision for farm-to-fork reform of the city's food system, which was followed several years later with an update (Weiss 2013). None of these documents constitutes a legally binding mandate for action, but each does serve as a 'roadmap' that activists hope will be followed by legislation. Indeed, there are signs of such motion: in July 2011, the City Council approved the first set of binding '*FoodWorks* bills' and substantiated some support for local food purchasing, an improved food metrics system, and urban agriculture (e.g., DeMarco, Thorburn, and Kue 2009). The 2011 version of *PlaNYC* (City of New York 2011), the Mayor's strategic plan, has also (for the first time) included a section on food.

opportunities to improve food; and gardeners and farmers who like to get their hands in the dirt and to eat the food they and their neighbours grow. These disparate individuals and the organizations they influence constitute an amalgam of forces determined to change the city's food environments and food choices. Some are connected to regional, state-wide, national, and international efforts to change food policies (ibid., 625).

Its force is such that Marion Nestle, the grand dame of US food scholarship, called New York City the centre of a growing national movement and the first to generate truly impactful political attention (The New School 2013). During 2013 mayoral elections, for example, all of the major candidates responded to the priority of food by participating in a capacity-audience, worldwide-broadcast forum on future food policy direction, and newly elected mayor Bill DeBlasio initiated his term with 'listening sessions' in which he welcomed community and activist input on food issues. In brief, the convergence of socially driven activism, political engagement, and a newfound interaction between the two combine to make NYC a hotbed of food policy activity, reform and innovation, and central to its concerns are precisely the two faces of the new food insecurity, hunger and obesity.

This massive co-occurrence of local and national action, then, make New York City's food system a locus of attention and activity within which the issue of a bimodal new food insecurity is omnipresent. From our perspective, the convergence of a highly numerous and diverse set of actors and interests, an extremely strong mayorally led public health impetus under Bloomberg, as well as the recentness of most of these efforts, also imply a food security discourse with many different voices; still, certain dominant and pervasive discursive characteristics – as well as some of the more peripheral ones – are possible to distinguish, and I attempt to capture some of them in this study.

Bogotá

South America is the most heavily urbanised region of the world, with 84% of its residents currently living in urban areas and 91% predicted to do so by 2050 (UN Habitat 2010b). Its cities, however, are rife with injustice, and Bogotá is the continent's second-to-most inequitable city; its Gini coefficient of 0.61 reflects not only gross (actual) income inequality but also recent *growth* in inequality, which increased by 24% between 1991 and 2005 (UN Habitat 2008). Many of its 9.5 million residents live in precarious or irregular circumstances, working informal jobs for daily wages and living in informal neighbourhoods with poor infrastructure and services.⁹ For example, 44% of residents in the Bogotá locality of Ciudad Bolívar lack a refrigerator (Quiñones 2007, 7) and people throughout the city (with percentages ranging from 22-33% of residents, depending on neighbourhood) buy much of their food – including staples

⁹ These *informal neighbourhoods* are known in Bogotá as *barrios informales* or *barrios de invasión*, the latter a tag suggestive of the marginalization and exclusion that plague residents of such neighbourhoods.

such as rice and potatoes – on a daily basis (SDDE 2011, 35). The city's overall rate of food insecurity is 28% – an alarmingly high figure, to be sure, but considerably better than the Colombian national rate of 42% – but this rises to surpass 54% in some of the city's poorest localities (Alcaldía Mayor de Bogotá 2012c, 42). Many residents face ongoing challenges to afford sufficient food: 45% of those assessed had lacked sufficient funds for food purchases at some point during the past 30 days, and 16% remain in a state of 'constant crisis' (ibid., 30).

Moreover, the *new* food insecurity is evident in its fully bimodality and – in fact – has shifted to manifest even more prominently in the second modality. Indeed, the problem of 'malnutrition by excess', as it is called in one report (Sierra Nova 2011), is so prominent that Colombia recently passed Law 1355 (República de Colombia 2009), dubbed the 'Anti-Obesity Law', which affirmed health as a public good and an individual right and instituted measures to curb the growing rates of such 'malnutrition'. Statistics from the ENSIN survey¹⁰ (2010) illustrate the picture nationally.

Below, Figure 2(a) illustrates the percentage of children and adolescents (ages 5-17), according to SISBEN income levels¹¹, who are under- and over-nourished¹², demonstrating the widespread incidence of both. For example, in SISBEN 1, the lowest income bracket (indicated by the lightest-coloured and left-most bar), the incidence of stunting is 13.4%, and the incidence of overweight and obesity is 14.3%. Aggregated across income levels (indicated by the darkest-coloured and right-most bar), 10% of children are stunted (with the incidence decreasing from 13.4% to 5.5% with rising income classification) and 17.5% are overweight or obese (with the incidence rising from 14.3% to 22.3% with rising income classification).

Figure 2(b) shows the incidence of overweight and obesity in adults (ages 18-64) according to gender and age group. Overall, some 50% of adults are overweight (with 16.5% obese), with incidence rising among men and among older populations. Figure 2(c) announces (with exclamation) that 'Colombians do not practice a healthy diet!' and reports the percentage of people who eat different categories of food on a daily basis. Among notable shortcomings are the relatively low percentages that eat vegetables (28.1%) and fruits (66.8%) on a daily basis and among notable excesses are those who eat candy (36.6%) and sweetened soft drinks such as soda (22.1%) on a daily basis. Figure 2(d) illustrates the formal manifestation of food security

¹⁰ ENSIN, the *National Survey of Colombia's Nutritional Situation*, is conducted yearly and offers a comprehensive, rigorously collected and well-presented national data set.

¹¹ Incomes are classified according to the SISBEN Scale. SISBEN is the *System for the Selection of Beneficiaries of Social Programmes* and classifies Colombians into income categories from 1 (the poorest) to 6 (the wealthiest).

¹² Here, (chronic) undernutrition is reported by the incidence of *stunting*, insufficient height-for-age; and overnutrition is reported by the incidence of overweight and obesity.

and insecurity according to severity. Only 57.3% of Colombians enjoy a state of food security, while 42.7% do not, 27.9% of these classified as ‘mild’ food insecurity, 11.9% as ‘moderate’, and 3.0% as ‘severe’ (ICBF 2011).

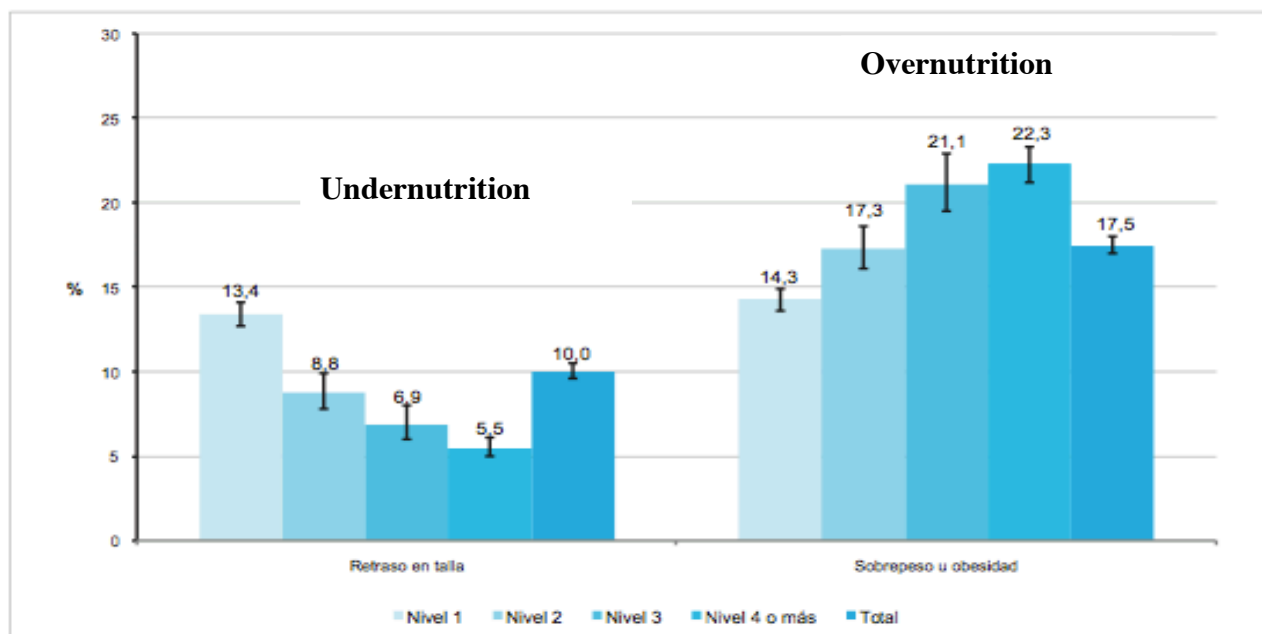


Figure 2 (a): The new bimodal food insecurity: Prevalence of stunting and overweight and obesity in children ages 5 to 17 according to SISBEN level (Source: ICBF 2011, 7)

The incidence of underweight and overweight among Colombian children at all income levels reflects well the bimodal character of the new food insecurity. The left-most collection of bars shows the incidence of stunting (insufficient height-for-age) for income levels 1, 2, 3, 4 and higher, and (in the final bar) in aggregate. The right-most collection of bars shows the incidence of overweight and obesity, again for income levels 1, 2, 3, 4 and higher, and (in the final bar) in aggregate.

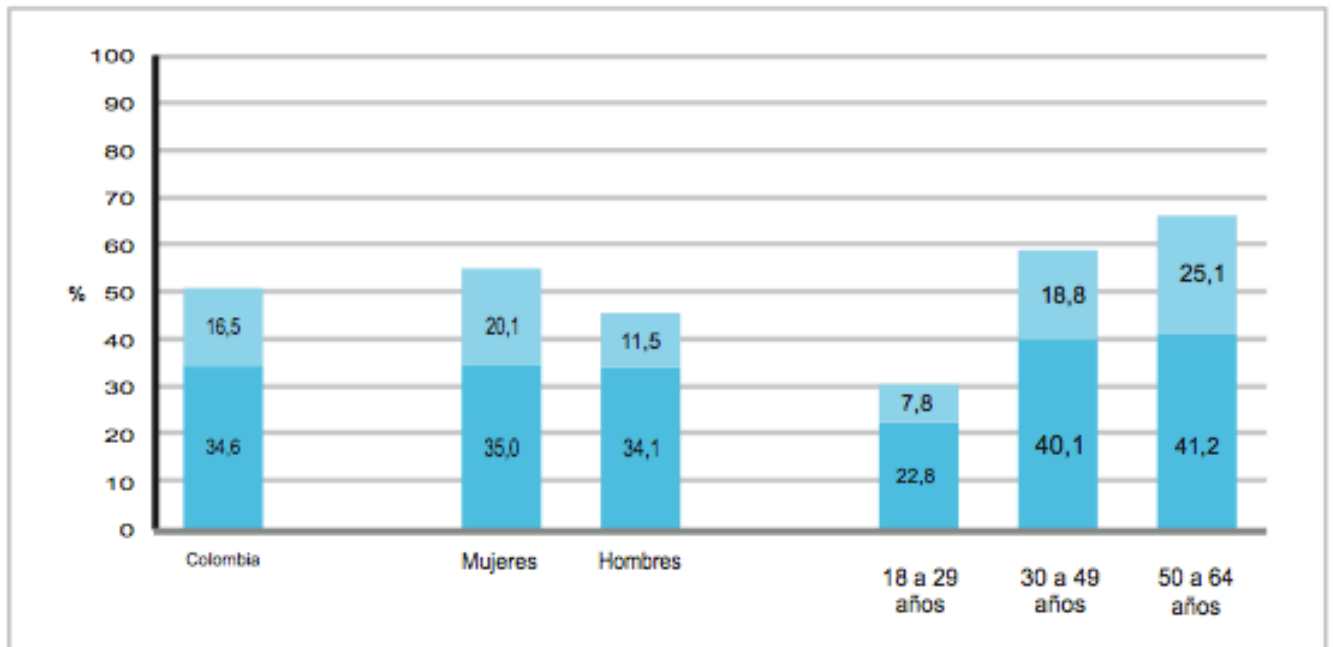


Figure 2 (b): Prevalence of overweight and obesity in Colombian adults ages 18 to 64, according to gender and age group (Source: ICBF 2011, 8)

The overall incidence of overweight and obesity among Colombian adults, shown in the left-most bar, reaches 50% (with 16.5% obese). The next bars show the incidence of overweight and obesity in adult women; adult men; people ages 18-29; people ages 30-49; and people ages 50-64.

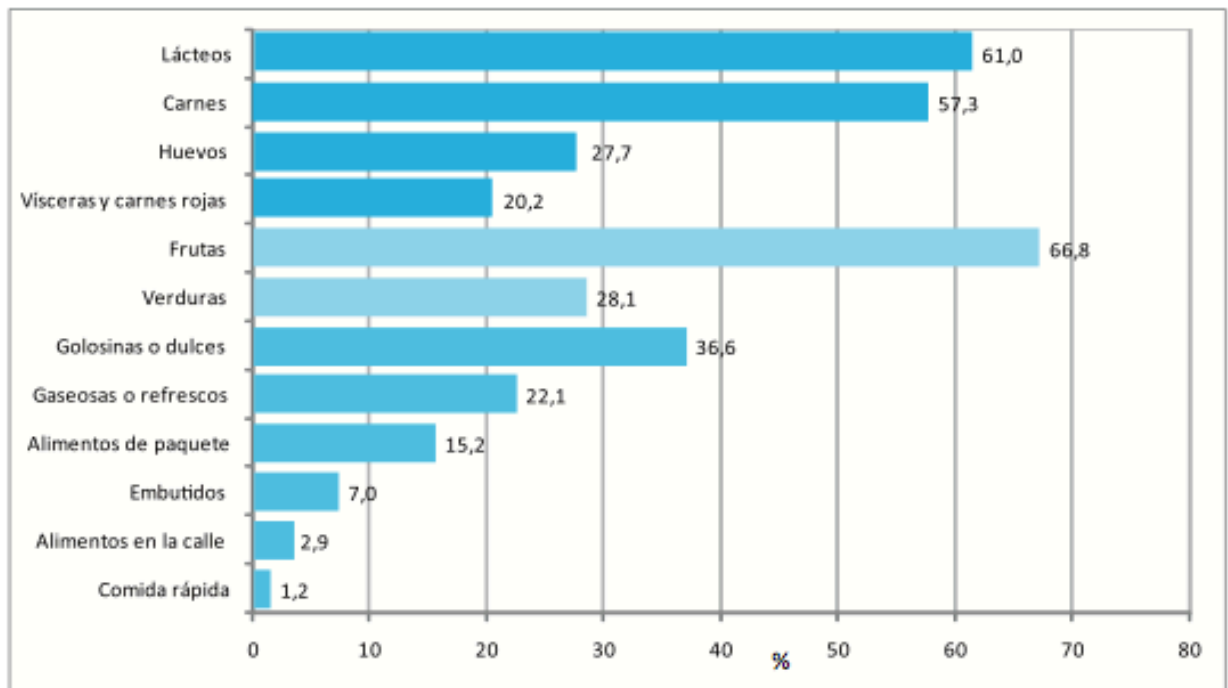


Figure 2 (c): “Colombians do not practice a healthy diet!”: Proportion of Colombians (ages 5 to 64) who consume different food groups daily (Source: ICBF 2011, 14)

As the title of this graphic announces, ‘Colombians do not practice a healthy diet!’ The bars show the percentage of Colombians who consume different foods on a daily (rather than more occasional) basis. Among notable data are the low proportion of Colombians who eat vegetables daily (28.1%) and the significant – and higher – percentage who eat candy daily (36.6%).

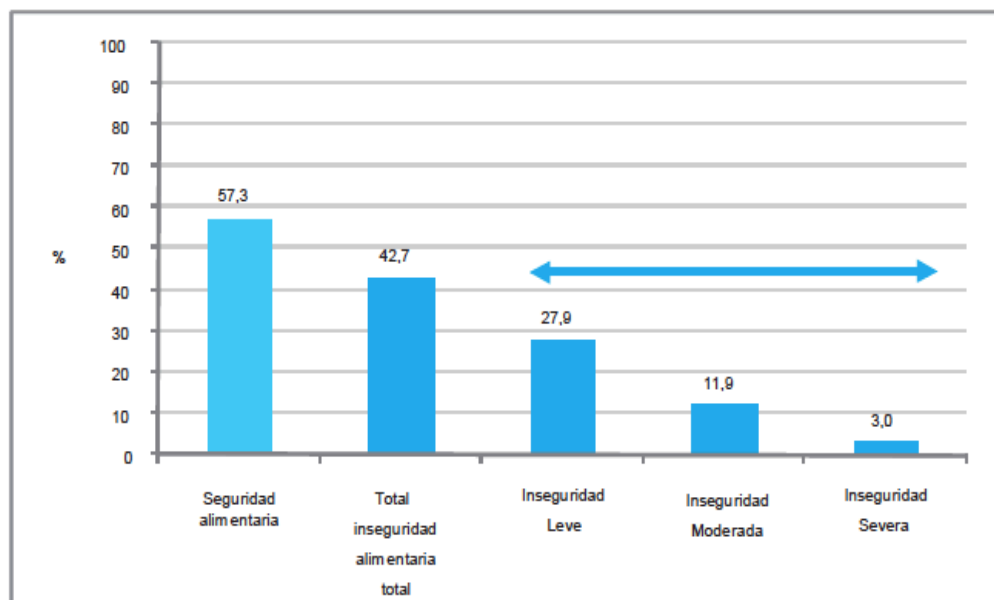


Figure 2 (d): Prevalence of food insecurity in Colombian households (Source: ICBF 2011, 17)

This graphic shows that only 57.3% of Colombians enjoy a state of food security, while 42.7% do not. The last three columns classify food insecurity incidence according to degree, showing the percentage of Colombians who suffer from light, moderate and severe food insecurity.

In the city of Bogotá, the figures and the story are similar: as of the 2010 benchmark, 45.9% of adults were overweight or obese (Secretaría de Salud 2011, 58), and 3.5% have been diagnosed with diabetes (ibid., 59); 45% of the senior population (aged 69 and over) suffer from high blood pressure (ibid., 59); and 14% of adolescents are overweight (while 4% are underweight) (ibid., 21).

In the face of such challenges, however, the city has benefited from politically progressive actions by recent administrations, and its social policies are notable for their extremely strong framing in terms of human rights. Food security policies, for example, rest upon a foundational assertion that all people have a *right to food security* and that the state has the responsibility for ensuring that those rights are met. The initiatives have integrated local policy with national support (including, e.g., funding), and the city has been as an exemplar of insulating progressive reforms from the caprice of political ebb and flow (see also Garzón 2003; ICBF 2007; Ministerio de Educación Nacional 2007).

During the past decade, the bogotano political landscape has prioritized food security as a political and social issue of great importance. While there were important existing motions earlier, food security came to the forefront in 2004 with Mayor Lucho Garzón's radically progressive anti-poverty development plan, *Bogotá Sin Indiferencia*¹³, and its anti-hunger component *Bogotá Sin Hambre*¹⁴; the program introduced and emphasized such major efforts as neighbourhood and school canteens, rural-to-urban connectivity efforts, and reform of the city's market system, all framed under a cornice of rights, justice and dignity.¹⁵ Each of the following mayoral administrations continued with similarly themed and escalating in magnitude food security work.

Meanwhile, several important pieces of legislation helped to institutionalize food security efforts: The PMA, or *Bogotá Food Supply Plan*¹⁶ (Alcaldía Mayor de Bogotá 2008b), supports a reform of the city's market system designed to dramatically improve the city's food supply system so as to 'reduce inefficiencies' and to achieve its titular objective of 'food supply at a

¹³ *Bogotá without Indifference*

¹⁴ *Bogotá without Hunger*

¹⁵ To be sure, Garzón's plan was not the origination of food security work in Bogotá (but rather the weighty accentuation of it). Among the political ancestors to the BSH initiative were plans to promote maternal breastfeeding (1993), a district plan to more formally support breastfeeding (1996), and a city food and nutrition plan (1999).

¹⁶ The PMA (also referred to as the PMAASAB or PMASAB) is the *Plan Maestro de Abastecimiento de Alimentos y Seguridad Alimentaria para Bogotá Distrito Capital* and was passed by Decreto 315 of 15 August 2006 and modified by Decreto 040 of 2008. The full title translates most directly as the *Bogotá Master Plan for the Supply of Food and Food Security*; normally it is translated as the *Bogotá Food Supply Master Plan*.

fair price'. Its executed and planned work emphasize the creation of *agroredes*¹⁷ (agri-networks) and *nutriredes*¹⁸ (nutri-networks) that agglomerate small producers and consumers, respectively, and link them more directly within the food supply chain. It also constructed a publicly owned alternative to the city's wholesale market and created a *Food Supply Observatory* (the *Observatorio de Abastecimiento 'Alimenta Bogotá'*). The city council likewise passed the *Public Policy for Food and Nutrition Security* in 2007¹⁹ (Alcaldía Mayor de Bogotá 2007), which helped to further institutionalize and insulate the city's food security work.

The current Bogotá mayoral administration of Gustavo Petro²⁰ administers the *Plan de Desarrollo Bogotá Humana (PDBH)*²¹, the *Human/e Bogotá Development Plan* (Alcaldía Mayor de Bogotá 2012f, also referred to here as PDBH 2012) serves as the city's roadmap and action plan during Petro's 2012-2016 term. The plan's overarching goals are aligned according to three axes, aiming respectively to reduce social segregation, to respond to and adapt to the onset of climate change, and to protect and defend the 'public sphere'. The first axis, that charged with reducing social segregation, effectively constitutes an anti-poverty and anti-inequality programming plan; it receives the bulk of funding and indeed the bulk of discursive emphasis. The administration's discourse (and the plan's programming arm that puts it into effect) enounces strong commitments to human rights, equity and dignity, and, within this framework, the treatment of food and nutrition security is central. Food security work is governed and executed with extreme multi-sectoriality. It is overseen by CISAN,²² the Intersectoral Committee for Food and Nutrition Security, and the breadth of its membership illustrates the wide-ranging scope of food security work in the city; it includes representation from the Departments of Economic Development, Health, Social Integration, Environment, Education, and Planning, as well as several others, including extra-municipal partnership with a respected university and with several national agencies.

The programming is holistic, with wide-ranging efforts comprising a suite of initiatives including school and community canteens, nutritional supplementation, cooperative food shops,

¹⁷ *Agroredes*, *agri-networks*, are devised in the PMA to consociate small producers, aiming to leverage their collective force, strengthen their economic and technical aptitudes and link them more directly with each other and within the Bogotá food supply chain.

¹⁸ *Nutriredes*, *nutri-networks*, are devised in the PMA to consociate small Bogotá shop owners in an effort to potentiate their role in the city's food system.

¹⁹ This was passed via Decreto 508 of 6 November 2007.

²⁰ This research concluded its bogotano phase in 2012. Subsequently, Petro has been the subject of a scandal-ridden drama that saw him formally dismissed by Colombia's Inspector General following a national recall petition; refuse to step down; receive from the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights an injunction staying his dismissal; removed from office following a suspension by the Colombian president of that same stay; and reinstated as Mayor following an order by the Superior Court of Bogotá (in April 2014).

²¹ The *Plan de Desarrollo Bogotá Humana* is also referred to throughout this text as the PDBH and, where context permits clarity, even more simply as 'the plan'.

²² The Comisión Intersectorial para la Seguridad Alimentaria y Nutricional

family food baskets, food banks, and activities to strengthen local food chains and urban agriculture; as of 2010, the city delivered over 1 million direct food supports (meals and food basket supplies) each day (Alcaldía Mayor de Bogotá 2010, 16). Importantly, these efforts consistently invoke the rights theme and emphasize aspects of community building, inclusivity, and co-responsibility (UN Habitat 2008). Among the specific objectives of the current plan are to reach 890,000 students via school meals (PDBH 2012, 148) (in 2012, it had reached 609,000 (ibid., 275)); to reduce rates of undernutrition and anaemia; to connect 7000 small rural regional producers in processes of integration in the city's supply system (ibid., 317) and assist 1000 small family producers to convert to sustainable production techniques (ibid., 321); and to redesign each of the *comedores comunitarios* as a 'Centre of Referral and Capacity Development' that 'trains and prepares the economically vulnerable population toward inclusion in the labour force, while at the same time providing food for them and their families' (ibid., 275).

The outcomes of recent food security programming have been positive but incomplete. The rates of poverty and extreme poverty fell from 31% and 7% in 2001, respectively, to 16% and 3% in 2010 (Alcaldía Mayor de Bogotá 2012c, 35); food insecurity rates fell to well below the national average at 28% (Fonseca Centeno et al. 2010)²³; and the city has managed to position itself as a leader in food security policy both within Colombia and within Latin America more broadly (Alcaldía Mayor de Bogotá 2012c, 16). As its programmes evolve, however, Bogotá faces ongoing questions surrounding the breadth of reach and effectiveness of its services, the degree of citizen participation in governance and oversight; the provenance of food used in the city; and the incidence of corruption and 'missing money' in the system.

Hence Bogotá constitutes a scenario of both great manifestation of the fully bimodal new food insecurity as well as of aggressive and widely scoped municipal work to address it. From our perspective, it is extremely notable for its strong rights and dignitarian discourses and particular setting within a specific culture that is distinct from other contexts treated more frequently in the academic literature.

Social and theoretical relevance

The societal relevance of this study is – or ought to be – immediately clear from the pathetic portrait painted in the opening paragraphs of this chapter. Food and nutrition security is

²³ While poverty in Bogotá has decreased notably, inequality has *increased*, and the city now has a 'high' Gini index of 0.54 (Alcaldía Mayor de Bogotá 2012c, 40). This situation is abundantly visible in food security statistics, which show that poor bogotano localities such as Sumapaz have rates of food insecurity up to 54% (ibid., 42).

fundamental to human wellbeing, and yet it remains unattained for many people (and lingers precariously for many more) in the North and South alike; and the matter becomes more urgent as the NFE reveals ever more clearly its severity and permanence. That 25% of U.S. urban households with children and 42% of all Colombian households are food insecure is troubling: behind its quantification lie *real* stories of *real* people who experience *real* (and often intense) suffering. The simultaneous facts of very high reliance on food aid and national obesity-related health bills that tally into the billions of dollars testify to a two-headed food insecurity monster that menaces contemporary global society with its appalling faces of hunger and obesity.

That cities have emerged as new, aggressive, and important actors in the midst of this situation is encouraging, and we might hope that their efforts will be more successful than the national and international food security efforts that have preceded them. But outcomes are not based on hope, and there is great need to better understand these new urban food security efforts. Better understanding the discursive and cultural character and constraints that determine these new efforts becomes, then, much more than a matter of intellectual satisfaction. My hope – and my belief – is that it might instead support the work of those who labour towards the just goal of universal, permanent and unassailable food and nutrition security for all.

At the same time, however, there *are* notable aspects of intellectual gratification, as well, and – beyond curiosity itself – this work responds to and engages considerably with several bodies of existing academic literature, most notably those derived under headings of food security, development, urban food systems and the anthropology of food.

First, within the food security literature – the patrimony perhaps most important for its theoretical implications, and which I address more fully in Chapters 3 and 4 – is the fact that the conceptualization of food security itself remains contested, and the ‘cornucopia’ of differing definitions (Maxwell 1996, 155), emphases, and offshoot concepts reflects a wide range of interests and power (as Mooney and Hunt (2009) have adeptly illustrated). That food security is of concern is now little contested; but *what*, precisely, food security *is*, however, is another matter. *Especially* given that much of the contemporary research on food security is quantitative, attempting to measure its incidence, the classic deconstructionist question – of *what*, precisely, we are attempting to measure – remains too little debated. Maxwell counted over 200 food security definitions in his 1996 review; if we include the definitions that have emerged in the intervening years and even *some* of the descendent concepts of food security (such as, e.g., food sovereignty and community food security), the figure will now sum into the several of hundreds. The differences in the emphases of each of these concepts are not trivial. Mooney’s 2009 analysis underlines just how contested the concept remains and underlines the

need to understand the major negotiations of power and culture that underlie the processes of defining, owning and acting upon the various conceptualizations and definitions of food security. Lang's (2010) radical redefinition – arguing for moving food security beyond 'the pursuit of the three A's – access, availability, affordability - ... to factor in all diet-related ill-health, not just hunger' and 'to focus on entire food chains' (94-95) – illustrates the scope of variation (and, for my tastes, constitutes the best recharacterization that I have encountered).

There has been growing attention to the character of concepts derived *from* and inextricably *related to* food security, such as food sovereignty, community food security, food democracy, food justice, and the right to food (Patel 2009; Anderson and Cook 1999; Anderson 2008; Haddad and Oshaug 1998), and scholars have offered plentiful justification for further theoretical work consolidating each of these. Yet the *nature* of food security itself – and, most relevantly here, the constructs that govern it – remains far too little queried.

But it must be. Here we undertake precisely this effort to understand what food security *means* and how it 'comes to be' in a given context. Of course we necessarily do so only in very limited fashion, examining two of many possible cases, extracting several of infinite thematic possibilities, and applying specific research and researcher perspectives. This does not make it unimportant; on the contrary, I hope it is important above all in helping to raise the curiosity and salience of the discursive issues at hand and to encourage a new generation of related discourse- and culture-emphatic research within the food security field.

Second, this research engages extensively with a postdevelopment literature – which I present in Chapter 5 – that holds much rich debate over what constitutes development and progress and challenges the ideologies and hegemonies that construe these. Inasmuch as food security stands as a primary and extremely visible marker of development – however we are to understand these two constructs – examining the food security discourse *implies* examining the development discourse of which it is so centrally a part.

The postdevelopment literature provokes important questions related to dignity and justice, and these, too, are themes that I seize ample opportunity to explore from both discursive and cultural perspectives here. At present, these themes are left too little treated in the food security and agri-food literatures. As Allen (2010) cleverly summarises of the localization concept so fashionable within numerous agri-food fields: 'to the extent that people are trying to solve problems of tastelessness [...] local food systems can provide solutions. For other food-system issues, particularly those involving social justice, the role of food-system localization is less clear' (295). A similar commentary might be applied to any number of trendy agri-food themes: the

construction of quality, the slow food revolution, and so on. Indeed, since we are *not* concerned *primarily* with problems of tastelessness, the need to better address questions of equity in the food system is critical. This research affords the occasion to reflect upon the theoretical and practical merits and implications of several different – and often contentious – models of development, progress and justice, and I seize the opportunity to do so in the following chapters.

Third, this research occurs in a practical context of rapid and massive global urbanization that has spawned burgeoning academic attention to urban particularity in a number of disciplines. Within agri-food studies, *food in the city* is a recent but rising theme (see, e.g., the 2009 and 2012 special issues of *International Planning Studies*, ‘Feeding the City’ and ‘The Rise of Urban Food Planning’). There are calls for more research into many aspects of urban food systems (Sonnino 2009; Morgan and Sonnino 2010), and – especially in the wake of the 2007-2008 food crisis – particular attention to questions of *urban* food security.

Cities – especially large, diverse ones – face special challenges that rural areas and more homogenous demographics do not; some of these challenges refer to fact that the urban poor do not have access to many of the food coping resources that rural populations do (Patel 2009; Anderson and Cook 1999; Anderson 2008; Haddad and Oshaug 1998), that most residents are dependent upon the market for their food supply, and the heightened and highly visible juxtaposition of both sides of the new food insecurity bimodality, hunger and obesity.

The great cultural heterogeneity and highly diversified food needs of urban residents also raises interesting theoretical questions related to global-local connectivity (Anderson and Cook 1999; Morgan and Sonnino 2010) and the importance of cultural aspects in food security; for example, Anderson and Cook (1999) have posed the question:

If a certain number of people in a community have developed a taste for gourmet coffee, sofrito, or calzones, does this mean that the community is not food-secure unless these are readily available? Or should the criterion of cultural acceptability only apply to people who have grown up in a culture in which such items are traditional? Or should it apply only to food staples? (146)

This study’s engagement precisely with such issues of urban diversity and cultural specificity – practically and discursively – seizes the imperative to better address the new contexts left largely unexplored by the academe.

Finally, this research engages extensively also with the anthropology of food literature. While the matter of food-as-culture is an established and fairly well treated component of the anthropological tradition, the matter of food *security* as a cultural fact is, on the contrary, almost altogether neglected. This is beginning to evolve (see, e.g., Pottier 1999), but the change is slow

and to this point minimal. Yet (as I hope the discussion presented in this study demonstrates), such treatment is relevant, fruitful and required for more comprehensively understanding either ‘food security’ or ‘the anthropology of food’.

The remainder of this study

The dissertation proceeds as follows. In Chapter 2, I present the methodological considerations that frame the project. In Chapters 3, 4, and 5, I introduce several literatures – most importantly the food security and postdevelopment literatures – from which it is possible to understand the theoretical bases upon which this project builds. In Chapter 6, I introduce a framework for analysing the research ‘findings’ and follow it in the subsequent chapters with those ‘findings’ themselves.

The next four chapters respond to Research Question 1 by examining the relationships between food security discourses and development ideologies. Chapter 7 considers the capitalist development perspective, drawing mainly on the case study of New York City. Chapters 8 and 9 examine how the human development perspective, and particularly its central themes of human rights and dignity, defines Bogotá’s food security context (and how these same themes appear in the New York City case). Chapter 10 looks at the ambivalent food security discourse that manifests where different development ideologies coexist, depicting via the lens of the Bogotá case study a negotiation between the pronounced human development discourse and the influential legacy of capitalist practice.

The next three chapters respond to Research Question 2, exploring the influence of culture upon food security ideation and programming through the concepts of *foodways* (with Chapter 11 dedicated to a consideration of this question in Bogotá and Chapter 12 dedicated to one in New York City) and to the constructed qualities of *food-health narratives* (which I address in Chapter 13).

Finally, Chapter 14 responds to Research Question 3 by proposing an improved, original construct for food security that is more cognizant of its philosophical foundations and better aligned with virtuous principle. I draw importantly upon both the empirical findings that moor this project – and their testimony to the ways in which food security is (and, in the promising sense, *must be*) *constructed* upon contextually specific bases of development and culture – and the literary-intellectual campaign that accompanies them, to suggest a promising way in which we might attempt to differently frame the food security cause: *dignified food security*.

Finally, I close the dissertation in Chapter 15 with a short reflection upon the project's peculiarities and limits – and its particular promise.

Chapter 2

Methodological considerations

Interpretive work of all kinds, in rendering tacit knowledge explicit, makes silenced discourses speak, thereby engaging questions of power.
- Yanow and Schwarz-Shea (2006b, xx)

Abstract

In this chapter, I frame the philosophical underpinnings and methodological structuration of this research, describing the general research paradigm, ontology and epistemology that ground the study; the interpretivist, critical realist and ethnographic traditions from which it draws important philosophical and methodological inspiration; the data access methods (documentary analysis, semi-structured interviews and participant observation) and analysis methods (critical discourse analysis and analysis-through-writing) that it employs; and the ethical considerations that it stimulates.

Opening remarks: The research philosophy

Philosophies of reality and knowledge – and of how we access these – are central to defining and executing any research project (or indeed any inquiry, formal or not). As Yanow and Schwartz-Shea (2006b) write, “‘methodology’ is usefully seen as ‘applied ontology and epistemology’” (xviii). While most research exercises give this point at least passing (and requisite) acknowledgement, here I embrace it with somewhat more fundamentality, as the constructs of knowledge that I adopt not only underpin this *study*’s form and structure but also constantly and importantly engage with its *content*. In short, the specific philosophy adopted here, the analytical attention to discursivity, and the extremely heightened sense of reflexivity inherent in these combine to make matters of ontology and epistemology centrally important to this project.

To begin, then, we must acknowledge that all inquiry emerges from and occurs within a paradigmatic framing that determines not only the research approach but also the very identification of what is researched. Guba (1990) describes a *paradigm* (in simplified form) as a ‘set of beliefs which guide action’ (17)²⁴. According to Guba, research paradigms ‘can be characterized by the way their proponents respond to three basic questions’, the *ontological* (*what is the nature of the ‘knowable’? or, what is the nature of ‘reality’?*); the *epistemological* (*what is the nature of the relationship between the knower - the inquirer – and the known?*); and the *methodological* (*how should the inquirer go about finding out knowledge?*). The (cohesive) sets of answers to these questions then establish ‘the starting points or givens that determine what inquiry is and how it is to be practiced’ (ibid., 18). While of course ontology, epistemology, and methodology are fields unto themselves and I would be impossibly challenged to address them duly *per se* here, I begin by framing (at least) the basic paradigmatic constructs that ground this research so that its endeavours and analyses can be understood in proper light.

In brief, this research follows in the *interpretivist* or *constructionist*²⁵ tradition, undertaking to understand the ways in which meanings – and the social realities that they inform – are

²⁴ Guba observes the problematic task of defining what a paradigm, itself, *is*, given that (1) it has been assigned multiple definitions and uses in academic texts, and (2) if we are to assume, as Guba does, an interpretivist or constructionist paradigm, then even the notion of paradigm itself must be a constructed one. Nonetheless, for the purposes at hand, I accept Guba’s definition and use it as a departure point for this discussion.

²⁵ Practicants of social constructionism would point out that this is but one specific (and specialized) perspective within a much larger family of interpretive methodologies. (They would also be keen to point out the distinction between [social] constructionism and [personal] constructivism, but that is rather another matter.) A criticism of non-specificity is validly issued here. However, as the terms are often used

(socially) created and attending in a special way to questions of language, authority and power. Its data access methods (semi-structured interviews, documentary analysis, and participant observation) and data analysis methods (critical discourse analysis and analysis-through-writing) accordingly are ones that give great attention to issues of narrative and authority and place important emphasis on the researcher's roles as interpreter and reflector.

In accordance with the interpretivist tradition, this research assumes an ontology that is tendentially *subjectivist*, accepting that 'realities exist in the form of multiple mental constructions, socially and experientially based, local and specific, dependent for their form and content on the persons who hold them' (Guba 1990, 27). At the same time, however, it admits an important realist dimension, accepting that there is some (important) objective empirical reality (related, for example, to the *real* manifestations of hunger and health that *really* affect people's wellbeing). The emphasis of the *inquiry*, however, lies in understanding how that reality is shaped and negotiated in human relational and discursive experiences, and this is what situates the project in tendentially subjectivist light. These ontological assumptions imply an epistemological approach²⁶ that is *interpretivist* or *constructionist*, accepting that 'inquirer and inquired into are fused into a single (monistic) entity' and that 'findings are literally the creation of the process of interaction between the two' (Guba 1990, 27). In very brief (and approximate) schematic summary, then, the research situates paradigmatically as follows²⁷:

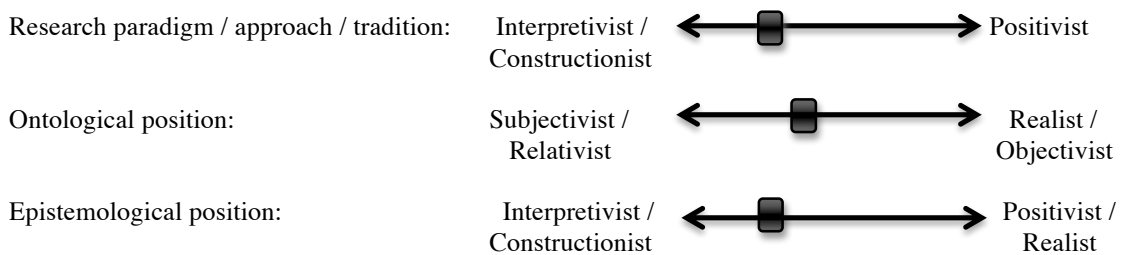


Figure 3 shows the research methodologies used in this study, portraying a schematic representation of the mrelationships between and among the project's greater and lesser paradigmatic assumptions and the data access and data analysis methods adopted.

interchangeably (rightly or wrongly) elsewhere and commonly understood (again, rightly or wrongly) as interchangeable, I also refer to both terms here. In any case, in the most general of senses, both terms pertain in this study, as we are interested in understanding the ways in which people have *interpreted* and *constructed* their dominant societal notions of food security.

²⁶ Note that, for comparability with other paradigms, Guba retains a threefold organization in his description of constructivism – which I understand as his generic term for all interpretivist approaches – but argues that, 'in constructivism, the ontology/epistemology distinction is obliterated' because 'what can be known and the individual who comes to know it are fused into a coherent whole' (26).

²⁷ While I have generally employed the terms 'interpretivist', 'subjectivist', 'positivist' and 'realist' in this text, I have included in the schematic, for easy reference and translatability, also the other commonly used terms that describe more or less similar perspectives.

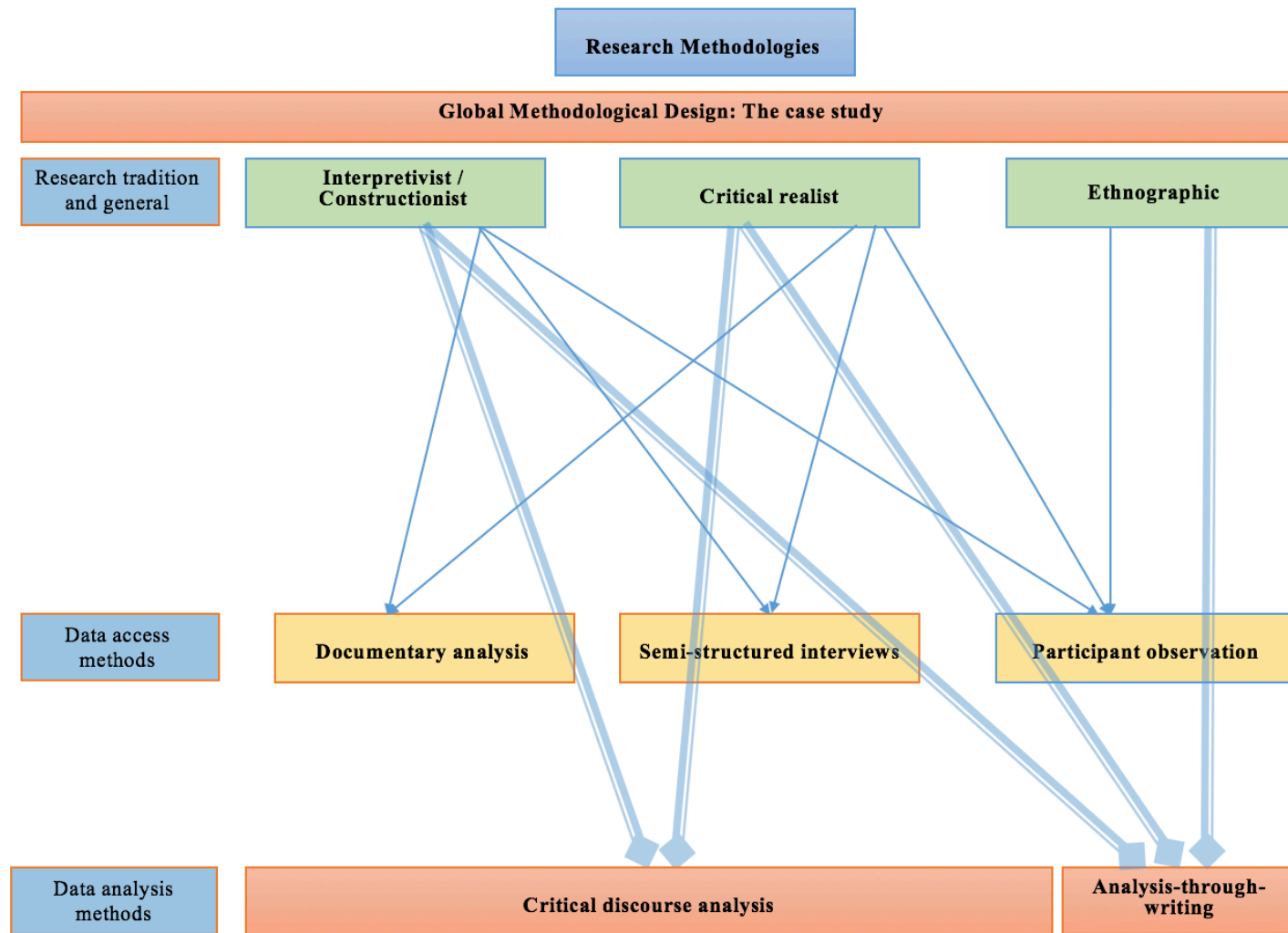


Figure 3: Schematic representation of research methodology (Source: Author)

The interpretivist tradition

In this research and in this text, I assume and refer quite *generally* to an *interpretivist* tradition. Certainly it is worth acknowledging the specific and differentiated analytical methodologies within the interpretivist family, and indeed the collection is a numerous one. Yanow and Schwarz-Shea (2006b) explicitly list over thirty of varied emphases (allowing for others, as well), writing that:

One might array the [various] analytic methods ... along a continuum, from more descriptive to more critical-theoretical ... Case study, grounded theory, life and oral histories, and participant-observation analyses—to make a gross generalization—might more commonly be found at the descriptive end; action research, critical theory, deconstruction, discourse, and post-structural analyses might be at the other end; frame and value-critical analyses might be more toward the centre on the critical side; and so forth ... [But] any interpretive analytic method ... has the capacity to move fully across the descriptive-critical continuum (xx).

In any case, what such approaches share is more cohesive than the differences: ‘interpretive work of all kinds, in rendering tacit knowledge explicit, makes silenced discourses speak, thereby engaging questions of power’ (Yanow and Schwarz-Shea 2006b., xx). Guba (1990) describes the same family of approaches using ‘constructionist’²⁸ terminology, referring to the *common* emphasis that these place on understanding the constructed and multiple natures of ‘reality’, noting that “‘reality’ exists ... in the context of a mental framework (construct) for thinking about it’ (25), and that ‘realities are multiple, and they exist in people’s minds’ (26). To be clear, interpretivist research is *not* the same as qualitative research²⁹; if we are to think in binaries, the qualitative tradition contrasts the quantitative one, while interpretivist epistemology opposes positivist epistemology³⁰.

By interpretivist *approach* in this research, then, I refer to its adoption of a fundamental emphasis on understanding the ways in which people interpret, construct and make sense of their worlds. The specific interpretive *methods* chosen – critical discourse analysis and analysis-through-writing – apply this emphasis in determining how data is analysed (and I discuss these methods shortly).

²⁸ Constructivism, constructionism, and interpretivism are three terms in particular that are commonly interchanged. As Yanow and Schwartz-Shea (2006b) explain, these might more fully be called constructivist-interpretive methods; because of the prevalence of the phrase “the interpretive turn” in social science and the cumbersomeness of the doubled term, they are more commonly referred to only as “interpretive” methods, although one also finds reference to “constructivist” or “constructionist” methods (xviii).

²⁹ And indeed, qualitative research may not be interpretive at all. Again, Yanow and Schwartz-Shea (2006b) offer an excellent and recommended discussion (xv-xvix).

³⁰ Positivism is a philosophy of science closely associated with empiricism, and it assumes a decidedly Western-centric, Enlightenment-inspired faith in ‘reason’. The postmodern intellectual lineage from which this research derives rejects the generalized positivist metanarrative of unitary truth.

Critical realism

Despite its great emphasis on interpretivism, however, this research at the same time accepts an important element of critical realism, particularly as in Sayer's interpretation. At its most basic, realism makes the points that 'the world exists independently of our knowledge of it' and that 'knowledge is not immune to empirical check' (Sayer 2010, 4-5). In brief, the implications for this research are that – regardless of how individuals (or their governments) go on to construct and characterize such experiences – people *really* do undergo *real* consequences of what they eat (or do not eat). People *really* become undernourished, people *really* become obese, people *really* acquire diabetes and *really* have their legs amputated, people *really* do have heart attacks and people *really* do die. These experiences *are*, I insist, mediated, modulated, negotiated, attenuated and enriched by the many constructive practices that surround them; but their basic materiality (that is, most importantly in this research, their fundamentals in *food*) is a point that must be acknowledged from the outset.

Science has often done a poor job of recognizing the simultaneous veracity of both material and constructed realities, generally reverting instead to disciplinary and philosophical insularity (Sayer 2010).³¹ To be sure, however, more synthetic *weltanschauung*³² are not altogether absent in the social sciences, and several of the scholars relied upon in this study go to lengths to recognize the validity in both³³ materiality and constructedness. Sayer, for example, realizes important elements of the interpretive tradition in the midst of his argument for (critical) realist philosophy, acknowledging that 'our knowledge of [the] world is fallible and theory-laden' (ibid., 4), that 'science or the production of any other kind of knowledge is a social practice' (ibid.), and that the language and other ways used to construct the 'texts of knowledge' have 'a largely hidden influence on how we represent knowledge and how it is read [and on] the content of the research itself' (ibid., 174). Likewise, Escobar and Geertz are both careful to recognize important realist dimensions within the contexts of their highly interpretive works.

Sayer (2010) contends that it is *critical realism*, as a total philosophical tradition, that has done the best job of synthesizing multiple paradigmatic perspectives:

³¹ 'A plague on all disciplinary imperialism and parochialism!' (Sayer 2010, 14).

³² *Weltanschauung* is the comprehensive worldview within which a society (or individual) fundamentally frames its knowledge, and how thought and speech, and perceiving and conceiving, are inseparably interactive.

³³ Here I have focused the explication on the *realist* character of critical realism without saying much in the way of critique, in the supposition – I hope warranted – that this feature becomes abundantly clear in the perspectives of theorists we explore in the course of this work (for example, those who follow in the postdevelopmental line). Nonetheless, it is perhaps worth a short definitional comment here. Foucault (1997) offers a good (and unusually succinct) answer to the question *What is critique?* in his essay of the same title: it is 'the movement by which the subject gives himself the right to question truth on its effects of power and question power on its discourses of truth' (47).

One of the distinctive features of critical realism is that it combines two models that have often been imagined to be not merely different but incompatible—the human being as causal agent, who makes things happen, the other as “meaning maker”, who interprets the world in innumerable ways (ix).

One matter on which it continues to disappoint, however, is that of recognizing the human subject as a sentient, needy being who suffers and flourishes (and does not simply ‘perform’, ‘experience’, ‘make meaning’ or participate in other such *activities*); in other words, it fails to adequately orient itself to the ‘world of care and concern’ (ibid.) and tends to produce an ‘alienated social science’ (ibid., x). To overcome this, Sayer (2011) calls for renewed acceptance – and celebration – of normativity within the scientific endeavour, decrying the ‘divorce of normative from positive thought’ and ‘the separation of philosophy from the rest of social science’ (14).³⁴ Indeed, normative questions are the most important ones people encounter, and in any case – he well points out – ‘it is self-contradictory to be against normativity: it would be like saying it is wrong to say anything is wrong’ (ibid., 16). Nonetheless, such perspective continues to dominate much of the social sciences, and ought to be overcome. I have attempted to do so in this study, then, by extending, where and how appropriate, a certain level of normative evaluation to the materialities and constructions revealed and discussed.

In the end, then, this research adopts an interpretivist approach that is enhanced by the materially alert perspectives of critical realism and the normative celebrations of Sayer.

Research design

Global methodology: The case study

The research employs a case study design that considers the food security discourses and practices of New York City and Bogotá (as municipal entities), with an emphasis on the discursive particularity of *food security* in each context. While the primary intent began as an effort to capture the official government discourses, it became apparent during the research exercise that it was both impractical and unwise to exclude certain other voices, as these constituted important actors in the policymaking community; influenced, reflected, contested, and dialogued with government-issued discourses; and more acutely reflected key elements of the dominant landscape – and *its* discourses – from which official discourses emerged and in which they existed.

The case study design was chosen because this research concerns objects highly embedded in their contexts and subject to impact from a multiplicity of variables and actors. It best allowed

³⁴ See also Pigliucci’s (2012) advocacy for a ‘sci-phi’ movement (which I discuss in Chapter 14).

for the inclusion of a multiplicity of data sources and actors; for repeated contacts with interviewees; for adjusting research in accordance with emerging data; and for generating a *holistic* understanding of food system discourse, planning, policy and implementation; and it was the only method capable of adequately accounting for the embeddedness of food systems within their sociopolitical contexts.

Yin (2009) summarises three guiding criteria for appropriate selection of the case study design, saying that ‘case studies are the preferred method when (a) “how” or “why” questions are being posed, (b) the investigator has little control over events, and (c) the focus is on a contemporary phenomenon within a real-life context’ (2). All of these criteria characterize this research and corroborate the appropriateness of the design choice. At the same time, much of the previous research regarding alternative food networks (as a subject) as well as much of the research employing discursive analyses (as a methodological approach) has also relied primarily on the case study method.

In short, the research availed of the case study design’s advantages: most importantly, the possibilities it permitted to probe contextually embedded phenomena *in their contexts*; to pursue data iteratively, deeply and from a diverse set of sources; and to produce research that is holistic in its vision. It also, of course, celebrates – rather than excuses – the *particularity* of the contextual specificities it studies and does not aspire mechanically to generalizability. But while the findings may not be generalizable, the approach – which suggests far more esteem for particularity than is common in food security research – could be profitably replicable in other contexts.

I have also seized upon the opportunities for comparative ‘service’ offered in the two cases studied to drive the specific interpretive analyses ultimately conducted. In this sense, of course, the choice of the two cities was crucial, most importantly for the established presence of lively discourses and enterprising policy work on food security that similarly characterize each one. The cities are also similar in size and attributed with continentally iconic stature. At the same time, the cities propose distinct food security (and development) discourses and emerge from substantially different cultural contexts, and this creates a confrontation that is well disposed to both comparability and contrast.

There are many – infinite – ways in which we *could* discuss the food security discourses and practices in both New York City and Bogotá. Indeed, there is likely great value to be gained from repeating the exercise in another fashion – for example, aiming to more precisely

understand the *evolution* of the current food security context, to capture the wide *variegation of understandings* among actors internal to each case, or to capture the fullness of the urban-agriculture- or food-sovereignty-as-food-security components of the discourse (and indeed I flirt with each of these temptations, and several more, en route). But what became most (and most quickly) apparent is that the Bogotá case is most interesting and instructive when viewed in relief to the New York City case, and vice versa. There are both stark contrasts and surprising commonalities to the food security contexts in the two cities, and such insights, in my view, lie among the most practically constructive outputs of this research.

Bogotá and NYC were chosen as cases precisely for their contextual relevance in light of the NFE: both are large, global cities; both prominently manifest the dynamics and outcomes of the *new* food insecurity; and both boast extremely active government efforts to address it (in contextually specific ways). Given the research questions and the NFE-contextuality that this study aimed to investigate, the pool of possible case studies was naturally rather small, and the desire to compare (or at least to study in simultaneity) experiences in the North and South confined the selection further. Even further, while there is considerable attention and work upon food system and food security issues in South America generally, there is relatively little attention to these experiences in the major academic journals – this largely a reflection, it would seem, of the continuing Anglo-American dominance of the academe and consequent chasm between English- and Spanish-speaking communities of scholarship. This work thus seized upon the opportunity to address this gap and to bridge the Northern-Southern and English-Spanish experiences and literatures.

Bogotá was chosen specifically both because of its particularly prominent role in addressing food security (i.e., through the Bogotá Sin Hambre program and subsequent municipal efforts) and because it has been less studied than certain other South American cities and *their* host countries (this, largely because of WFP's comparatively limited interventions in Colombia).³⁵ New York, on the other hand, was chosen not for its understudied nature – indeed, it has been, if anything, *exceedingly* popular as an object of recent interest – but rather for its particular demographic character (that is, of extreme poverty in the midst of extraordinary wealth³⁶, and of massive manifestations of both hunger and obesity), and its particularly prominent role in both municipally led and socially led food system reform activity.

³⁵ Much of the research on food security in South America that does exist has been produced in the context of WFP and related projects. Hence the absence of a prominent WFP role in Colombia – and particularly in the city of Bogotá – exaggerates the paucity of its English-language treatment.

³⁶ Indeed, the 'problem' pointed to by staggering inequality figures is as much a problem of wealth as it is one of poverty.

Data access methods

In accordance with the interpretivist framework used in this study, I follow Yanow and Schwarz-Shea's (2006b) preference for referring to *data access* rather than *data collection* (xviii). As they write:

“Data,” in this approach, are not things given (datum, data, from the Latin “to give”), but things observed and made sense of, interpreted. What are accessed are sources of data; the data themselves are generated,... So-called raw data may be the “least interpreted” form (in contrast to succeeding stages in the research process), but the “interpretive moment” cannot be escaped: It colours all stages (xix).

Indeed, they give the notion of the ‘interpretive moment’ (rightfully) more consideration than most. While most writers explicitly acknowledge the ‘double hermeneutic’, Yanow (2009) points out that the double hermeneutic itself implies *three* interpretive moments, and that – further – the research process includes a third hermeneutic and corresponding fourth interpretive moment. In this reading, the first interpretive moment occurs when the actor interprets his own experience; the second when the researcher (in the field) interprets the actor’s interpretations; the third (in the analysis phase) when the researcher interprets his own (field-collected) interpretations (... of the actor’s interpretations); and the fourth – this the third hermeneutic referred to – when the reader interprets what the researcher has ‘written up’ of that analysis (278-279). In short the crux of the interpretive paradigm is that interpretation cannot be avoided in the research process, and it is best to acknowledge and embrace it throughout. This means that data is not *collected* but rather *accessed* – i.e. that the data presented here are recognized to be mediated through the various interpretive moments.

Within each case, three methods of data access were used to generate a holistic, triangulated³⁷ vision of food security discourse and practice.

First, a documentary analysis was undertaken of available government and other high-profile documents related to food system and food security policy, strategy and vision. This extended to incorporate also a considerable number of other publications such as NGO and media reports, including for example the New York Times, National Public Radio, and (the Colombian newspaper) El Tiempo were monitored. Individual media and Google alerts led to relevant news and blog items, and subscription to numerous listservs with pertinent material also provided a holistic vision of the sociocultural contexts and food security activities in both cities.

³⁷ And it is properly called triangulation here!

Second, semi-structured interviews were conducted with key individuals who participated in, or whose organizations participated in, the discursive and material construction of urban food systems and food security in the cases examined; this included city policymakers, representatives from key parapolitical organizations and NGOs active in food security issues; involved academic actors; and several social activists. It began by attempting to identify (through documentary, media and human sources) and obtain interviews with high-ranking representatives of the key bodies participant in urban food security policy formulation and implementation and subsequently by employing a snowball technique. In particular, established contacts among staff at New York SchoolFood³⁸, the New School³⁹ and School Food FOCUS⁴⁰ (in New York City), and among staff at WFP, FAO and the Universidad de los Andes (in Bogotá) provided entry points for data access.

Where possible, interviews were recorded and transcribed; where not possible, detailed field notes were used instead. Inevitably and intentionally, both the documentary and interview analyses were selective, given the interpretivist rejection of positivist nomothetic generalizability.

All interviews were semi-structured; an interview prompt was prepared for each interview, but engagements carried varying degrees of formality and structuration that answered the needs of the specific contexts. During the fieldwork, I became progressively more conscious of the extraordinary complexity that characterized the food security landscapes I studied, and I was keen to capture the emergence of themes, ideas and perspectives that I had not previously identified as important and to encourage individual participants to express the particularity of their voices and experiences. Hence I relied on curiosity, conversational alertness, and genuine respect for participants' perspectives for accessing information as importantly as I did upon my interview plans and guides; and this contributed to a much richer content and analysis than would have resulted had interviews been too formal.

Where possible and approved by the participant, I recorded the interview and transferred the MP3 recording to my laptop for storage (with backup to hard disk and cloud space); where this was not possible, I relied on detailed field notes. During a later phase of data analysis, I

³⁸ The New York City Board of Education Office of Food and Nutrition Services is known as *SchoolFood*.

³⁹ The New School has an excellent Food Studies program that aims to 'explore the connections between food and the environment, politics, history, and culture'; its faculty comprises a diverse range of 'culinary historians, policy activists, entrepreneurs, and scientists' (The New School 2012).

⁴⁰ School Food FOCUS is 'a national collaborative that leverages the knowledge and procurement power of large school districts to make school meals nationwide more healthful, regionally sourced, and sustainably produced'; it aims to simultaneously benefit students, farmers, regional economies and the environment (School Food FOCUS 2015).

outsourced the transcriptions of the interviews and verified the faithfulness of the transcriptions to the audio files (making corrections where necessary).

Third, a limited but very important element of participant observation was used to bolster the discerning reflexivity that proved crucial to the analysis. Medina (2004) writes of semi-structured interviews and participant observation – two methods employed in this study – as those best able to access an individual's *discourse*. But while the former is useful for engaging participants in elaborating their *own* discourses, it encounters the omnipresent complication of the first hermeneutic: 'informants' [verbalized] discourse is ... highly selective' (57) and often shaped and constrained by many factors, including the desire to *appear* accordant to social norms. Participant observation can help the researcher overcome such limitations and make sense of the complicated relationships between articulated discourses and practiced realities. As Medina (2004) explains,

Researchers must never forget that informants' discourses are always expressed through the sociocultural sieve of their own ideology and scale of values ... [Participant observation] allows researchers to interpret and analyse informants' discourses with a better knowledge of facts ... [and] enables clearer perspectives and a broader range of information (60-61).

Yanow (2009) similarly underlines the distinctive character that in situ experiences can lend to research, noting that it can make a great difference to the character of a study whether research takes place primarily on formal grounds and from 9-to-5 or 'continue[s] at the corner bar or over dinner'.

In the case of this research, though interviews and documents served as the *primary* data sources, the – albeit limited – aspect of 'continuation' of research 'over dinner' while doing fieldwork proved invaluable in allowing me to develop a more robust perspective on food security (and on development ideology and culture, the two themes that emerged as central in this research) in both case studies. This research, *while not an ethnography*, takes important methodological and epistemological inspiration from that field. The in situ stays in New York City and Bogotá were short, but, even so, allowed research to 'continue ...over dinner' in such a way as to enable me, to at least some extent, to 'interpret and analyse informants' discourses with a better knowledge of facts' and to access 'a broader range of information' about the contexts in which subjects spoke, wrote, and acted.

Fieldwork: NYC

I spent four weeks in NYC during June and July 2012. While I did not formally partner with a local university, I was welcomed collegially by numerous academic counterparts, engaging with scholars from New York University, The New School, and the City University of New York and serving as a guest lecturer at The New School. I also participated in the Joint Conference of the Agriculture and Human Values Society and the Association for the Study of Food and Society, where I presented my own research, sat on a panel regarding urban-rural linkages, and engaged in several interviews with academic counterparts.

During my fieldwork in NYC, I executed data collection primarily by interviewing informants, actors whom I had previously identified as important food system actors through preparatory document analysis, referrals, and preliminary interviews. Interviews were conducted with actors from the city's departments of health, school meals, sustainability, and food policy; scholars engaged in food system research and activism; and community activists engaged in food system reform efforts.

I supplemented these core data collection activities by others that extended my understanding of locally important dynamics and gave me heightened access to non-dominant discourses: I attended a forum on sustainable food policy organized by an international (but NYC-based) NGO, a local organizing meeting on food system reform, and several public advocacy forums on issues such as the (at the time pending) U.S. Farm Bill; viewed two pertinent food system-related museum expositions; and visited several urban agriculture projects.

The research experience also created the opportunity for a limited dimension of participant observation, a feature that complemented the core data collection by helping me to achieve a greater contextual awareness and a heightened perceptiveness to the food security issues that (some) New Yorkers encounter. While in NYC, I lived with a roommate in Harlem. Though my apartment was comfortable, it was in a mixed but predominantly marginal neighbourhood and situated across the street from a NYCHA development⁴¹. I walked great distances everywhere, including in the most marginal neighbourhoods, so as to explore and experience as closely as possible the local 'realities'. This "walking" – and the seeing, hearing, smelling, feeling, sensing and 'encountering' that it portended – gave me, in this sense, a daily platform for the

⁴¹ NYCHA, the New York City Housing Authority, is the largest public housing authority in the United States. It administers the low-income housing developments known commonly in the United States as 'projects'.

observational research that deepened my understanding of the different contextually specific foodscapes that characterize NYC.

I visited markets, supermarkets, bodegas, mini-markets, fast food outlets, food carts, *Green Carts*, farmers' markets, and urban gardens throughout the city. I took public transport to far-away stops, 'listened in' on bus-route conversations, read local and national newspapers daily, and clipped advertisements. I wrote extensive notes, both observational and reflexive, and queried outstanding themes with interview participants.

Fieldwork: Bogotá

The field experience in Bogotá was similarly rich, both 'from 9-to-5' and beyond it; and it likewise profited from a warm professional reception and an important dimension of contextual presence. I spent five weeks in September and October of 2012 dedicated to intensive fieldwork in Bogotá. CIDER (the Centro Interdisciplinario de Estudios sobre el Desarrollo), a centre at the Universidad de los Andes dedicated broadly to development studies, welcomed me as a Visiting Scholar. Centre members oriented me well to Bogotá and facilitated many of the personal links and connections that proved crucial for data acquisition.

Prior to my arrival in Bogotá, I had carefully and critically reviewed all of the documentation that I had been able to locate regarding Bogotá's food security context. These sources, however, paled relative to the quantity and quality of information – in all forms – that I was able to access in situ. Contacts shared with me unpublished documents, directed me to undetected data sources and, in conversation, pointed me to loosely formulated themes that entered the written discourses only inarticulately.

I identified important informants through discussions with colleagues at CIDER and elsewhere – and, further, through the referrals of these first informants – and through references in relevant documents. Informants included actors from the city's departments of economic development, public health and locality governments; comedor administrators and workers; scholars involved in various aspects of food security research, evaluation and programme and plan development; and leaders and participants at urban agriculture and projects.

Those I contacted for interviews and meetings extended to me great consideration, offering lengthy, often reflexive discussions. Also very importantly, they shared considerable,

substantive written documentation (including old or otherwise inaccessible government publications; reports used during the preparatory phases of different food security projects; government departmental presentations and training materials; and analyses of different projects and approaches conducted by local academics and activists). These informants also pointed me to others. These interviews and meetings profoundly deepened my access to relevant data, elicited insightful insider perspectives, and shaped the direction of analysis in this research.

In addition to the core interviews, the research experience also extended opportunity (albeit abbreviated in duration) to add a greater depth of contextual understanding to the data collection by way of participant observation. While in Bogotá, I lived in the home of a middle-aged woman ('Carmen'⁴²) and her 20-year-old son, who were renting their spare room. This proved a rewarding arrangement: Carmen had a well-knit social network, and she was generous in introducing me to people, news items, and projects of interest. She was also keen to engage and acted as a good resource with whom I could 'check my understandings' and query cultural doubts.

The spatial aspect of my stay in Bogotá also bears importantly upon the breadth of 'data' that I was able to access. Carmen's apartment was located in Las Aguas, one of the neighbourhoods in the locality of the Candelaria⁴³; Las Aguas itself is a mixed-income neighbourhood and borders several marginal zones. I walked everywhere within several miles in all directions, against the advice and to the surprise of acquaintances who perceived many of those areas as dangerous. I did my food shopping primarily at the local market plazas⁴⁴; 'visited' many supermarkets; spent a morning at the central wholesale market, Paloquemao; and ate in market stalls and informal and formal restaurants, as well at home with Carmen and as a guest in the homes of others. I also visited the neighbourhood of Cerro Norte, one of the more established informal neighbourhoods in the city, to participate in a *minga*⁴⁵ in the community garden. When destinations were too distant to walk, I took (for the most part) public buses and (on several occasions) the Transmilenio, Bogotá's lauded aboveground rapid transit.

In all of these ways, then, I was able to develop – even during such a short stay – at least *some* sense of the practical and ideological 'realities' that characterize Bogotá: the physical settings in

⁴² 'Carmen' is a pseudonym, used to disguise the person's identity.

⁴³ Bogotá is comprised administratively of 20 localities, each of which is further subdivided into neighbourhoods.

⁴⁴ *Plazas de mercado*, market plazas, are spread throughout Bogotá's neighbourhoods. They are fixed, covered structures and open daily for the provision of foodstuffs, including mostly fruits and vegetables, tubers, meat and fish, and bulk grains, as well as some non-perishable items.

⁴⁵ A *minga* (or *minka*) is a communal work session; it is a word and a practice of Andean indigenous origin and popularly practiced in the contemporary urban agriculture movement as something of a reclamation of tradition (as well as a practically productive effort). See several photos in Appendix B.

which people lived; where different people bought their food; what people ate on the streets and in the markets; who shopped in supermarkets and who shopped from street vendors; how much foods cost at the different sources; which stories headlined the newspapers and which products were advertised at which prices inside of them; and what people talked about during their bus-ride conversations. Again I wrote extensive notes, observational as well as reflexive, and I elevated outstanding themes to query with interview participants.

Analytical methods

Interpretive methods

I have analysed data using two interpretive methods, critical discourse analysis and analysis-through-writing. In general, interpretive methods share a focus appreciating the discursive construction of individual and social realities, attending carefully to language, accessing ‘meaning’, and understanding the relationships between these constructions and meanings and the ‘realities’ that they produce and reflect (see, i.a., Fransella 2003; Yanow and Schwartz-Shea 2006a; Geertz 1973; Guba 1990; Escobar 1995).

Guba (1990) writes of interpretive methods generally as broadly hermeneutic and dialectic, the first of these characteristics intent upon ‘depicting individual constructions as accurately as possible’, and the second upon ‘comparing and contrasting these existing individual (including the inquirer’s) constructions so that each respondent must confront the constructions of others and come to terms with them’ (27). Escobar (1995) discusses the particular usefulness (and indeed *need*) of using interpretive methods (and particularly critical discourse analysis) in the context of development, where hegemonic discourses oppress and obscure alternative versions of reality; using interpretive analytical methods helps to ‘mak[e] other models visible’ (100) and ‘follows the mandate ... that we take subjects as agents of self-definition whose practice is shaped by their self-understanding’ (101).⁴⁶

⁴⁶ The contextualization of interpretive methods within the postmodern current should not be left totally uncommented. For postmodernists, *all knowledge is narrative* (that is, knowledge transmitted and acquired by storytelling). Note the contrast to modernist thought, in which observed or derived ‘*scientific*’ knowledge – not understood to be accompanied by any narrative at all – is more advanced than narrative knowledge and *progress* is manifestly identifiable. Postmodernists, of course, insist that these modernist truths – *especially* these – are themselves narratives, or rather metanarratives (narratives about narratives), and they are among the most complicit in subscribing to exclusionary and constructed discourses (see, e.g., Lyotard 1984; Taylor 1985). Escobar (1995), appealing to Foucault, writes: ‘The birth of science itself was marked by an alliance that almost two centuries ago “was forged between words and things, enabling one to see and to say” (Foucault 1975, xii)’ (40). Hence we must be doubly attentive – reflexive – in this present ‘scientific’ effort, as it were, ‘to see and to say’ as validly as possible.

It is important also to observe the important sociopolitical opportunity borne by and through the use of interpretive perspectives and methods. Gudeman notes that ‘mediating ... communication ... or formulating a conversational community across cultures is an important project of anthropology’ (Gudeman 1992, 100); Escobar writes that the project of ‘making other models visible ... constitutes a sound philosophical and political alternative’ (Escobar 1995, 100); and Pavlovic (2011) writes that one aim of such research perspectives is to ‘transform the meaning systems in order to open up space for alternative subjectivities’ (407). All of these perspectives pertain in this case, and – indeed – precisely what I hope is that by exposing some of the *constructivity* inherent to ‘food security’ as it is experienced and addressed in NYC and Bogotá, it will *make visible* construction *as* construction and widen the space for productive variation.

Discourse analysis

Within the family of interpretive methods, discourse analysis itself comprises its own well-populated sub-family of approaches, attending in various ways to linguistic content and form and the way these are used to construct individual and social realities (Potter and Wetherell 1994); they help to understand how people ‘tell their stories’ and explain things and to appreciate the importance of what they omit or neglect to tell (Gibbs 2008). Discourse analysis effectively derives from the reflexivity inherent to the postmodern intellectual tradition generally and constitutes a specific method of *applying* deconstructionist⁴⁷ thought (Mayr 2008). I have followed most closely in the *critical* discourse analysis tradition, giving prioritized attention to the ways in which social structures of power, domination and ideology are found in the discursive structures of texts.

Discourse is ‘a system of statements which constructs objects and produces subjects’ (Pavlović 2011); it develops the ‘ideological currency of society, providing schemata and methods that transpose local actualities into standardized conceptual and categorical forms’ (Smith 1984, 63). Particularly important are Foucauldian appreciations of the language-power nexus: the ways that discourse ‘constructs the topic’, ‘governs the way that a topic can be meaningfully talked about’, and ‘limit[s] and restrict[s] other ways of talking and producing knowledge about it’ (Mayr 2008, 8).

⁴⁷ Mayr uses the variant deconstructivist, but the significance here remains identical.

Escobar (1995) emphasizes that the reason discourse is so important is that it *constitutes* and creates reality – *not* that it represents some alternative to it: ‘Representations are not a reflection of “reality” but constitutive of it. There is no materiality that is not mediated by discourse, as there is no discourse that is unrelated to materialities’ (130).⁴⁸ More forcefully (and citing Foucault 1972), he writes about the *practice* of discourse⁴⁹:

Let us start ... by recalling that discourse is not just words and that words are not “wind, an external whisper, a beating of wings that one has difficulty in hearing in the serious matter of history” (Foucault 1972, 209). Discourse is not the expression of thought; it is a practice, with conditions, rules, and historical transformations. To analyse development as a discourse is “to show that to speak is to do something ...” (1972, 209) (216).

Chomsky (2013), too, reminds that discourse occurs on many planes; indeed, in every context that there exists a power imbalance, there exists also a particular construction of discursive relationality (a matter that pertains conspicuously in this study): ‘[In] the most advanced democratic systems of the modern era ... thought and understanding are shaped in the interest of domestic privilege’ (vii). A broader reading of this same claim holds true: thought and understanding *within* societies (i.e., domestic or internal to it) are shaped precisely in the interest of the (domestically or internally) privileged. In short, discourses are shaped by the powerful, within societies-writ-small and Society-writ-large.

At its most basic, discourse *analysis* is, in the end, *reflexivity* in the face of discourses⁵⁰, ‘reflexivity about the constructed meanings within and the power relations they represent and

⁴⁸ That there ‘is no materiality that is not mediated by discourse’ creates the imperative for methods that appreciate the construction inherent in this mediation. Eco (2003), writing from another field altogether – translation (the sort of it that converts a text from one language to another) – observes a particular challenge in his field that illuminates the omnipresence and inherent difficulty implied within the constructionism that pervades our collective intellectual spheres. He describes the challenges posed by the inconsistency of the ‘semantic spaces’ and ‘content spaces’ that are differently circumscribed within different languages. This creates a quandary for the translator, as Eco describes: ‘Should a translation lead the reader to understand the linguistic and cultural universe of the source text, or transform the original adapting it to the reader’s cultural and linguistic universe?’ (89) While we are not interested at the moment in the particular theoretical quandaries of language translation, we can appreciate an important matter in the way that Eco’s query points to the specificity of meaning-making that occurs within each particular language, and the variability and contingency that this implies for meaning-*understanding* in other languages. I suggest that we can use this to appreciate also the specificity and variability of meaning-making and -understanding within distinct discourse spaces. In short, I suggest that, within discourse spaces, there are no ontic ‘content spaces’ (as positivist theorists might imagine there to be) onto which corresponding ‘semantic spaces’ called ‘food security’ and ‘development’ and so on can be readily mapped. Rather, as actors immersed within specific traditions of language and culture, we must constantly render semantic units into the content units to which they refer – that is, to which *we assign them*. The resulting inconsistency inherent within this process of intra-lingual translation – precisely as Eco describes in his context of inter-lingual translation – offers, I suggest, an excellent way of understanding the cultural complicity inherent to discourse.

⁴⁹ Recall, of course, that Escobar writes specifically in reference to the development discourse (and its practice), with which we also engage in a fundamentally important way in this study.

⁵⁰ It is precisely the *absence* of such reflexivity that creates and determines the power of discourse, and – in what will be a *unique* reference in the context of this dissertation – it is the satirist Stephen Colbert who

(re)produce' (Pavlović 2011).⁵¹ It is over this last sense that the vein of *critical* discourse analysis lingers, and I follow here its heightened attention to the deployment of power and ideology. In this research I have inspected texts for the emergence of themes (which present by way of *all* dimensions of the texts, including, i.a., lexicon, syntax, rhetoric, style, and meaning) and attending especially to the relationships among text, power and ideology that these signify. I manually coded texts for salient themes, confronted passages intra-, inter-, and con-textually, and from these pixelated testaments located coherent threads of significance and importance.

Anthropology, ethnography and analysis-through-writing

Anthropology – and especially its ethnographic arm – is the second tradition (or, again to be more correct, *family* of traditions) that has inspired my methodological practice. In particular, the discipline's postmodern adaptation – also referred to as postcultural, poststructural or reflexive anthropology⁵² – which remodelled the discipline into 'a hermeneutic and interpretive project rather than an observational science' (Beldo 2010, 150), has proven invaluable for its breadth and openness of inquiry and its agentic, reflexive analytical practices.

In this study, I embrace the postmodern call for anthropologies not of the exotic (and all too often imagined as 'primitive') other but rather of the too familiar. Rabinow (1986) and Escobar (1995, 49) write of a need to 'anthropologize the West'; since its 'tales are rarely questioned; they are taken as normal and natural ways of seeing life, "the way things are"' (Escobar 1995, 59). Instead, the 'West's' practices (including centrally its hegemony of economy and market) 'can be anthropologized and shown to be made up of a peculiar set of discourses and practices' – and very peculiar at that – 'in the history of cultures'. Likewise, Escobar calls for an 'anthropology of modernity' – 'a general investigation of Western modernity as a culturally and historically specific phenomenon' (ibid., 11) – and for 'institutional ethnographies' (110) that

offers the most straightforward illustration of this point. In 2005, he coined the term *truthiness*, which subsequently was named Merriam-Webster's 2006 Word of the Year, became a popular lexical deployment in the American media, and even inspired a short slate of academic research on related topics. According to Colbert (2005), *truthiness* is 'truth that comes from the gut, not books': in short, it comprises those things that we *know* to be *true*, even when those things are not, in fact, concordant with *reality*. In a word, *truthiness* captures the distinction that lies between *truth* and *reality*, and – the point I draw out here – it is an absence of reflexivity regarding that distinction that gives basis and power to discourse.

⁵¹ Rabinow (1986) is another who insists that we appreciate the Foucauldian practice of attending to power relations. He recommends that we 'follow Foucault in seeing power as productive and permeative of social relations and the production of truth in our current regime of power' (241).

⁵² This last label is, for obvious reasons, my preferred one.

deconstruct and expose the ‘the work of institutions’⁵³ ... one of the most powerful forces in the creation of the world in which we live’ (107).

Among the most pertinent aspects of anthropology in this study are its holism and receptiveness to multiple sources of information and insight; its emphasis on narrative both in data collection and in data analysis; and its positioning of the researcher as an active, central and instrumental component of the research itself. It is a discipline centred upon discourse in the widest of senses, adopting as fundamental a dialogic priority that excludes the sometimes sequestered practices of the academe; as Geertz (1973) writes (emphasis mine):

‘Looked at in this way, *the aim of anthropology is the enlargement of the universe of human discourse*⁵⁴ (14) ... Monologues are of little value here, because there are no conclusions to be reported; there is merely a discussion to be sustained’ (29).

In this study, anthropology’s central positioning of the researcher in the research itself⁵⁵ is perhaps its most profitable aspect. This, combined with the discipline’s holism, makes it a capacious tool able to incorporate and scrutinize data from many different and different types of sources and perspectives and to value a great variety of ‘local knowledge, diverse worldviews, and alternative philosophies’ (Kottak, 18).

At a first level, these traits support a grand sense of ‘openness’ to information, not only the intentional *seeking* of it from varied (and sometimes unconventional) sources, but also a ‘*disponibilité*’ to the ‘*objets trouve*’ (Okely 1994, 19) – to the surprises, we might say – discovered while in the field and en route in the research process. Such perspective, of course, is not unique to anthropology: Strauss (1987) writes, for example, that qualitative researchers in general must learn to ‘allow the main theoretical concepts to “emerge” during the research itself’ (278), and Sayer (2010), defending critical practice, writes to researchers of all types to ‘use all you know —not only the theories and methods you have learned in your subject, but

⁵³ ‘Institution’ should be understood in both its informal (social) and formal (organizational) senses. Geertz, for example, examines both ‘development’ and ‘the World Bank’ in his exercise. In the context of our study, we might be concerned, for example, with both ‘food security’ and ‘the New York City Mayor’s Office’.

⁵⁴ Geertz (1973) acknowledges that of course this is not its only aim, but he goes on to explicate this objective as primary and basic to his understanding of culture as semiotic:

That is not, of course, its only aim - instruction, amusement, practical counsel, moral advance, and the discovery of natural order in human behaviour are others; nor is anthropology the only discipline which pursues it. But it is an aim to which a semiotic concept of culture is peculiarly well adapted (14).

⁵⁵ Okely (1994) insists that there is much ‘data’ that resides not in the interview transcript but rather in the researcher:

The anthropologist-writer draws also on the totality of the experience, parts of which may not, cannot, be cerebrally written down at the time. It is recorded in memory, body and all the senses. Ideas and themes have worked through the whole being throughout the experience of fieldwork’ (20).

what you know from your experience' (viii-ix). Still, anthropology's long ethnographic tradition makes it particularly committed to such receptiveness. Indeed, ethnography has celebrated – not simply tolerated but *celebrated* – the role of the researcher as central to the research process. In short, its perspective is that it is only through the researcher that the dialogue vital to interpretive research can occur, creating opportunities for both the expression of particular realities (by those who experience those realities) and the contextualization, comparison, questioning, and other-engagement with those realities (by and through the researcher).

This has led to the particular style of analysis-*through*-writing (or analysis-through-writing) that pervades the discipline. Geertz (1973), Yanow (2009) and Clifford and Marcus (1986) all offer considered discussions of research writing⁵⁶, and I have relied crucially on their insights. The semiotic construction of culture that Geertz (1973) proposes⁵⁷, or in any case the human proclivity to narrative and story as meaning-making exercises, compels the researcher to recognize and respond to such activities, not only appreciating the actor's meaning-making but also drawing (further) meaning from it via one's own experience and perspective. I refer (deferring to Geertz) to the distinction that must be drawn, for example, between twitches and winks; but good research entails much more, as much of human activity is laden with subtleties that go well beyond this, and one must apprehend the presence and the implications of 'winks upon winks upon winks' (Geertz 1973, 9).⁵⁸

This makes imperative the need for 'thick' (rather than 'thin') description, for, as Geertz (1973) writes, 'ethnography is thick description' (16):

Doing ethnography is like trying to read (in the sense of "construct a reading of") a manuscript – foreign, faded, full of ellipses, incoherencies, suspicious emendations, and tendentious commentaries, but written not in conventionalized graphs of sound but in transient examples of shaped behaviour (10).

Such an appreciation for 'thick description' and narrative-focused analytical practice reflects also in the 'writing culture' movement detailed by Clifford and Marcus (1986) and in the analysis-through-writing practices described by Yanow (2006, 2009).

⁵⁶ And all are warmly recommended reading.

⁵⁷ See also Chapter 11.

⁵⁸ Making sense of twitches and winks – indeed, of 'winks upon winks upon winks' (Geertz 1973, 9) – is, then, effectively the ultimate effort of (cultural) anthropology, one that entails, as Ingold and Lucas (2007) describe the discipline's 'basic task', 'understand[ing] other people's understandings' (287). As they write:

Anthropology is not so much the study *of* people as a way of studying *with* people ... it serves not merely to furnish us with information *about* the world ... More than that, it educates our *perception* of the world and opens our eyes to other possibilities of being (ibid.).

Yanow (2009) affirms that it is indeed ‘becoming increasingly common in interpretive research ... to [use] writing as a method of generating knowledge’ (277).⁵⁹ Likewise, Clifford (1986) reports that “‘literary’ approaches have ... enjoyed some popularity in the human sciences. In anthropology influential writers such as Clifford Geertz, Victor Turner, Mary Douglas, Claude Levi-Strauss, Jean Duvignaud, and Edmund Leach ...’ have used such tactics (3). Furthermore, Clifford explicates the craft and skill inherent to the practice – it is not a haphazard venture! – and the close relationship of the creative but methodical process and its productive outcome, saying that ‘the making of ethnography is artisanal, tied to the worldly work of writing’ (ibid., 6).

To repeat, this research is not *an* ethnography; but the methodological traditions of ethnography have come to bear importantly in this research in their marked influence on my exercise of the discourse analysis. While many researchers presume the use of CAQDAS⁶⁰, I have chosen intentionally not to use such tools, preferring instead a technique centred upon critical reading and writing and often called analysis-*by*-writing: as salient themes emerged, I *wrote*, pulling together tagged passages to locate dialogic elements and to construct and deconstruct broader themes and arguments. As such, it has *not* been a mechanical exercise (as in the more tendentially quantitative variants of discourse analysis) but rather, following the tradition that Clifford describes, an *artisanal* one.

On rigor and quality

Many academic traditions conventionally require a discussion of a study’s *validity* and *reliability*: a verification of the work’s approximation of ‘truth’ and of its replicability. However, as I argue here under a solidly interpretivist framework, the subjectivity, variability, and contingency of ‘data’⁶¹ are clear (and in fact create the very point of the research exercise). Neither rigor nor quality, then, ought to be evaluated according to such (contextually illegitimate) criteria. Instead, following Guba (1990), a more sensible aim is that of *authenticity*, related to the accurate capture of specific realities in specific social contexts at specific moments in history (71-74); and this is what I strive for here.

⁵⁹ In this sense, we should recall that the produced writings ‘are, thus, fictions; fictions, in the sense that they are “something made”, “something fashioned” – the original Latin meaning of *fictio* – not that they are false, unfactual, or merely “as if” thought experiments’ (Geertz 1973, 15).

⁶⁰ Computer Assisted Qualitative Data Analysis Software

⁶¹ Which, again, if we follow Yanow’s appeal to the Latinate origin of the word, are in fact not even ‘data’ at all.

Geertz (1973) describes the difficulty of ascertaining quality in ethnographic work⁶² - a description that applies well also to other interpretive work, such as this one – where this rests upon the researcher's keen perception and interpretation; in brief, upon 'whether it sorts winks from twitches and real winks from mimicked ones'⁶³ ⁶⁴ (16). Moreover, it ought not be judged even upon the internal coherence of the system it presents, as 'there is nothing so coherent as a paranoid's delusion or a swindler's story' (18). He summarizes:

This raises some serious problems of verification, all right – or, if "verification" is too strong a word for so soft a science (I, myself, would prefer "appraisal"), *of how you can tell a better account from a worse one*. But that is precisely the virtue of it. If ethnography is thick description and ethnographers those who are doing the describing, then the determining question for any given example of it, whether a field journal squib or a Malinowski-sized monograph, is whether it sorts winks from twitches and real winks from mimicked ones. It is not against a body of uninterpreted data, radically thinned descriptions, that we must measure the cogency of our explications, but against the power of the scientific imagination to bring us into touch with the lives of strangers (16).

Neither are predictivity or generalizability good judges of quality here, and the development of grand or universal theory should not be (and is not) the objective. The value of anthropology and ethnography lies precisely in their specificity, their attention to details that do *give insight* to larger realities in important ways, even if they do not themselves *constitute* those larger realities; 'it is not necessary to know *everything* in order to understand *something*' (Geertz 1973, 20). As Geertz writes:

The notion that unless a cultural phenomenon is empirically universal it cannot reflect anything about the nature of man is about as logical as the notion that because sickle-cell anaemia is, fortunately, not universal, it cannot tell us anything about human genetic processes. It is not whether phenomena are empirically common that is critical in science – else why should Becquerel have been so interested in the peculiar behaviour of uranium? – but whether they can be made to reveal the enduring natural processes that underlie them. Seeing heaven in a grain of sand is not a trick only poets can accomplish (44).

⁶² Or at least its 'difficulty' when this is viewed as variation from 'standard' research reporting and evaluating practice. That this 'standard' derives precisely from the positivist paradigm rejected by interpretivists (and hence ought to be likewise discarded directly here) does not seem to have softened the requirement for its formal consideration in the research enterprise – a demonstration, perhaps, more of the enduring dominance of positivism than of the real need to engage with such obligations.

⁶³ The reference to twitches and winks derives from a lovely and lengthy tale that Geertz relates from his own fieldwork in Morocco (and one highly recommended to readers interested in exploring the complexities of ethnographic and other interpretive research). For the time being, however, it is sufficient to recognize the less rich but still telling enough fact that twitches, winks and mimicked winks all assume similar (or identical) form but are charged with radically different meanings.

⁶⁴ Making sense of twitches and winks – indeed, of 'winks upon winks upon winks' (Geertz, 9) is, then, effectively the ultimate effort of (cultural) anthropology, one that entails, as Ingold and Lucas (2007) describe the discipline's 'basic task', 'understand[ing] other people's understandings' (287). As they write:

Anthropology is no so much the study *of* people as a way of studying *with* people ... it serves not merely to furnish us with information *about* the world ... More than that, it educates our *perception* of the world and opens our eyes to other possibilities of being (ibid.).

While ethnography – and other interpretive methods – can address the same grand issues that other social science methods do (issues such as, in our case, Ideology, Power, Hunger, Need, State, and so on), they do so in contexts microscopic and often marginal enough ‘to take the capital letters off them’ (Geertz 1973, 21). Geertz characterizes the concrete realities that are studied more as ‘comments’ upon larger issues than as microcosms of them (ibid.), and this, in my perspective, is the correct way to view (and to evaluate) this study. Geertz proposes that what we ought to aim for is to *inscribe*⁶⁵ (ibid., 19) the studied ‘realities’ as fully and as explicitly – as *thickly* – as possible; and this is what I strive for here.

Ethics

My code of ethical conduct was extremely simple to follow (though *more*, rather than less, rigorous because of it): to committedly ‘do the right thing’ in each situation according to its context, always prioritizing the wellbeing of participants over any other interest. I provided each participant with a verbal introduction prior to interviews that addressed my identity, role as a researcher and Ph.D. student, university and network affiliations; I briefly outlined my research project and its central questions; and, where possible, I preceded or followed meetings with a written brief describing the same. In all cases, I made clear to each participant my identity and role as a researcher, made it clear that their participation was and would remain at all moments voluntary, and asked for explicit (verbal) consent prior to conducting and recording interviews. Participants in the study were and are not subject to possible harm resulting from their participation.

The project received approval from the Cardiff University School of City and Regional Planning Ethics Committee.

Summary: The *how* of this research

At this point, I have described the *why* (in Chapter 1) and the *how* (in this chapter) of this research. The project assumes an interpretive approach that is complemented by the concrete appreciations of critical realism and (especially) the normative appeals of Sayer. It uses a case study design; accesses data primarily through documents and interviews with sources who present food security perspectives prominent in New York City and Bogotá (and complemented

⁶⁵ In describing the vital difference between ‘*thick*’ and ‘*thin*’ description, Geertz would prefer to mark a departure even from the conventional (positivist) language of *description*, allowing *description* to become *inscription* (hence emphasizing the researcher’s role in ‘*writing it down*’). I have followed here his use of *inscription*, though elsewhere, in view of conventionality, I employ the term *description*.

by a smaller component of participant observation); and analyses data through critical discourse analysis and analysis-through-writing. With this framework for the research project's *how* in place, I turn now to consider more incisively its *what*.

Box 1

Starting points: A selection of varied food security definitions

Any discussion of contemporary food security conceptualisation must acknowledge the most dominant current definition of *food security*, the FAO definition that emerged from the 1996 World Food Summit and very slightly modified in 2002:

Food security [is] a situation that exists when all people, at all times, have physical, social and economic access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food that meets their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life.

This definition is often distilled into four ‘pillars’ that together constitute food security: availability, access, utilization (these three ‘pillars’ constructed in parallel) and stability (applied transversally).

Moreover, in this research, it is interesting to note the formal definitions of food security tendered by the host countries of the two case studies. In the United States, the USDA (2015) issues this definition of *household food security* (its preferred measure):

[Household food security is] access by all [household] members at all times to enough food for an active, healthy life. Food security includes at a minimum (1) the ready availability of nutritionally adequate and safe foods, and (2) an assured ability to acquire acceptable foods in socially acceptable ways (that is, without resorting to emergency food supplies, scavenging, stealing, or other coping strategies) (3).

Meanwhile, in Colombia, *food and nutrition security* – note the significance of the terminological choice – is defined in the National Policy for Food and Nutrition Security – and that there *is* such a policy is itself notable – using terms that closely mimic the widely accepted FAO phrasing:

Food security is the adequate and stable supply of food; permanent and appropriate access to and consumption of food by every person in such quantity, quality, and safety as to permit the adequate biological utilization of this food to lead an active and healthy life (MinSalud et al. 2007, 5)..

Moreover, the continuation of the policy text establishes and defends the discourse of a human *right* to food that is the foundation of Bogotá’s work, affirming that this definition of food and nutrition security goes beyond the fact that all people should have sufficient food and underscores the *right* to not be hungry and to enjoy an adequate diet, the responsibility that each person and each family has to secure an appropriate diet, and the need for social strategies that confront threats and challenges to these rights (ibid.).

It further elaborates, again in close conversation with the FAO definition and its frequent distillation into ‘pillars’, that ‘the concept of food and nutrition security is brought into focus by the central axes that define it’:

- **Availability:** This is the quantity of food available at national, regional, and local levels. It is related to the sufficiency of food supply at each of these levels relative to the requirements of the population, and it depends primarily on production and import levels.
- **Access:** This is the possibility of all people to realize an adequate and sustainable diet. It refers to the foods that a family, a community, or a nation can obtain or buy.
- **Consumption:** This refers to the foods that people actually eat and is related to food choice, beliefs, attitudes, customs and habits.
- **(Biological) Utilization:** This refers to how and how well the human body is able to use the foods consumed and to convert them into nutrients that can be assimilated and used by the body.
- **Quality and safety:** This refers to the set of characteristics that make food fit for human consumption, and it requires the assurance of numerous measures and conditions throughout the food chain, from production through consumption through utilization, which assure the absence of risks (biological, physical, or chemical in nature) that might undermine health. Food safety cannot be neglected in favour of food quality, since safety is in fact a component of quality (ibid., 6-7).

Chapter 3

Food security: A grand challenge

A review of the literature, Part I

La destinée des nations dépend de la manière dont elles se nourrissent.
- Brillat-Savarin (1850, ix)

Abstract

With the onset of a ‘New Food Equation’, food security is one of today’s ‘grand challenges’. Policymakers and researchers agree that assuring food security is imperative and urgent, and in recent years both communities have dedicated to its address heightened attention, research, and resources. But what food security is – and all the more so, what should be done to assure it – remains tenuous ground. The discourses used to characterize the nature of the challenge and justify the approaches employed to meet it are many, diverse, dynamic and evolving; they are also extremely conflicted and contested, and the specificities with which these conflicts are borne and resolved wield major implications for policy choices and the human wellbeing outcomes that result from them. In this chapter, I depict the varying discursive heritage of food security, reviewing the literature and theory issued from several – sometimes divergent – perspectives. I review how food security is emerging as a very contemporary ‘grand challenge’; show how the nature of this challenge is both extremely contested and decidedly new; and discuss the generalized thematic shifts that have occurred in the discourse on food security during the past half-century.

Introduction

Food security is one of today's 'grand challenges'. Policymakers and researchers agree that assuring food security is imperative and urgent, and in recent years both communities have dedicated to its address heightened attention, research, and resources. But what food security *is* – and all the more so, what should be done to assure it – remains tenuous ground. The discourses used to characterize the nature of the crisis and justify the approaches employed to meet it are many, diverse, dynamic and evolving; they are also extremely conflicted and contested, and the specificities with which these conflicts are borne and resolved wield major implications for policy choices and the human wellbeing outcomes that result from them. In this chapter, I illustrate how food security is emerging as a very contemporary 'grand challenge', show how the nature of this challenge is both extremely contested and decidedly *new*, and discuss the generalized thematic shifts that have occurred in this discourse during the past half-century.

Food security: A contemporary 'grand challenge'

The world food system is in a state of massive crisis. Even a cursory glance at the statistics reveals a system fraught with dramatic human inequity and ecological imbalance. That 842 million people are undernourished (UN 2015), another billion and a half are overweight or obese, and non-communicable diseases now cause 'more deaths than all other causes combined' (United Nations General Assembly 2011, 1) together comprise a *new* food insecurity – one that, differently from the past, is distinctly bimodal – that affects more than a third of the world's population (Ashe and Sonnino 2013a). Neither is the crisis isolated to poor countries: in the United States, the level of households that were food insecure reaches 14.5% (Coleman-Jensen et al. 2011) at the same time that over one in three adults were obese (CDC 2011).

The coincident dysfunction in food, environmental and health systems menaces human and planetary wellbeing with interrelated phenomena of global environmental change, environmental unsustainability, and a critically and newly bimodal model of food insecurity (Von Braun 2007; O'Kane 2012; Morgan and Sonnino 2010; Barling, Sharpe, and Lang 2008; Lang 2010; Ingram, Ericksen, and Liverman 2010). Under a new and still unfolding scenario that has been variously labelled as the 'New Food Equation' (Morgan and Sonnino 2010), the 'world food equation, rewritten' (Von Braun 2007), and the 'New Fundamentals' (Barling, Sharpe, and Lang 2008), good nutritional health⁶⁶ is inaccessible to an enormous number of

⁶⁶ I have so far left uncommented my use of the term *nutrition*, but it deserves important remark before proceeding further. I summarily address the culturally rooted construction of food policy in Chapter 13, and many of the cultural roots I examine there find their effect in nutritional stipulations. At this point,

people *in different ways*. Simply put, people suffer on the one hand from hunger and undernutrition and, on the other, from obesity and diet-related disease – and, in ironic injustice, the two problems sometimes simultaneously afflict individual households and even persons (Popkin and Gordon-Larsen 2004). In other words, the current nutritional health crisis is increasingly manifesting bimodally to include widespread problems of both *under-* and *mal-*consumption (with *over-consumption* here considered as part of the latter). Adding to this complexity, there is also a new *geography* of food insecurity, which has become a problem in both rich and poor countries, and all the more so in the urban contexts that increasingly define the contemporary population dynamic (Dixon et al. 2007; Caraher and Coveney 2004; Popkin 1999; Morgan and Sonnino 2010).

At the same time, because this crisis is not isolated to a single geography, sector or discipline – rather, it is a nexus of global and local vulnerabilities that has implicated policymakers, researchers, activists and citizens with wide provenance (Lang, Barling, and Caraher 2009) – it has also assumed a prominent place in many key institutional discourses. These discourses are enormously variegated, disharmonious in the extreme, and we will explore this discord in greater depth here. We begin, however, by acknowledging that, despite wide disagreement over what food security *is* (and all the more so on what ought to be done about it), there is wide *agreement* on one fundamental point: *it is a big problem, one of the biggest of our time, and something must be done to address it.*

In this research, I adopt Morgan and Sonnino's (2010) construct of the 'New Food Equation' (NFE) to describe a critical global context in which food security situates as a very – perhaps even as the *most* – central element of concern among simultaneous and severe social, political, economic and environmental crises, precisely since food (in)security both contributes to and results from other aspects of crisis (Swan, Hadley, and Cichon 2010; Barling, Sharpe, and Lang 2008; Von Braun 2007; Morgan and Sonnino 2010; Johnston 2010; Lang 2010). Likewise, Shaw's (2007) schematic portrayal of food security as 'the eye of the storm', situated at the center of a series of concentric circles of weighty concerns – in the nearest circle, immediate food- and nutrition-related challenges; next, ones related to the guarantee of basic services, technologies, assets and rights; and, in the farthest-reaching series of implications, 'overarching

suffice it to say that I reject the (positivist) certainty that societies and their scientists have captured *the* correct understanding of nutrition – the nutritional *Truth*, as it were – such an idea being wholly contrary to the poststructuralist and interpretivist tones of this project. This does not, however, render it impossible to maintain the view, guided at once by constructionist theory *and* critical realism, that what people eat *does*, in some way, affect their wellbeing. While the purpose of this research is not at all to approach the nutritional 'Truth', as it were, I tentatively accept throughout this dissertation at least some very rough tenets: centrally, that dietary diversity, fruits, vegetables, and whole grains generally act more favourably than dietary monotony, highly processed foods and foods high in added fats and sugars. (These propositions enjoy the commonest actual acceptance and stand as points of agreement among the recommenders in the WHO and the national governments of Colombia and the United States; I would not necessarily expect them to remain identical a century into the future.)

major concerns' including poverty alleviation, climate change, and international migration – illustrates both the widely implicative nature of the food security crisis and the centrality of food security to other crises (384).

Recognition of the food system and food security crises extends well beyond the academe, with food security emerging as a prominent element in the global political discourse, particularly following the 2007-2008 price spikes, and increasing numbers of policy reports and government-issued statements on the issue (Marsden 2012, 139; Barling, Sharpe, and Lang 2008, 7; MacMillan and Dowler 2012). At the same time that it has gained political prominence, 'the question 'who will feed the world?' [has also] emerged in the media as one of the central issues' (Brunori, Malandrin, and Rossi 2013).

Part of the reason for this rise in prominence, of course, is precisely the nature of the NFE and of food security within it: that is, food security is decidedly *not* an isolated and independent problem but rather relates to many of the other most pressing issues of the moment, including climate change, energy resource depletion, water scarcity, and national security (MacMillan and Dowler 2012; Morgan and Sonnino 2010), and it therefore bears implications and has become important for all who take interest in *those* sectors and issues. In effect – to return to Shaw's (2007) depiction – 'food insecurity is now being seen as the eye of the storm of interlocking national and global concerns to which it contributes and whose solutions lie in tackling those concerns holistically' (383).

The institutions that have underlined the emergence and importance of the food security challenge are numerous and prominent. The UN's Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), endorsed by all of the world's countries and all of the world's leading development organizations, stand as perhaps the most recognizable and wide-reaching of such pronouncements; they include, as the first of seven objectives, 'to halve, between 1990 and 2015, the proportion of people who suffer from hunger' (UN 2015).⁶⁷

At national levels, the rise in prominence is also evident. In the United States, for example, President Obama pledged to end child hunger in that country by 2015 (Vilsack 2010) (in an obvious parallel to the internationally embraced MDGs), a sober and public reminder that the food security crisis transcends national borders and gross domestic products. At the same time,

⁶⁷ At the time of this text's completion, the UN (2015) had declared that this 'hunger reduction target should be almost met by 2015'; however – and this elaboration of the statement reveals notable dissonance – 'about 842 million people are estimated to be undernourished' (ibid.). Having concluded the end of the MDG period, the 'UN is working with governments, civil society and other partners to build on the momentum generated by the MDGs and carry on with an ambitious post-2015 development agenda' (ibid.). It is likely to produce a new set of 'sustainable development goals that build on the eight Millennium Development Goals' (ibid.).

the U.S. Department of Health's strategic vision *Healthy People 2020* aims to 'achieve health equity' and to 'eliminate disparities' in health, themes that map very closely onto the bimodality of the new food security challenge, among its overarching goals (DHHS 2012).

In the United Kingdom, the UK Research Councils defined food security as one of the nation's 'grand challenges' (Marsden 2012, 139). Barling, Sharpe and Lang (2008) underline the *newness* and *emergence* of this national prominence and prioritization, saying that until recently food security had been considered even as a 'pariah concept' in that country (9). For example, the major discursive difference between the 2006 and 2008 policy statements issued by the nation's Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) illustrate the *newness* of the contemporary food security priority. In 2006, the statement read: 'Poverty and subsistence agriculture are root causes of national food insecurity. National food security is hugely more relevant for developing countries than the rich countries of Western Europe' (cited in Barling, Sharpe, and Lang 2008, 8). In 2008, on the other hand, it more robustly considered the matter (of *Ensuring the UK's Food Security in a Changing World*, as it verily titled the report) as resultant and reliant not only on productive output but also on 'the social dimensions of the food vulnerabilities of low income households' (ibid., 9), a recognition of the problematic inequalities in food *access* and health outcomes that plague not only developing countries but also rich countries such as the UK. Meanwhile, in Italy, Brunori et al. (2013) call identifying 'a consistent national food security concept, not in conflict with a global food security approach, ... the latest and biggest challenge' (9).

There is, then, wide agreement in both academic and policy communities that there is a major food security challenge at hand. The precise nature of the problem, however, (and, moreover, what ought to be done about it) fails to enjoy such unanimous accord. Indeed, defining precisely what food security *is* – how to conceptualise, understand, measure and assure it – remains extremely controversial and gives rise to debates conducted across and within numerous disciplines, including most notably those of agri-food studies, development, law, and political science. Given the tenor of this discord and the enormity of the food security crisis – whatever it is – I dedicate much of the remainder of this literature review (in this chapter and the following) to exploring these debates, and indeed I dedicate much of the analytical work in this research to contextualizing and further querying them.

In order to illustrate the scope of conflict immediately – and to set the stage for the rest of the exploration – let us view as a 'taster' of the discursive variety implicated in the three definitions of food security chosen by Lang, Barling and Caraher (2009) for the same illustrative purpose. Taken together, they exemplify the wide range of ideas at hand:

FAO⁶⁸: Food security exists when all people, at all times, have access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food to meet their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life.

OECD⁶⁹: [Food security is a] concept which discourages opening the domestic market to foreign agricultural products on the principle that a country must be as self-sufficient as possible for its basic dietary needs.

UK Government economists: [Food security is the] ‘availability of food; access of consumers to affordable, nutritional and safe food; resilience of the food system to significant disruptions, and public confidence in that system.

(255-256)

There is not, then, a single definition of food security; rather its definition lives within a well-populated and hotly contested discourse space. Let us examine in greater depth this point that is central to the current research paradigm: *food security is a contested concept*.

Generalized thematic shifts

Since the 1970s, the notion of food security has changed considerably, and its multiple trajectories have led to a diverse and often conflicting set of interpretations. In general, however, it is possible to identify several generalized shifts in food security conceptualization; these shifts are by no means complete (we need only to consider current interventions that reflect extremely closely the hyper-productivist origins of food security ideation), but they do reflect widespread and major changes that must be recognized. In 1996, Maxwell related the shifts he observed at that time to wider shifts toward postmodernism in development and social science generally and testified to ‘the value of relating food security not just to other topics in development, but to a wider philosophical and cultural current’ (165), a discerning comment that remains valid – and worth recalling – today. At the time of his writing, Maxwell identified three major shifts in food security conceptualization: a shift from aggregate to individual levels of measurement; a shift from food production to sustainable livelihoods perspectives; and a shift from objective to subjective measures of food security.

Despite the nearly two decades separating Maxwell’s observations from our own, the shifts he identified remain pertinent. In some ways, the intervening time has created the conditions for their extension and consolidation; in some, for their refinement or transcendence. While acknowledging the perspicacity and sustained bearing of Maxwell’s observations, the present context demands a refined identification of the major shifts in food security conceptualization,

⁶⁸ The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations

⁶⁹ The Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development

and the roll I present here draws from and builds upon, but does not precisely replicate, Maxwell's early summary. While these shifts have, of course, evolved over time – and indeed continue to evolve – they also closely reflect, relate to, and respond to the very contemporary dynamics of the 'new' food insecurity. In broad strokes, then, I identify four largely generalised transitions in food security conceptualization: a shift from production focus to consumption focus; a shift from issues of quantity to issues of quantity *and* quality; a shift from poor-country to all-country; and a shift from rural to rural *and* urban.

From production-side to consumption-side: The shift to 'access'

This shift might be framed in a number of ways: from supply-side to demand-side, from production-side to consumption-side, from productivism to sustainable livelihoods (as per Maxwell), or, perhaps most usefully in dialogue with the contemporary lexicon, from availability to access. Shaw (2007) relates the shift to a current of holism and expansiveness of vision, saying that food security moved 'from a purely agricultural sector concern into the broader arena of poverty and development problems' (383). Through the 1980s, food security remained for the most part conceived of as a problem of inadequate production: achieving food security, then, was ('simply', if we might use the term only in a very relative sense) a matter of finding ways to increase production.

Following Amartya Sen's landmark contributions regarding poverty, famine, and entitlements (a contribution that has borne fruit in many fields)⁷⁰, however, 'it has been impossible ... to speak credibly of food security as being a problem of food supply, without at least making reference to the importance of access and entitlement' (Maxwell 1996, 156). Indeed many contemporary commentators on food security and on related concepts reflect the certainty of this shift and now refer to access as *the* central concern of food security. MacMillan and Dowler (2012), for example, assert that 'it is entitlement and access – whose and how sustained – that are important for food security, rather than overall increase in supply' (15).

In a related vein, while early analyses of food security focused on *national* productivity (e.g., FAO 2003; Shaw 2007), later ones moved toward appreciations of *household* food security and

⁷⁰ Sen's contribution not only to food security and development work but also to numerous other disciplines is impossible to overstate and also impossible to fully explore here. I include several comments related to his work in this review, but the interested reader is heartily encouraged to consult directly both his fuller body of work – see the bibliography – and work deriving from it (for example, that in the capabilities tradition).

continued evolving to consider aspects of distribution *within* households and families.⁷¹ We see practical examples of this change in appreciation, for example, in school feeding approaches that include take-home rations contingent upon school attendance, designed and lauded for their impact not so much on the school-attending child but rather on his younger siblings (Bundy et al. 2009, 28).

Again, it is Sen who deserves much of the credit for driving (or at least hastening) this shift. Indeed, he is the figure most directly responsible for launching a ‘paradigm shift that moved this issue of access to food to centre-stage’ (though ‘the idea was already commonplace in nutrition planning and had been amply demonstrated in field studies’) (Maxwell 1996, 157). Sen’s (1981) illustration of the 1943 Bengal Famine in *Poverty and Famines* showed that national-level food availability meant little in terms of preventing hunger and starvation where *individuals* lacked an entitlement to food. With this he famously ‘redefined’ hunger, famine, and food security: ‘Starvation is the characteristic of some people not *having* enough food to eat. It is not the characteristic of there *being* not enough food to eat’ (1). His notion of entitlements required ‘a shift in thinking from what exists to who can command what’ (Kent 2005, 12).

Sen’s work, moreover, helped to better integrate ‘an ethical and human rights dimension into the discussion of food security’ (FAO 2003, 34) and implied a fundamental philosophical revaluation of the food security project, reframing the issue from *food* to the *people whom food must serve*. In other words, ‘the concept [of food security] had both lost its simplicity and [had become] not itself a goal, but an intermediating set of actions that contribute to an active and healthy life’ (ibid., 27). In this view, ‘production and productivity should not be seen as goals in themselves’ (MacMillan and Dowler 2012, 15), but rather as instruments for achieving human nourishment and wellbeing.⁷²

The shift to access is not without its shortcomings. The first is its general failure to articulate a broad appreciation of access itself. While the spatial and economic aspects of food access have been more readily recognised (with attention, for example, to food deserts and food poverty), the matter of *intellectual* access is often neglected. Sen (1999) underlines the importance of knowledge, skills and education as factors that support access to one’s (other) rights and to full participation in one’s society, as well as the need for access to knowledge and skills in order to fully participate in one’s society. Marquand (2004) similarly recognises the importance of citizen knowledge for buttressing a well-functioning public domain (where the common good,

⁷¹ In this sense, of course, the ‘shift to access’ also reflects what Maxwell characterized as the shift from aggregate to individual-level measurement.

⁷² Note that this revaluation is also largely what enables the shift to quality; allows for a better integration of food with the health outcomes it allows for and creates; and helps to link the food security concept with other major contemporary agri-food concepts including food poverty, food deserts, and food justice.

which we might easily imagine includes the assurance of food security, can be best prioritized and pursued). Arguably, then, knowledge and skill⁷³ should be considered as constitutive elements of food and nutrition security in its access dimension: indeed, if individuals can find and afford healthy food, but do not have the knowledge or skills to use or prepare it, the food is *effectively inaccessible*.⁷⁴ There is some (largely cursory) mention of these issues; for example, Kent (2005) refers to problems ‘relating to human resources, having to do with inadequate knowledge, inadequate skills, or inadequate time’ (11). Yet these themes remain grossly underappreciated relative to others attended to in the shift to access.

Second, while this shift has been impressive, it has been by no means complete, and in many ways there remains a strong productivist legacy. Indeed, while much of the development discourse has shifted to emphasize access, many of the most powerful actors in the food system – including, for example, members of the increasingly concentrated corporate agri-food sector (i.a., Monsanto and Cargill) and major international neoliberal institutions (such as the World Bank) – continue to promote food security characterizations and interventions founded upon productivist principles. Most notable, of course, are their propositions for a second (or third) ‘Green Revolution’, ‘sustainable intensification’, and ‘corporate social responsibility’, all strategies that promote and reinforce productivism (Marsden 2012; Foresight 2011).⁷⁵

From quantity to quantity and quality

Much as the larger agri-food discourse has taken a quality turn (Ilbery and Kneafsey 1998; Goodman 2003), so too has the food security discourse. That is, food insecurity is increasingly seen as an issue of *quality* (mal-consumption including over-consumption) as well as one of *quantity* (under-consumption). Brunori et al. (2013), for example, examine the character of food security conceptualization in a unique contextual situation: in Italy – a rich country with a highly particular food culture that links food to identity (Montanari 2010) – food *security* directly and explicitly relates to the notion of *quality*, here understood to take into account aspects such as ‘how food is produced and processed, where it comes from, and its impact on the environment and on society’ (1).⁷⁶

⁷³ Knowledge and skill, of course, are concepts that have been often co-opted and compromised in the contexts of colonialism and development – a theme I explore in subsequent discussions of ‘development’ – and I do not intend here to too narrowly conscript these concepts.

⁷⁴ At the same time, it is important to integrate considerations regarding the knowledge-discourse-power triangle: *whose* ‘knowledge’ and *which* ‘ways of knowing’ are considered valid for participation in and contribution to society are central concerns in realizing what many postmodern scholars and practitioners define as a more just, human and dignified pursuit of food security. I problematize the matter somewhat more fully in our later discussion of development.

⁷⁵ As well as the wider notions of capitalism, consumerism and growth that comfortably accompany it.

⁷⁶ This, of course, broaches questions about how quality, which has come to encompass aspects of taste, nutrition, health, status, ethics, etc., is constructed; it is an interesting issue addressed at length in the

In the public health literature, meanwhile, Yngve et al. (2009) articulate a generalized shift in food security precisely in the ‘quality’ terms I use here, and others, too, maintain that the current explosion of obesity and nutrition-related disease should be considered alongside hunger under a widened rubric of food security. Lang (2010), for example, suggests that the definition of food insecurity broaden sufficiently to ‘factor[s] in all diet-related ill-health, not just hunger’ (95). International bodies such as FAO and SCN also recognize this changing practical dynamic and refer to diet-related ill health in many contemporary reports and statements (e.g., Commission on the Nutrition Challenges of the 21st Century 2000).

Perhaps the clearest implication of this shift to better appreciate ‘quality’ issues within the rubric of the new food insecurity is that it requires acknowledging the fundamental and symbiotic relationship between food and health. In doing so, it underlines food’s instrumental nature, resituating emphasis – in a Senian⁷⁷ reading – from the *means* (food itself) to the *ends* (the human wellbeing it is meant to assure). To risk ordinariness, it shifts the discussion from *the carrot or the wheat* to *the person* whom the carrot or the wheat *is meant to serve*.

At the same time – in a more practical light – it implies a more frequent and more intentional integration of food security and public health discourses and policies. The systemic, complex nature of the interactions between these fields suggest that older paradigms – of food security, of public health, and of the policy environments designed to support both of these – reproduce isolated and poorly functional visions and should be replaced with newer models better able to appreciate the complexity and complicity of the interactions.⁷⁸ Until-recently predominant – even ‘hegemonic’ (Rayner 2009) – approaches to public health have emphasized mechanistic, biomedical, and individualist understandings of health, which have correlated with intervention strategies based upon behaviour modification and assignation of individual responsibility, at the

wider agri-food literature (e.g., Marsden, Banks, and Bristow 2000; Ilbery and Kneafsey 1998; Kirwan 2006) but which I omit discussion of here.

⁷⁷ Indeed, Maxwell (1996) links the issue of quality directly to Sen by pointing out that inherent in the concept of food *entitlement* is that the *quality* of the entitlement, not just the *quantity*, matters (159).

⁷⁸ It is worth recalling here Kuhn’s (2012) original framing of the ‘paradigm shift’. Though *anomalies* – things that cannot be explained well by the existing paradigm – always occur within and are most often able to be withstood within a reigning paradigm, a too numerous and too serious collection of anomalies throws science into a crisis. In this crisis, new ideas emerge and gain acceptance, and some new collection of ideas coalesces into a new regnant paradigm; this is, as Kuhn calls it, is the ‘scientific revolution’. In popular discourse, of course, the notion of the *paradigm shift* remains common, if less rigorously critical. Nonetheless, in the several suggestions of a food security paradigm shift that we have seen here, it is worth noting the adherence they show to the Kuhnian model: in short, all of these suggestions rely precisely on the (correct) observation that – as the jeremiad of global food system woes presented at the opening of this text succinctly demonstrates – there is an excess of *anomalies*, as it were, in the application of older food security paradigms (related precisely to their understandings that assign consequences of widespread food-related wellbeing to a growth in agricultural productivity).

expense of more robust ones that better integrate social, structural and environmental factors (Caraher and Coveney 2004; Rayner 2009; Lang 2005).

More recently, however, scholars have demanded better attention to the systemic, structural and social factors that underlie nutrition and health outcomes, and this has led to a body of scholarship related to ‘ecological public health’ (EPH), which points to a need to better engage questions related to the links between nutrition and health outcomes and the food and social systems within which they occur (O’Kane 2012; Rayner 2009; Smith and Cummins 2009; Caraher and Coveney 2004; Lang 2005). Collectively embracing an ecological approach to food and health would represent a veritable paradigm shift; while the legacy of the productivist paradigm induces ‘implicit acceptance in society of [the] burden of disease’ and tolerates its ‘inability to act on problems of over- and undernutrition’ at a societal level, an ecologically integrated one instead acknowledges a ‘right to be well’ and designs an entire ‘food supply geared to deliver health’ (Lang 2005, 735). Proponents of EPH suggest that, in order to apprehend and address the new food insecurity in its fullness, however, such approaches must become *de rigueur*.⁷⁹ Indeed, while life science-based approaches to nutrition and health may have their place, ‘societies are not surgeries’ (ibid., 732), and the ‘the likely solutions for nutrition problems lie less in unlocking biological pathways than in creating social environments that can deliver “correct” balance’ (ibid., 731). Thus EPH proponents (and those with related perspectives) advocate for governments to ‘migrate from “post-swallowing” food and nutrition interventions to “pre-swallowing” conditions’, to aim ‘to make the social infrastructure conducive to healthy decisions about food’ (Caraher and Coveney 2004, 595) and to ‘focus on entire food chains’ (Lang 2010, 95).

In the present study, the shift to quality is most patently manifest in widespread and growing recognition of what I have termed the new food insecurity: one that is bimodal, or, in brief, with simultaneous incidence of under- and malnutrition (or, in even briefer and more colloquial terming, of hunger and obesity). (See Figure 1.) The simultaneous recognition of quality- and quantity-related issues represents a shift that is extremely important in both cases: in Colombia, it is seen directly in the full integration of the right to food with the right to health, and in NYC it is evident in the changing and intensifying dynamics of food security-related public health policy work.

⁷⁹ They acknowledge that such approaches are decidedly not (yet) dominant but do observe a distinct upward trend toward their embrace, noting that numerous important health institutions, including the U.S. Institute of Medicine and the WHO’s Commission on the Social Determinants of Health, express a *de facto* appreciation of it (Rayner 2009, 589).

From poor-country to all-country

Another aspect of novelty in the new food insecurity is that the challenge is global and what might be called GDP-inclusive, a challenge for and in rich countries as well as poor ones. Morgan and Sonnino (2010) underline that food security *is* an issue highly relevant to rich countries and particularly to their cities, and, indeed, that the challenge of ‘feeding the city’ is even more complex in the case of ‘world cities’, including ‘rich’ cities such as New York and London, whose ethnic diversity and international relations demand a special degree of global connectivity. Andrew Simms (2008), director of the New Economics Foundation in the UK, used a shocking phrase to communicate the urgency of such concerns, saying that the *UK* lives on the food security brink, perpetually just ‘nine meals from anarchy’ (3).⁸⁰

In rich countries, the new food insecurity crisis has been given greatest visibility in its form of ‘obesity-as-public-health-crisis’ (e.g., Barling, Sharpe, and Lang 2008, 39). Hinrichs (2010) describes how

in the United States, “food insecurity” is more likely to manifest as “malnutrition” rather than as “undernutrition”. Hungry Americans who are poor tend to eat disproportionate amounts of low-quality, calorie-dense, processed foods, because that is what is cheap, filling and most available to them (8).

It is largely the construction of obesity as an epidemic (e.g., Patterson and Johnston 2012; Guthman 2011) and the growing attention to public health concerns, then, which has served to underline the magnitude and severity of food system dysfunction and to somewhat raise the issue of food security on research and policy agendas (Dowler 2001).⁸¹

However, even in rich countries – and this is the great discontinuity and perhaps the greatest conceptual challenge – the enormity of the ‘obesity-as-public-health-crisis’ dimension does not imply that the ‘old’ food security challenge – in a word, *hunger* – has disappeared. On the contrary, hunger remains rampant (as we have seen, for example, nearly a billion people are hungry worldwide, 47% of NYC households with children face challenges affording food and 14% of Americans are considered formally food insecure according to a definition that heavily emphasizes the hunger dimension). As Barling, Sharpe and Lang (2008) acknowledge, ‘today, problems of under-, over- and mal-consumption coexist’ (39). Indeed, it is the absurd

⁸⁰ Simms (2008) was writing on the need to transition (rapidly) from a carbon-based food economy, and his overture to the shocking phrase cited is also worthy of note (*italics added*): ‘*For all our technological sophistication and consumer society self-satisfaction*, we are, at all times, just nine meals from anarchy’ (4).

⁸¹ Of course, while the public health dimension of the new food security crisis has acted as the impetus for the issue’s rise on the agenda in rich countries, it has not left poor countries unaffected, and the ‘nutrition transition’ and ‘double burden’ are much discussed in the public health and development literatures as well as in the policy design of low- and middle-income countries (Popkin 1999; Drewnowski and Popkin 1997; Allen and Guthman 2006).

simultaneity and juxtaposition of hunger and obesity, worldwide, that verily *identifies* the new food security crisis, and the situation cannot be understood in its isolated halves. Shaw (2007) issues an important warning in the midst of this new reality, saying (correctly) that ‘it would be grotesquely perverse if attention to world hunger and food insecurity were to be diverted by a focus on the obesity epidemic. *Both* crises must be overcome’ (412). It is a useful reminder that the nature of the new food insecurity is complex. It is not *simply* the public health crisis of obesity, and it is not *simply* the development crisis of hunger: it is the cruel duality of the *two* phenomena, hunger *and* obesity, which together afflict more than a third of the world’s population.

From rural to rural and urban

Finally, the global population is rapidly urbanizing, and this bears major implications upon the materiality and discourse of food security: a majority of the world’s population now lives in cities, and the major inequity inherent in the resulting urban and peri-urban conglomerations implies important changes for the food security dynamic.

Now ‘cities find themselves at the forefront of the New Food Equation’ (Morgan and Sonnino 2010, 210; cf. Forster 2011; Maxwell and Slater 2003) – and hence at the centre of the food security crisis that characterizes it – and all the more so in ‘world cities’ that belong at once to a local geography and to a global supra-geography (e.g., Morgan and Sonnino 2010). Urban areas – especially large, diverse ones – face special challenges to food security that rural areas and more homogenous demographics do not. Some of these challenges arise from the fact that the urban poor do not have access to many of the food coping resources that rural populations do and must therefore depend primarily upon the market (in all its unpredictability) for food (e.g., DeMarco, Thorburn, and Kue 2009). Cities also more visibly juxtapose the twin crises of hunger and obesity that characterize the bimodality of the new food security challenge and reflect challenges related to the cultural heterogeneity and diversified food needs of their residents (Anderson and Cook 1999; Morgan and Sonnino 2010).

The main international food security institutions have recognized both the increasingly worrisome global food scenario and the new urban primacy within it, and the FAO, WFP and WHO⁸² have each undertaken initiatives to address *urban* food security in its particularity. At the turn of the millennium, FAO included ‘food for the cities’ as a priority area in its Strategic Framework and launched a formal ‘Food for the Cities’ multidisciplinary initiative. But it has

⁸² The World Health Organization

also observed that, despite the urgency and severity of the urban food security challenge, the response has thus far been quite inadequate:

The food dimension of poverty in urban areas is not given the appropriate attention in either poverty reduction strategies or international development fora. Furthermore, policies and resources dealing with poverty, exclusion and inequality in cities remain highly inadequate. As a result, urban diets are affected and malnutrition has become a major concern (FAO 2015).

As a consequence of this new centrality at the heart of the food security challenge, cities ‘are emerging as prominent food chain actors’ (Sonnino 2009, 432), and urban food systems have become a matter of recent and growing – but still, according to many, well insufficient – interest and attention. A range of academic and other literature (e.g., Dixon et al. 2007; Forster 2011; Pothukuchi and Kaufman 2000; Cohen and Garrett 2010) testifies to this emerging prominence, and numerous cities – including New York and Bogotá – have been lifted as exemplars for their various efforts toward urban food system reform.⁸³

With these dynamics, then, food security conceptualizations and strategies have begun to better appreciate a distinct urban dimension, recognizing food security as a phenomenon that must be understood not as (only) a problem of under-production by rural subsistence farmers but (also) as one of urban food access and – in the fullest sense – entitlement.

Summary: Bases for understanding food security

Three important points are clear at the conclusion of this overview. First, food security has emerged as a consensus ‘grand challenge’ of our time, coincident with and centric to numerous simultaneous social, political, economic and environmental crises. That is, in short, *it is important*. Second, *this* food security challenge is decidedly *new*, having only recently taken shape – and earned recognition – as a challenge that is globally implicative and posing threats to contexts that span economic, political and geographic classifications. Third, despite its certain material bases, the construction of this new food security challenge is contested and evolving, with protagonists differently characterising factors including food production and access; food quantity and quality; poor-country and rich-country manifestation; and rural and urban relevance. These variations underline the constructedness of the food security concept, and the evolving ideational models they describe inform the representations that dominate the current food security discourse space; I describe these representations in the next chapter.

⁸³ Note importantly, however, that the novelty and dynamism both of the NFE and of the urban particularity within it mean that urban food security efforts continue to occupy a rather peripheral place within the agri-food scholarship; there are numerous calls to remedy this gap (Morgan and Sonnino 2010; Bedore 2010; Sonnino 2009).

Chapter 4

The contested discourse space

A review of the literature, Part II

*The old food policy paradigm is running out of legitimacy.
- Lang (2005, 736)*

Abstract

Following an overview of food security's conceptual evolution in the last chapter, I continue, in this chapter, to elucidate the actual food security discourse space. Perhaps most notable among its characteristics is that this is a contested space, disputed among scholars, practitioners and policymakers with varying perspectives; indeed, this disharmony is what frames the necessity and currency of discursive research studies such as this one. In this chapter, I review the dissonance and dissension in contemporary food security theorization.

The food security discourse space: Defined by disagreement

As introduced in Chapter 1, one of the most curious aspects surrounding the current attention to food security is that there is at once widespread *agreement* (within both academic and policy communities) that ‘it’ is an urgent and massive problem, and widespread *disagreement* about what, precisely, ‘it’ is. In brief, the food security discourse space is *contested*, and extraordinarily so.

Numerous scholars have testified to the phenomena, calling ‘food security’ an ‘eclectic term’ (MacMillan and Dowler 2012, 21) and ‘a cornucopia of ideas’ replete with a ‘repertoire of interpretations’ (Mooney and Hunt 2009, 155): ‘like all simple terms, its meaning can be taken in different directions’ (ibid.). Since the foundational 1974 FAO / World Food Conference definition⁸⁴, the food security concept has ‘evolved, developed, multiplied and diversified’ (Maxwell 1996, 155). Even several decades ago, the conceptual diversity was evident: Maxwell’s 1996 compendium *elaborated* 32 widely differing definitions issued between 1975 and 1991, and Smith, Pointing, and Maxwell (1993) referred to a count that rather monumentally numbered around 200. Some claim that such drastic plurality carries with it constitutional vacuity: Rosset (2003), for example, asserts that ‘food security has been stripped of real meaning’ (1) and must (now) be replaced by other (more *meaningful*, we might infer) approach (such as, according to his suggestion, food sovereignty).

The commonality and widespread acceptance of the food security term is much like that of *sustainability* in the sense that it is an *agreeable* but not *agreed-upon* master frame. In other words, no one can credibly assume a position *against* food security, but the ‘nonreflexive consent’ awarded to it makes it a ‘consensus frame’ behind which there is great contestation of ownership, definition, and meaning (Mooney and Hunt 2009, 470).⁸⁵ ‘While nearly everyone

⁸⁴ This is not an entirely accurate characterization, as *notions* of food security – or at least ideas very closely related to it – have existed ‘forever’. We need turn only to the famous Roman *panem et circenses* to contemplate the long historical legacy of the concept, if not the term; nonetheless, in its contemporary use, the term *food security* and its associated connotations have effectively emerged in the wake of the 1972-1974 food crises. In this sense, for the present purposes, the 1974 WFC definition can be considered foundational, and its framing underlines the originary productivist basis for the concepts that we review shortly: it defined food security as the ‘availability at all times of adequate world food supplies of basic foodstuffs to sustain a steady expansion of food consumption and to offset fluctuations in production and prices’ (UN General Assembly 1975). (Notably, it also acknowledged the bases for a human right to food, proclaiming that ‘every man, woman and child has the inalienable right to be free from hunger and malnutrition’).

⁸⁵ Scholars have also remarked widely upon this aspect of sustainability, saying that it has come to mean so much that it now means little at all. Sustainability is (also) an undeniably malleable, contested, and highly contingent concept (Hopwood, Mellor, and O’Brien 2005; Jabareen 2008; Adams 2006; Giddings, Hopwood, and O’Brien 2002); Jabareen (2008) goes so far as to say that ‘the concept of ethical paradox’ – that is, the inherent tension between *sustainability* and *development* – ‘rests at the heart of this framework’ (188), and the (at least apparent) insolubility of this paradox leads the concept to its great fluidity of interpretation. Others describe the famous 1987 definition tendered by the Brundtland

will agree that food insecurity is a social problem, that very consensus generates contested claims to defining the problem within the “social problems marketplace” (ibid., 492). And that contestation – in short, the varied and differently power-implicating interpretations of what food security *means* – is immense. For example, Lang, Barling and Caraher (2009) situate (toward one end of the spectrum) the community food security perspective as ‘almost a proxy for anti-poverty work with an environmental and sustainability focus’, and (toward the other) a productivity-emphasising perspective ‘interpreted in national terms as “self-sufficiency” or “self-reliance” – whether a country can meet its own food needs’ (255).⁸⁶

It is precisely this plurality of meaning that drives the current research on the discursive contextualization of food security (and the programmatic and material finalities that result from it). Barling, Sharpe and Lang (2008) offer pointed testimony to the need for this undertaking, observing that

the term food security deserves to be reworked. It means different things to different people: food nationalism, food defense, community food security, food democracy, food sovereignty, food risks, food resilience, food capacity. All these carry connotations and have their own as well as overlapping literatures, yet are [used unreflexively] in the policy discourse (44).

This testifies also to a second point: food security is contested, but its contestation in large part derives from its contingent relationship with other *en vogue* agri-food topics such as food sustainability, sovereignty and justice. Whether, how, and to what extent these other concepts relate to the food security concept – whether these are derivational, integrative, parallel, opposing, overlapping, or otherwise related – determine, in many ways, the character, content, and ‘fullness’ of particular food security discourses.

Why and how, then, is there such contestation over as ‘agreeable’ an idea as food security? The reply is a long one, as there are both very many points of disagreement and very many inflections regarding the nature of each one. Shaw (2007), for example, reports disagreement on such issues as trade liberalization, legal assurances of a right to food, ‘population stabilization and reproductive health of women’, and the assignation of responsibility for pertinent programming (350). More radical and marginal actors report greater conceptual disputes and even greater contestations regarding the interests and power dynamics that lie behind the control of food security politics (Mooney and Hunt 2009; Carr 2006). For example, postmodern perspectives such as postdevelopmentalism point to major issues of relative power that allow

Commission – as ‘a political fudge [...] based on an ambiguity of meaning [...] in order to gain widespread acceptance’ (Giddings, Hopwood, and O’Brien 2002, 188). Evolving definitions have maintained this early conceptual vagueness, allowing different collectives to interpret it according to their own interests and to differently prioritize among its multiple dimensions. Indeed, one of the reasons for its current popularity is ‘precisely this looseness’ and flexibility of meaning (Adams 2006, 3).

⁸⁶ Note, of course, the power attributions variably emanant from each of these perspectives: while the first asserts democratic decision-making and widespread, agentic participation, the latter (differently) potentiates already powerful private-sector actors.

certain actors – to the exclusion of other ones – to reproduce and reinforce their own privilege, priority and interest (Escobar 1995). In a similar way, different interest groups – for example, those interested primarily in public health and those interested primarily in hunger – sometimes take opposing positions and make contrary valuations for reasons that are not fundamentally conceptual but rather practical; for example, different actors often must effectively compete for the same pools of intervention resources (Winne 2008).

There are two broad tendencies in the conventional food security discourse space, one progressive and one conservative, though scholars have labelled these differently (Holt Giménez and Shattuck 2011; MacMillan and Dowler 2012; Mooney and Hunt 2009)⁸⁷. According to MacMillan and Dowler (2012), the first of these, progressive, prioritizes matters of fairness and equity and has been most prominent in the international development discourse; the second, conservative, dominant in the UK (and most other rich countries)⁸⁸, is ‘wedded to a mixture of neoliberalism and protectionism’ (2) and is often largely ignorant to concerns for distributivism, equity, and justice. In practical terms, the progressive trend has rejected the neoliberal marketization of the food system to instead emphasize equity of food *access* (this, understood in various permutations that include physical availability, affordability, nutrition, quality, and cultural appropriateness, and which sometimes extend even to include wider concerns for equity and justice beyond the food system). The conservative trend has focused instead on supply-side concerns for improved productivity and production while making secondary (and sometimes marginalizing or ignoring altogether) consumption-side concerns related to access and distribution.⁸⁹

Prominent discourses: General frameworks for understanding food security

With this basic picture of a contested discourse space as the backdrop, we consider now several of the most prominent and mainstream discursive constructions of the food security concept: the productivist framework; the place-based or context-dependent framework; the right to food

⁸⁷ Compare this progressive / conservative characterization of the divergence in food security discourse to Holt-Giménez and Shattuck’s (2011) discussion of the same divergence within the ‘food movement’. It is not an incidental comparison, since indeed much of the food movement’s work is centred in some way on food security, whether this is interpreted as the temporal longevity of the functional food system or the immediate hunger needs of vulnerable groups.

⁸⁸ At least until the past several years: its dominance is less outstanding since the 2006-2008 food crisis.

⁸⁹ The tension between these two trends manifests in a further curiosity. Many of the most progressive actors in food system reform (in both the academy and in civil society) are reticent to accept even progressive, highly evolved understandings of food security. Rather, they view the concept as irredeemably burdened with the conservative legacy of its origins and early history, citing the argument that neoliberal approaches to food security have disabled vulnerable economies, destroyed livelihoods, and ultimately thwarted the drive for genuine food security in many countries (with the widespread actuality of hunger and poverty serving as the principle supporting argument). This progressive faction, then, prefers to confine *food security* to its *un*-evolved and decidedly *un*-progressive characterizations – in other words, the conservative ones – only to oppose these altogether with rival notions such as food sovereignty or community food security.

(RTF) framework; the livelihoods framework; and the food and nutrition security (FNS) framework.⁹⁰ Of course, while these frameworks *can* be oppositional or exclusive, they are not *necessarily* so. While the productivist framework clashes quite contrastingly, for example, with the rights framework, the livelihoods and rights frameworks are largely harmonious and complementary. Nevertheless, we consider them separately here because they reflect discrete bodies of literature and intervention traditions.

Productivist (or neo-productivist) framework

The origins of the modern food security concept lie in productivism: in brief, this understands the ‘problem’ of food insecurity to consist fundamentally in a lack of food *availability* – this due, most conventionally, to a lack of food *production* – and consequently the ‘solution’ to lie in producing more food. The temporal and contextual situation in which modern food security work emerged – that is, in the wake of the 1970s food crisis – largely explains the paradigm’s logic. Early FAO conceptualizations of food security⁹¹ reveal and define the productivist paradigm; as Shaw (2007) summarizes, these:

focused on increasing food production, particularly in the developing countries, stabilizing food supplies, using the food surpluses of developed countries constructively and creatively, creating world and national food reserves, stimulating world agricultural trade, negotiating international commodity agreements, and increasing concern and understanding through B.R. Sen’s Freedom from Hunger Campaign (283).

While FAO’s appreciation of food security has expanded considerably and now much more fully appreciates individual-level and access-emphatic appraisals, much of its practical work continues to reflect early production-centred approaches.⁹²

The productivist discourse continues to dominate among many of today’s most powerful actors within the contemporary agri-food, international development, and food security circles, manifested in their propositions for food security tactics that promote the pursuit of another ‘Green Revolution’, ‘sustainable intensification’, and ‘corporate social responsibility’. Brunori

⁹⁰ It is important to note that this discussion collects only those discourses that are both more or less prominent and more or less mainstream. More radically alternative political and social ideologies have yielded accordingly more radical alternatives to food security conceptualization, and we view an important example of this type in the following chapter’s consideration of postdevelopment theory.

⁹¹ Recall again the ‘foundational’ food security definition proffered by the 1974 World Food Conference: ‘the ‘availability at all times of adequate world food supplies of basic foodstuffs to sustain a steady expansion of food consumption and to offset fluctuations in production and prices’ (UN General Assembly 1975).

⁹² Consider, for example, recent discussion items and output documents of the Committee on Food Security (CFS), which focus largely on production issues.

et al. (2013) summarize well the argument employed by the ‘neoproductivist’⁹³ coalition’, which proposes that

to defeat hunger in a world with a growing population we need to produce more food; b) organic and local foods are for the upper classes; c) organic production is not safe, while technology can provide solutions to important safety problems; d) the latest technologies – including GMOs – enable more food to be produced with fewer resources; [and that] e) science applied to food can provide solutions to important health problems (7).

The discourse relates closely to a present context of particularly strong corporate neoliberal domination of the food system, which Holt-Giménez and Shattuck (2011) describe as a ‘neoliberal retrenchment’ (135) that is characterized ‘by the unprecedented market power and profits of monopoly agri-food corporations ... liberalized global trade in food, increasingly concentrated land ownership ... and growing opposition from food movements worldwide’ (ibid., 111). Since it is precisely a productivist discourse that ‘reinforces extant dominant interpretations and practices’ and ‘supports the forces of globalization’, it is ‘usually advanced by power holders’, including actors such as the World Bank⁹⁴, WTO, transnational corporations (such as Cargill, Monsanto, Wal-Mart, etc.), FAO, USDA, CGIAR, and BMGF⁹⁵ (Holt Giménez and Shattuck 2011; Mooney and Hunt 2009), as well as by ‘other agents of globalization’ (Mooney and Hunt 2009, 476) and by efforts that ‘treat hunger and poverty as a business opportunity’ (Holt Giménez and Shattuck 2011, 114). The food security strategies proposed by such mainstream actors include increasing agricultural production; increasing corporatization; expanding GMOs; and internationally sourcing food aid. By and large, they also serve well to reinforce the interests of their powerful mainstream proponents.

The productivist perspective toward food security is sharply criticized by detractors, who insist that it is precisely such approaches that have handicapped local development and in fact created precisely the conditions for food *insecurity* to thrive. Holt-Giménez and Shattuck (2011) charge, for example, that while ‘the food crisis is bad ... another Green Revolution will make things much worse’ (154). Such criticisms to the productivist – that is, *conventional* – paradigm, then, have given rise to numerous alternative frameworks. We review several of the more prominent here.

⁹³ Note that this genre of perspective is sometimes referred to in its contemporary form as neoproductivism rather than simply productivism; both terms carry essentially the same package of embedded connotations.

⁹⁴ For example, as recently as 2001, a World Bank summary reduced food security to ‘daily calories and grams of protein per capita’ (cited in Mooney and Hunt 2009, 475), an availability-centred representation that obscures (and even obstructs) distributional inequalities in food access.

⁹⁵ For example, the BMGF-funded AGRA initiative aims to promote ‘rapid, sustainable agricultural growth’ (AGRA 2012).

‘Place-based’ or context-dependent framework

In intentional opposition to productivist approaches that support ‘the forces of globalization’ lie alternatives that are variably characterized as place-based, context-dependent, devolved, or subsidiary. Marsden (2012), for example, argues that the ‘opportunities and potentialities’ for effective changes in the agri-food system ‘do not lend themselves to generic or globalised “one-size-fits-all” solutions’ and argues against the tendency to privilege the ‘sanctity of the generic ... technological solutions over more place-based technologies and knowledge systems’ (139). Rather, he argues, new food systems approaches must better appreciate the ‘social, cultural, political and spatially embedded aspects’ of agri-food systems and link food security to local and regional actions, in a context governed by enabling policy, participatory action, and even ‘sovereignty’ (ibid., 142).⁹⁶ Similarly, Morgan (2009) argues for the importance of contextuality in the design of secure and sustainable *urban* food systems, saying that ‘each urban food strategy has its own unique, path-dependent history’ (343). And Maxwell (1999) calls ‘subsidiarity’ the way forward, saying that food security efforts should be ‘decentralised, carried out by and with poor people’ (101). Such discourses are reflective of wider enthusiasm for food system localization (DeLind 2011; Starr 2010; Hendrickson and Heffernan 2002) and are also suggestive of dialogic links between food security and several of its closest and most significant peer concepts, such as food sovereignty and community food security, that insist upon priorities of subsidiarity and empowerment.

Right To Food (RTF) framework

The right to food (RTF) concept⁹⁷ is likely the most significant – and oppositional – of recent alternatives to the productivist stance on food security. MacMillan and Dowler (2012) recognize ‘growing international work in the global North and South on implementing a rights-based approach to food insecurity’ (19), though in practice the concept has been much more meaningfully embraced in the Global South. Knuth and Vidar (2011) give a present count of 56 countries whose constitutions explicitly or implicitly recognize the right to food. Of these, 23 are explicit, and nine of them – all low- and middle-income countries – extend the right universally (Bolivia, Brazil, Ecuador, Guyana, Haiti, Kenya, South Africa, Nepal, and Nicaragua) (ibid., 22).⁹⁸ Numerous scholars have spoken to the merits of the RTF approach

⁹⁶ Marsden’s use of ‘sovereignty’ is significantly different from that of those who advocate for ‘food sovereignty’. Marsden’s term is attached to the meanings of devolution and localism that abound in his work, while ‘food sovereignty’ upholds a more militantly progressive sense of independence related to the eponymous quasi-branded ‘movement’.

⁹⁷ RTF is also sometime referred to under the extended appellations *right to adequate food*, *human right to food*, and *human right to adequate food*.

⁹⁸ However, they observe that, in fact,

(Dreze and Sen 1990; Oshaug, Eide, and Eide 1994; Riches 1999; K. Hussein 2002; Kent 2005), but the best work on the topic lies in the grey literature, the product of practitioners, activists and advocates working to promote and implement such approaches (i.a., FAO 2004; Commission on the Nutrition Challenges of the 21st Century 2000; Wheeler and Pettit 2005; Chmielewska and Souza 2011)

The RTF approach is at once extremely simple (in its fundamental and supremely *human* assertion) and beguilingly complex, paradoxically being never quite fully achievable. Shaw (2007) offers a single-line description that might adequately serve as a grossly but competently summary encapsulation, saying that ‘what distinguishes a human rights approach to the elimination of hunger ... is the focus on the dignity of human beings⁹⁹ ... and their status as rights-holders’ (360)¹⁰⁰; it is an elevation of food security (however we understand it) from an optional privilege to a due entitlement¹⁰¹, not only in theory but ‘as a matter of international law’ (ibid., 360). At the individual level, this means that ‘people all around the world should perceive their food and nutrition security as a human right that can be claimed, defended and protected’ (Forster 2011, 9). At the national level, elevating food to a right ‘brings a very different meaning to food security policies and efforts’ (De Schutter 2010, 2), one that Rocha and Lessa (2009) insist ‘can hardly be overstated’ (397).

The UN Special Rapporteur on the Right to Food (SRRTF)¹⁰² (2012) proposes a formal definition of the right to food as

The right to food is better protected legally at the national level than one would assume from simply counting the number of direct and explicit mentions of the right to food in constitutions. Currently, 56 constitutions protect the right to food either implicitly or explicitly as a justiciable right, or explicitly in the form of a directive principle of state. In addition, through the direct applicability of international treaties, the right to food is directly applicable, with a higher status than national legislation, in at least 51 countries, thus reaching a total of 106 countries in which the right to food is applicable. Finally, ten countries have already adopted a framework law on the right to food or food security recognizing the right to food, and a further nine countries are in the process of drafting such legislation (32).

⁹⁹ Indeed the discussion of human dignity is central to numerous non-dominant perspectives in several fields, including food security but also moving well beyond it, and here I only broach the theme. I discuss the central positioning of dignity in presenting the bogotano rights-based development practice, and dignity emerges as a centrally important theme in the reflection that accompanies and follows it.

¹⁰⁰ For example, in its foundational position paper, FAO Food for the Cities (Forster 2011) calls for a ‘people-centred approach’ to food security (27), a label that perhaps best arrives at the heart of the rights discourse.

¹⁰¹ Some advocates, in fact, emphasize the importance of this distinction between food as *privilege* and food as *entitlement* to such an extent that they ‘powerfully question the charitable anti-hunger sector at its core’ due to the ‘co-dependencies’ and ‘ideology of voluntarism’ – instead of one based upon entitlement and obligation – that it engenders (Neff et al. 2009, 292).

¹⁰² The existence of the Special Rapporteur post, authorized by mandate of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, is itself a notable comment on the evolution of the international food security discourse in recent years. The first mandate was created in 2000 and appointed Jean Ziegler, who served until 2008; he was followed by Olivier De Schutter (2008-2014) and Hilal Elver (2014-present). The mission of the mandate, among other things, is ‘to promote the full realization of the right to food and the adoption of measures at the national, regional and international levels for the realization of the right of everyone to adequate food and the fundamental right of everyone to be free from hunger’ (SRRTF 2012).

the right to have regular, permanent and unrestricted access, either directly or by means of financial purchases, to quantitatively and qualitatively adequate and sufficient food corresponding to the cultural traditions of the people to which the consumer belongs, and which ensure a physical and mental, individual and collective, fulfilling and dignified life free of fear.

The SRRTF makes an explicit and intentional distancing from older productivist approaches, elaborating that:

the right to food is not a right to a minimum ration of calories, proteins and other specific nutrients, or a right to be fed. It is about being guaranteed the right to feed oneself, which requires not only that food is available – that the ratio of production to the population is sufficient – but also that it is accessible – i.e., that each household either has the means to produce or buy its own food (ibid.).

Neff et al. (2009) elaborate the latter point, acknowledging that the

rights framework emphasizes the right to be able to obtain one's own food more than the right for government to provide food; but where such need arises, a framework in human rights shifts the dialogue from that of perceived charity to governmental obligation (284).

Several points about the RTF paradigm bear underlining.

First, the RTF approach is a subset of a broad family of rights-based approaches (RBA)¹⁰³ and as such is unlikely (and, according to the internal logic of these theories, *unable*) to stand in isolation either from related approaches or from a much wider sociopolitical recognition of rights themselves. In other words, it is not *about food alone* but rather about achieving dignity in the totality of the human experience (with the right to food considered as integral *to* such achievement). As such, the right to food is inextricably tied to other rights. Indeed, one of the fundamental tenets of rights-based approaches is that all human rights are 'universal, indivisible and interdependent and interrelated' (UN General Assembly 1993), a theme extolled by scholars and activists (among the most notable and influential, Sen) and upheld in international treaty. No right is greater or lesser than any other right, and it is incoherent to suggest a hierarchy of rights or to advocate for the satisfaction of one right at the expense of another. In our context, this notion of interrelationality is extremely powerful for its ability to link food and health outcomes: if one accepts the tenets of a rights-based approach, he must accept not only a right to

¹⁰³ While 'rights-based approaches' have gained popularity recently in practice and certainly retain a powerful discursive framing, it is often left unclear the matter of *what* these are intended as rights-based approaches *to*. Most commonly – and perhaps reflecting the strong tenure of the international 'development' framework – they are implicitly considered to be 'rights-based approaches' *to development*; other common, explicitly signalled thematic framings include 'rights-based approaches' *to justice, ethics, health, livelihoods and (as in our case) food*. In fairness, the truest and most universal framing might be simply that rights-based approaches are approaches to the full celebration *of rights themselves*.

food but also a right to health.¹⁰⁴ Though this connection is often left little probed, it is a key link in relating the two modalities of the new food insecurity under their common rubric.

At the same time, the concept of interrelationality inherent to rights theory broaches considerations that – though they are themes taken up by proponents from many fields – breach easy disciplinary boundaries to undertake more fundamental and universal questions. As such, it might be philosophy¹⁰⁵ that is best equipped to treat them, and the capabilities approach, elucidated most prominently by Sen and Nussbaum¹⁰⁶, is perhaps the line of thought that has best succeeded in expressing the values and principles that undergird such approaches generally. Sen (1999) emphasizes the dual *constitutive* and *instrumental* natures of rights: rights are both integral both of leading ‘the kinds of lives [people] have reason to value’ (*ends*) and tools for constructing such lives in ever better ways (*means*) (10). In the present case, then, the right to food must be appreciated both in and of itself (i.e., an *end*, a right to be free from the sufferings of hunger) as well as a tool (i.e., a *means*) for achieving ulterior and important aims (in this case, most immediately, good health, though other consequential aims can be and are also claimed).¹⁰⁷

Second, rights imply justiciability. Indeed, as Anderson (2008) describes, ‘among the advantages of recognizing [something] as a human right and not a privilege or simply something nice to have is that rights have legal standing’ (594).¹⁰⁸ Those who advocate for a rights approach maintain that this elevation of status is not simply advantageous but rather *crucial*. Anderson says that ‘human rights are the conceptual glue to connect food system alternatives that otherwise seem to strive for different goals’ (ibid., 604) and that ‘the consequences of failure [to respect a rights perspective] are severe in terms of human suffering, inequity and damage to the environment’ (ibid., 602). Similarly, Neff et al. (2009) maintain that

we cannot effectively address food-related health disparities or the ecological harms of the food system without also working to make access to health and more sustainably produced food a right, not a privilege (304).¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁴ We must acknowledge the difficulty of articulating a right to health. Clearly (since all humans must die) this is something ultimately beyond the control of individuals or states, and this is explored more fully in the rights literature. For the present purposes, it is sufficient to understand a right to health as a right to all the conditions that well respect, protect and promote good health.

¹⁰⁵ Which, in some variations of translation, is precisely the love of *wisdom*.

¹⁰⁶ Sen and Nussbaum are two particularly prolific authors. Several recommended works related closely to rights and capabilities include Nussbaum (2001, 2003, 2011) and Sen (1999; 2005, 2009).

¹⁰⁷ Indeed, fundamental in the context of this project is its function in serving another end: human dignity.

¹⁰⁸ Note, however, that this benefit is not intended to reflect only a political change in perspective but also a cultural one (and indeed a *profound* cultural one). As Anderson (2008) writes later,

the overriding goal of rights-based approaches is that rights become embedded in everyday political and social expectations ... so that the collective vision of how one should be treated and what one deserves, *simply by being human* [italics added], is transformed and steadily co-created to improve human potential for self-realization (594).

¹⁰⁹ What can be lost in a too-heightened focus on the justiciability criteria is the *principle* (of the existence and essentiality of the human rights in question) that seeks to be concretized via legal codification; there

In practice, the integration of a right to food into international doctrine – and whatever extent of justiciability that this manages to encourage – is extensive. Among the most important (modern) foundations of international right to food legislation are the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) (UN General Assembly 1948) and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR) (United Nations General Assembly 1966)¹¹⁰. More recent guarantees of a right to food are also embedded in numerous other decrees addressing, for example, the rights of children, women and indigenous peoples.¹¹¹

By ratifying these treaties, states oblige themselves¹¹² to move toward the ‘progressive realization’¹¹³ of the RTF. As elaborated in the ICESCR (and in many further rights-sustaining decrees), states are thrice obliged: they must ‘respect, protect and fulfil’ the right:

The first obligation is thus not to interfere with people’s efforts to feed themselves, the second, to protect people from third parties’ interference with the right, and then to take steps to facilitate and provide for the enjoyment of the right to food (Cabannes 2012).

Note, however, that enshrining food (or anything else, for that matter) as a right remains powerful even when its full realization remains largely unachieved, and, further, even when the right remains unacknowledged by a given state. As Anderson (2008) observes, ‘the failure to acknowledge a widely accepted right can undermine a government’s legitimacy by making clear to its citizens and the rest of the world that it does not act in the interest of its people’ (594). In brief, human rights *are* human rights, and a state’s acknowledgement of them is another thing altogether.

Among the most recent important developments in international right to food doctrine is the widespread adoption of the 2004 Voluntary Guidelines (FAO 2004)¹¹⁴¹¹⁵, which proposes

can be insufficient insistence on (and discursive treatment of) the *a priori*, originary nature of – the justification for – the justiciability criterion that they pursue. As Gearty says, ‘the laws that inscribe human rights are not the same as the values that preceded the laws’ (LSE 2011).

¹¹⁰ At present, there are 164 parties to the ICESCR; the United States is one of five countries that have signed but not ratified the convention; and there are 28 further states that have taken no action on it (OHCHR 2015).

¹¹¹ Lang, Barling and Caraher (2009) offer an excellent but concise summary of key milestones in the evolution of a rights-based food security agenda in the context of the UN system (281) – and the specific obligations each imposes –, and the reader is encouraged to consult it in entirety. Kent (2005) offers a longer but more comprehensive history, and – again – the reader is encouraged to consult it.

¹¹² Note, too, that while the literature mostly makes reference to the national assumption of these obligations, they may also be applied to and interpreted by local authorities, an observation worthy of note in our current research on municipal actors.

¹¹³ The ‘progressive realization’ principle dialogues with the definitional paradox of unattainability inherent to the right to food concept.

¹¹⁴ In 2014, to observe the ten-year anniversary of the doctrine’s acceptance, FAO marked a series of research, awareness, and publication activities regarding the achievements and shortcomings in fulfilling the right to food in nations around the world (FAO 2014).

¹¹⁵ Or, in its full title, the *Voluntary guidelines to support the progressive realization of the right to adequate food in the context of national food security*.

responsibilities that should be assumed by governments to support the progressive realization of the right to food, including most centrally the responsibilities to provide an enabling environment in which the right to food can be met; to implement suitable policies and strategies in support of the right to food; to ensure legal frameworks for the right to food; to assure an adequate supply of food that is safe and nutritious; to attend in a special way to vulnerable populations; and to respond adequately in situations of emergency or disaster (FAO 2004; Lang, Barling, and Caraher 2009). Unlike the binding ICESCR, however, these stipulations are – as the title suggests – non-binding *voluntary* guidelines intended to aid nations working to implement the right to food approach in practice.

Third – and important to observe in the context of the present research project – there is the noteworthy (and nearly unique) refusal by the United States to embrace the rights discourse that has gained such prominence internationally. At the 2002 World Food Summit, the United States was the *single country* (of the 182 present) to oppose the framing of a human right to food (Shaw 2007), and it registered this objection:

The United States believes that the attainment of the right to an adequate standard of living is a goal or aspiration to be realized progressively that does not give rise to any international obligation or any domestic legal entitlement, and does not diminish the responsibilities of national governments towards their citizens. Additionally, the United States understands the right of access to food to mean the opportunity to secure food, and not guaranteed entitlement (FAO 2002).

The United States is also one of seven countries that have signed but not ratified the ICESCR. Scholars and advocates such as Anderson (2008) cite the refusal of the United States to recognize economic, social and cultural rights (ESCR) as evidence of its assumed ‘implicit license ... to degrade these rights’ (595).¹¹⁶ Anderson expands upon this theme by emphasizing the US refusal’s underpinning in the neoliberal dogma that pervades its governance¹¹⁷, as well as the limitations that this perspective implies:

Putting food in the category of universal rights, rather than privileges available to those able to pay for them, is a radical notion in the US. Recognizing and implementing the right would require a turnaround in the thoughts of individual responsibility that prevails in government messages about food access, diet and related health problems, and environmental harm caused by food production and distribution. In the US at present, choices about food, and therefore accountability for those choices – are deemed to be up to the individual. ... congruent with the larger neoliberal agenda to downplay governmental obligation (ibid., 602).

In this study, the U.S. resistance to recognizing a right to food creates an extraordinary palette of relief in which to view the bogotano and Colombian endorsement of it.¹¹⁸

¹¹⁶ Note that Anderson writes this in the context of food workers’ rights; the argument, however, is a more universal one.

¹¹⁷ Consider, for example, the large number of U.S.-based actors who constitute the majority of dominant food system actors (and who therefore effect and reinforce the productivist discourse widely).

¹¹⁸ See also the discussion in Chapter 14.

Livelihoods and food security framework

Like the right to food framework, the livelihoods and food security framework is one that falls within a larger set of transdisciplinary frameworks; this family of approaches collectively emphasize a ‘people-centred’ focus within the development enterprise.¹¹⁹ The family of livelihoods approaches has several central characteristics that distinguish it from conventional development approaches: they appreciate diversity of perspective, experience and culture; prioritize holistic analysis; acknowledge and account for macro, meso, and micro level factors; and appreciate the ways in which political, institutional, and vulnerability contexts impact individuals’ abilities (K Hussein 2002, 1).

One widely cited definition of livelihood – as used in the context of the livelihoods approach to development or to food security – is that given by Ellis (2000): ‘a livelihood comprises the assets (natural, physical, human, financial and social capital), the activities, and the access to these (mediated by institutions and social relations) that together determine the living gained by the individual or household’ (10). In its application to food security, such an approach emphasizes livelihood sustainability as vital to an individual’s ability to (sustainably¹²⁰) assure his and his family’s food access. In brief, it represents an extremely holistic understanding of the experiences of individual poor people and households *in context* at the same time that it underlines an imperative for human empowerment. As Hussein (2002) describes, it ‘links poverty and food insecurity with issues related to social capital, empowerment and participation’ (6).

Numerous international development and aid organizations (e.g. DFID¹²¹, CARE¹²², Save the Children¹²³) have embraced livelihoods approaches in their food security efforts. FAO (2012) recognises the livelihoods vision as distinct from but worthwhile and complementary to its own food security framework¹²⁴, saying that it ‘adds value’ by helping to expand the perspective ‘from a narrow focus on agriculture towards a range of interventions that support diversified

¹¹⁹ Indeed, DFID (2012), a key proponent of livelihoods strategies, uses as a shorthand tagline for its advocacy of the concept the slogan (*emphasis added*) ‘Putting *people* at the centre of development’.

¹²⁰ The most immediate meaning here attached to sustainability is an uncharged temporal one that denotes the straightforward capacity for long-term viability. This is not altogether ignorant to (now) more common meanings attached to sustainability that emphasize a distinct, environmentally conscious ethic – indeed, an ecologically exhausted foodstuff is not futuristically viable – but neither does it emphasize these larger meanings.

¹²¹ DFID, the *UK Department for International Development*, is a British ministerial department that works globally to address extreme poverty.

¹²² CARE is major global development organization with wide project interests, including education, health and nutrition, water and sanitation and economic opportunity.

¹²³ *Save the Children* is a major international humanitarian organization dedicated to protecting and promoting the rights of children, including and especially by way of programmes in health, nutrition, hunger and livelihoods.

¹²⁴ Which it frames, straightforwardly but shortsightedly, as *the* food security framework.

agricultural and non-agricultural livelihoods strategies’, ‘pays particular attention to improving access of the poor to resources and markets’, and prioritizes ‘the sustainability of livelihoods, with less emphasis on short-term outcomes’ (3). FAO’s Corporate Strategy, too, recognizes the linkages between food security and livelihoods, maintaining that ‘the eradication of food insecurity and rural poverty’ requires ensuring ‘sustainable rural livelihoods and more equitable access to resources’ (ibid., 4).

While the livelihoods framework for food security has traditionally been applied in rural contexts, it is increasingly accepted as a valid analytical tool in (ever expanding) urban contexts. MacMillan and Dowler (2012) assert its appropriateness across many different contexts (including, of note here, rural and urban and rich- and poor-country), saying that ‘the fundamental problem in food insecurity globally is the ability of small producers as well as the increasing urban populations to be able to sustain reasonable livelihoods’ (14). In other words, the most central issue in food security is not how much food there is, or how physically accessible it is, but rather *what people can afford to procure* – and it is precisely in securing a sustainable livelihood that such power is assured.

Food and Nutrition Security (FNS) framework

While the term *food security* implicitly privileges a productivist approach, emphasising the *thing* that must be assured, the term *food and nutrition security*¹²⁵ shifts emphasis considerably and instead brings into focus the aspect of *human wellbeing* that must be assured. In other words, it shifts focus from object to subject, from thing to person; and this difference reflects a fundamentally different vision of the project¹²⁶ and strengthens the (only sometimes recognized) links that I have insisted upon between food and health and between production and consumption.

The SCN¹²⁷ (2004) defines nutrition as ‘both the *outcome* and the *process* of providing the nutrients needed for health, growth, development and survival’ (of a person) (1), underlining in

¹²⁵ Again, as I have insisted, it is important to problematize the term *nutrition*. Still, its use here, while remaining charged with historical baggage and current dispute, regardless represents an important and directionally definite shift in emphasis from the conventional food security concept (and that is what I emphasize here).

¹²⁶ At the same time, it draws upon, replicates and reinforces principles underlined by the rights-based approaches discussed previously. In practice, policies calling for food and nutrition security (rather than for food security) often implicitly or explicitly adopt rights-based approaches.

¹²⁷ The SCN was created in 1977 and has since operated, under various names, with a mandate is ‘to promote cooperation among UN agencies and partner organizations in support of community, national, regional, and international efforts to end malnutrition in all of its forms in this generation’ (SCN 2012). It is a ‘big tent’ that convenes members from various ‘UN agencies, governments, academia, and civil society’ (Longhurst 2010, 3) and acts as a scientific forum in which the ‘ideas, policies and actions [that] combine in support of nutrition’ (ibid., 10) can be pursued.

this definition the finality of *health* in the nutrition assurance project. SCN's interest in using this definition emanated from its concern for poor health outcomes related primarily to *undernutrition* in poor countries. In the present context of diet-related disease associated with *overconsumption* and poor quality of diet, however, the emphasis on a health finality is relevant more than ever, and relevant across the entire bimodal spectrum of the new food insecurity.

While the term food and nutrition security, like food security, is susceptible to wide interpretation, at present its use assumes a much narrower bandwidth and a position well removed from the productivist cohort. One example that well illustrates the humanistic, holistic, and finality-focused character of the term is its use in Brazilian law¹²⁸, which defines food and nutrition security as

the realization of everyone's right to regular and permanent access to quality food, in sufficient quantities, without endangering the access to other essential needs, and based on food practices that promote health, that respect cultural diversity and that are socially, economically and environmentally sustainable (Brasil 2006).

Here, the matters of quality, health promotion, and cultural diversity appear with much greater importance than they do, for example, in more conventional food security definitions such as those proposed by FAO and USDA.

While the FNS concept remains weakly exercised in the North¹²⁹, it 'has long been highlighted in the international literature to emphasize the interaction between food and health in producing poor nutrition status' (MacMillan and Dowler 2012, 12). And while Northern policymakers and practitioners have been wary to explicate the food-health connection via such a prominent terminological change, they have been – as is already clear from the very brief introduction I gave in the opening pages – more amenable to appreciating the clear connections between the two, and new (and newly aggressive) approaches to public health (such as New York City's 'nudge'-based policy work (Thaler and Sunstein 2008)) and progressive Northern theoretical work (of, e.g., environmental public health proponents) that emphasize food environment demonstrate this changing, though certainly not yet overwhelming, tide.

¹²⁸ Brazil is an exemplar in the institutionalization and implementation of food security legislation. The definition presented here, for example, is taken from *LOSAN*, the Law of Food and Nutrition Security, which also asserts the human right to food.

¹²⁹ Though a Google search can offer little more than 'at-first-glance' data, the meta-perspective it offers with regard to the various conceptualizations of food and nutrition security may be telling. Searching for the English string "food security" (that is, excluding the terminological nutrition component) yields 14 million results, while searching for "food and nutrition security" and "food and nutritional security" yield (a cumulative) 528,000, a ratio of 26.5:1. Searching for the Spanish string "seguridad alimentaria" – nutritional (that is, excluding proximate mention of nutrition) yielded 4.7 million results, while searching for "seguridad alimentaria y nutricional" yielded 2.1 million results, a ratio of 2.2:1. The striking difference between these ratios at least *suggests* an undervaluation of the nutritional component to food security in the English-speaking North relative to the Spanish-speaking South.

The shifts in understanding implied by the several approaches we have reviewed here all fall at least relatively within the mainstream of the worldwide discourse space but nonetheless propose to change the food security construct altogether from the heretofore dominant one: if food insecurity is not simply a problem of insufficient production – which might, given sufficient resources, be easily enough resolved – but rather relates to a complex interaction of factors that extend beyond the materiality of food per se to encompass also the entire ecology within which ‘food security’ *happens*, then addressing food insecurity implies *addressing those factors, as well*. Hence new and nuanced notions of food security *do* more fully emphasize – by appreciating upstream factors such as livelihoods and downstream ones such as nutrition – that complete ecology. *This* is the fundamental shift evident in the paradigms that we have examined here.

Chapter 5 reviews several approaches that appreciate even more fully the *totality* of the food security reality; while these fall more notably (in varying degrees) outside the mainstream, they remain extremely important for the reinvigorating perspective and voice that they lend to the total food security contest. Before this passage, however, it is worthwhile to note one particular feature that lingers more or less omnipresent across the mainstream food security discourse space: the three (or four) ‘pillars’.

The omnipresent pillars: A survey of visual food security representations

The collection of frameworks reviewed to this point – productivism, place-based, right to food, livelihoods and food and nutrition security – does not represent an exhaustive summary but does characterize the range of perspectives that populate the mainstream food security discourse space. As these discourses become actualised and implemented in policy and intervention work, they must frequently be reduced to forms that are more accessibly actionable, and this has yielded a second, more summary and more schematic body of *visual* food security modelling. Despite the very large number and diverse sourcing of such visual constructions – perhaps there are as many models as there are modellers – the perspectives they capture are tendentially standard, conservative and consistent with the conventional FAO-informed discourse. The family of schematic representations overwhelmingly feature a prevailing commonality of structure: that is, the nearly ubiquitous three or four ‘pillars’ of availability, access, utilization and (sometimes) stability. At the same time, so pervasive is the imaginary of the ‘food security pillars’ that even models which intentionally deviate from them in content often replicate them

in structure.¹³⁰ Here, then, we consider a sampling of visual representations that demonstrates both the (general) discursive consistency and the (specific) diversity of detail in such models.

First, numerous representations simply replicate the conventional three or four ‘pillars’ with very little amendment. The World Food Systems Center (ETH Zurich 2012) depicts its four-pillared framework as a ‘house’ in which the ‘pillars’ – literally, in this case – support an outcome of ‘global food security’ (Figure 5):

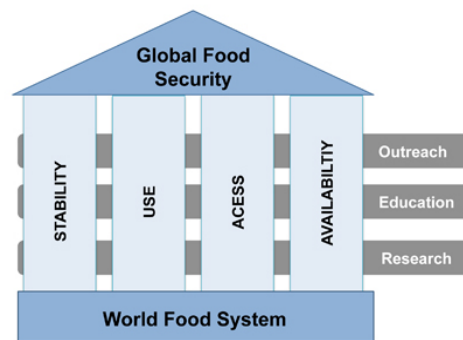


Figure 4: The World Food Systems Center’s model of food security (Source: ETH Zurich 2012)

The vast majority of food security models reproduce the discourse of the three (or four) ‘pillars’ – sometimes, as here, in form as well as in substance.

Kgathi et al. (2012) describe their conceptual model as a direct adoption of the FAO definition but depict it schematically with food security at the conjunction of four circles (rather than via graphically consistent ‘pillars’) (Figure 6):

¹³⁰ For example, Renzaho and Mellor (2010) suggest adding a pillar of *asset creation* that encompasses the creation of the five conventionally recognised types of capital.



Figure 5: Kgathi et al's model of food security (Source:Kgathi et al. 2012)

Many other food security models reproduce the content of the three (or four) 'pillars' but propose a different pictorial structuration.

Gross et al. (2000) present a similarly simple and direct adaptation of the FAO definition, with two points of note. First, they represent stability as distinct from the other 'pillars' in its transversality (Figure 7):

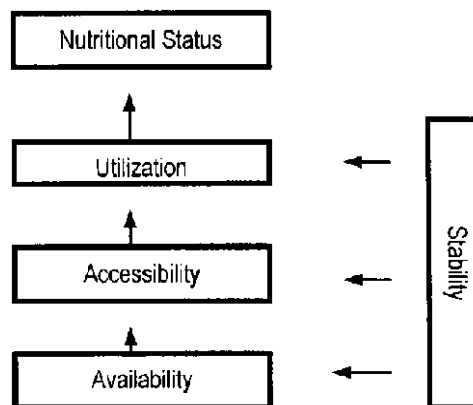


Figure 6: Gross et al's model of food security (Source: Gross et al. 2000)

Some models take care to represent stability as transversally applicable.

Second, in line with their position in favour of food *and nutrition* security (evident also in the model's identification of 'nutritional status' as its output), they use a *supplementary* model to show the finality-centred focus of the FNS paradigm, an understanding in which food security *acts as a subset of and precursor to* nutrition security. This supplementary depiction is useful for illustrating the discursive distinction made by advocates of the FNS approach (Figure 8):

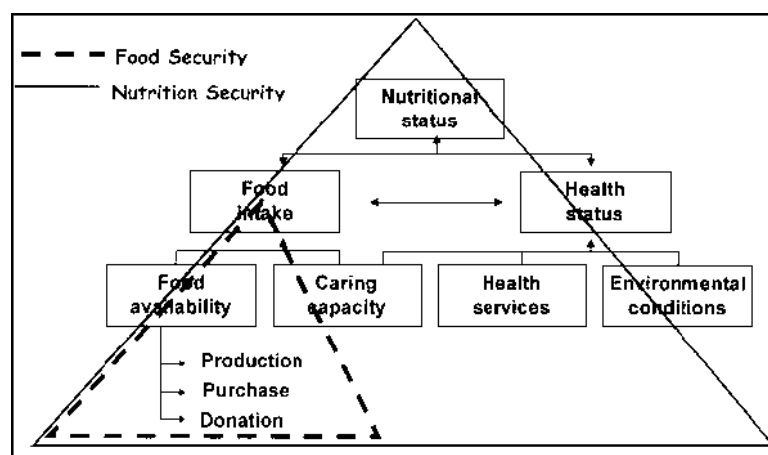


Figure 7: Gross et al's supplementary model of food security as only one aspect of nutrition security (Source: Gross et al. 2000)

Counterpart International (2012), a global development organization, also depicts food and nutrition security using the content of the four 'pillars' but positions it in a circular, cyclical format that emphasizes interdependence and consequentiality (Figure 9):

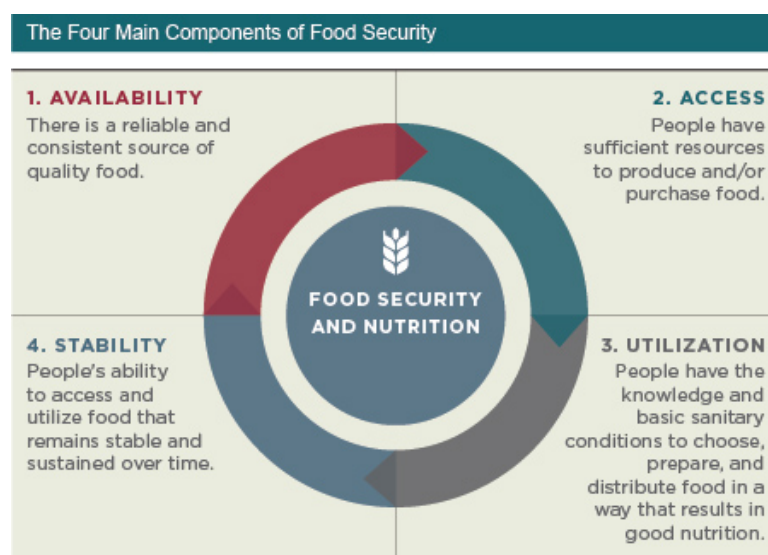


Figure 8: Counterpart International's model of food security (Source: Counterpart International 2012)

This model emphasises the interdependence and consequentiality among the conventional food security 'pillars'.

Organizations that work (somewhat) outside of immediate food security also sometimes frame their efforts in light of a food security mission. In a model attempting to locate its micro-finance

projects in the ulterior service of food security, the Rural Agricultural Finance and Food Security partnership (SEEP Network, Catholic Relief Services, and USAID 2012) situates its various micro-finance initiatives according to the food security ‘pillar’ to which they contribute (Figure 10):



Figure 9: The Rural Agricultural Finance and Food Security partnership’s model of food security (Source: SEEP Network, Catholic Relief Services, and USAID 2012)

Even development organizations that intervene in (discursively) separate contexts sometimes appeal to food security and its ‘pillars’ for conceptual support.

Likewise, USAID’s (2010) global hunger and food security initiative, *Feed the Future*, uses the four ‘pillars’ more elaborately to frame its intervention work, delineate short- and long-term outputs and outcomes, and define its indicators of success (Figure 11):

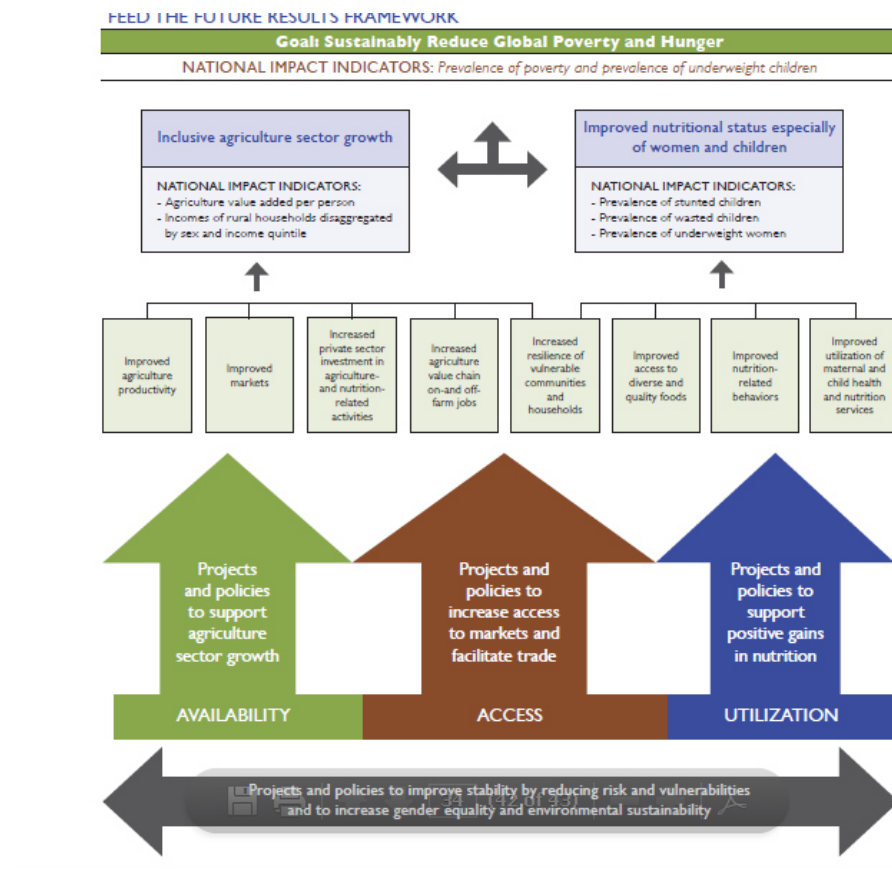


Figure 10: USAID Feed the Future’s model of food security (Source: USAID 2010)

Some food security models introduce considerable complexity but preserve an overall discourse of the three ‘pillars’.

Several more highly elaborated visual models are used to depict intentionally *systemic* understandings of food security while continuing to maintain reference to the conventional ‘pillars’. For example, the GECAFS¹³¹ food *systems* approach (Ingram, Ericksen, and Liverman 2010) is one of the most broadly visioned and comprehensive in scope and highlights the multiplicity and interactivity of factors that bear upon food security.¹³² One of its strengths is the recognition that these many factors are subject to interactions and feedbacks across scales and levels. In its model, it also recognizes the standard three ‘pillars’ (omitting stability) and their relationship with food system activities (as shown in Figure 12(a)) but further – and critically – situates all of this as an subsystem interrelated to a large and complex system of environmental and socioeconomic dynamics (as shown in Figure 12(b)):

¹³¹ GECAFS, the Global Environmental Change and Food Systems project, was an international and interdisciplinary effort to understand the links between Global Environmental Change (GEC) and food security. It ran between 2001 and 2010 and included members from the academic, governmental, and non-governmental realms.

¹³² For an excellent and more detailed graphic depiction of this conceptualization and its multiple interactions, drivers, and feedback loops, see Ericksen (2008).

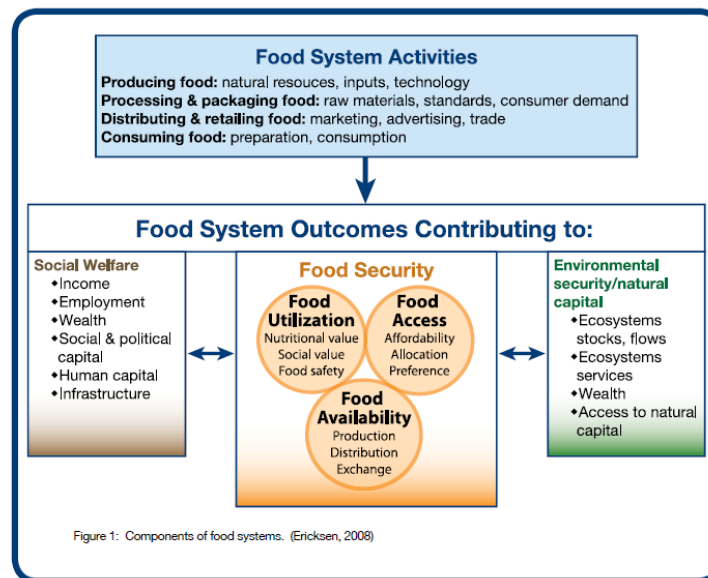
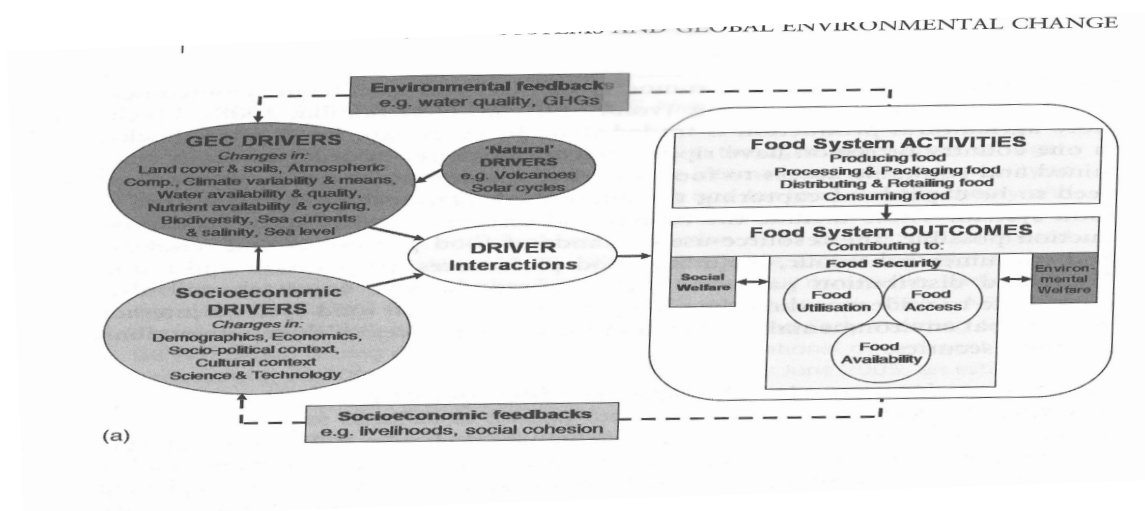


Figure 11 (a): The GECAFS model of food security (Source: Ingram, Ericksen, and Liverman 2010)

Systemic models, such as this one proposed in the GECAFS project, explicitly recognize the impact of factors beyond the conventional ‘pillars’ – such as, here, the panorama of those related to social and environmental context – upon food security.



(b): The GECAFS model of food security as it relates to a larger system of drivers

Systemic models likewise recognize the impact that food security bears upon other social, economic and environmental features of the context.

Similarly, IGBP¹³³ (2011), adapts the GECAFS systems framework to illustrate its environmentally and socially aware appreciation of the food security dynamic and its interactivity with other dynamics of human and planetary wellbeing (Figure 13):

¹³³ IGBP is the International Geosphere-Biosphere Programme, an international research partnership aiming for sustainability transitions.

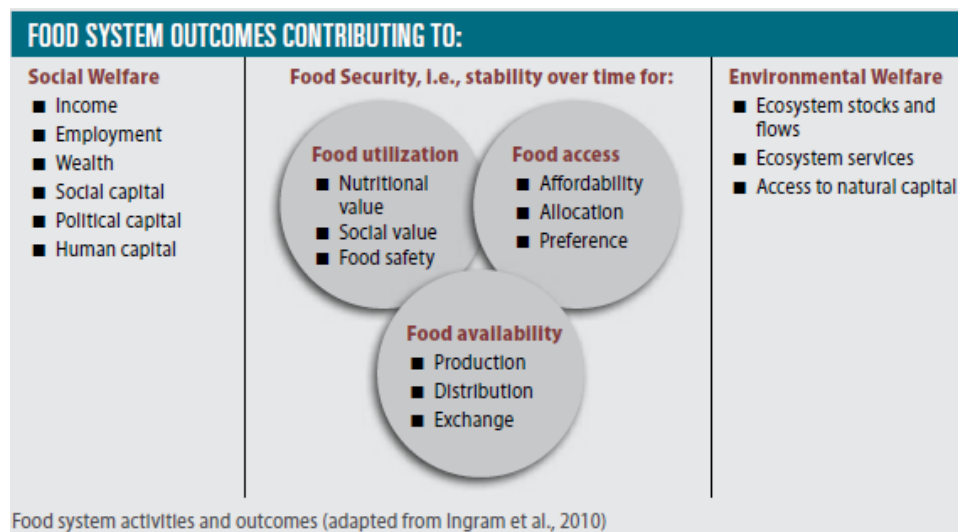


Figure 12: IGBP's model of food security (Source: IGBP 2011)

This model concisely and simultaneously recognizes the conventional three 'pillars' of food security and the interactions of food security with wider social and environmental factors.

Finally, demonstrating the relevance of the mainstream influence even upon considerably alternative food security visions, the model developed during the 2000 meeting of the CFS¹³⁴ (2000) integrates broad considerations related to livelihoods, health, human capital, and cultural contextualization, but it nonetheless continues to use the language of 'access' and 'utilization' that converse with the mainstream 'pillars' (Figure 14):

¹³⁴ The CFS is the Committee on World Food Security (2012), formed in 1974 as an intergovernmental body 'to serve as a forum for review and follow up of food security policies' but reformed in 2009 to include a much wider body of stakeholders. Notably and most visibly, it is the prominent gateway for civil society participation within UN food security decision-making. Among other civil society members, it includes, for example, representatives of smallholder associations and of Via Campesina, the leading food sovereignty movement actor.

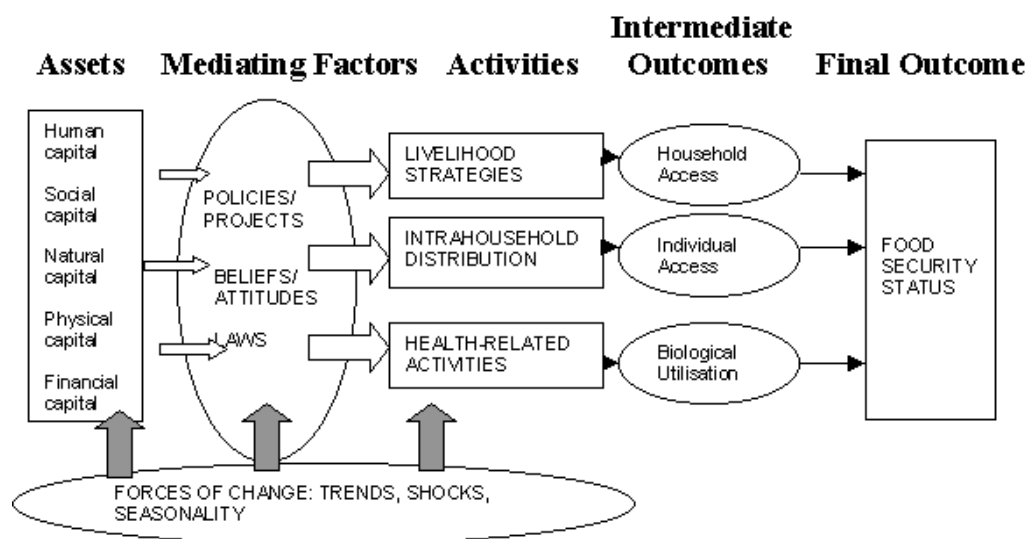


Figure 13: The CFS model of food security (Source: CFS 2000)

This model, produced by the Committee on World Food Security, demonstrates that even widely implicating food security representations often recapitulate the conventional three- (or four-) pillar model.

Summary: The current food security discourse space

This overview illustrates the girth of the actual food security discourse space, describing an ideationally diverse set of common frameworks used to represent it: the productivist discourse; the place-based discourse; the Right to Food discourse; the livelihoods and food security discourse; and the food and nutrition security discourse. While the diversity sustained in these different discourses underlines the varied possibilities that lie in food security's construction, the similarity of many visual food security models demonstrates the firm rooting and far-reaching influence of the dominant discourses. In the next chapter, I review another concept crucial to this study that also features multiple diverse but variably well-entrenched discourses: development.

Box 2

A harmonious discord about food security?

While scholars agree that food security is contested, they variably regard the degree of accord or discord among the contesting definitions. Some scholars emphasize accord, suggesting that focusing on the large *number* of definitions perhaps obfuscates a fundamentally simple commonality that underlies all of them, and that is that, in some way or other, all refer to assuring the ability of people to be well-nourished. Timmer (2000) includes a lovely footnote worth reproducing in its entirety (*italics added*):

Defining food security is an exercise in itself, especially when both macro and micro dimensions are included in the definition... Each definition is sensible in some context. The goal of this essay is to understand the economic context in which food security is no longer a personal or a policy concern. *Almost any definition that is intuitively plausible will do for that purpose* (284).¹³⁵

Indeed, with an issue as basally *human* as food security, a criterion of intuitive plausibility may be more than sufficiently adequate.

Lang, Barling and Caraher (2009) also point to the beautifully simple ideas that undergird (what becomes) an extraordinarily complex operationalization challenge, saying that ‘we could shorten the definition of food security to a state where everyone is fed well, sustainably and healthily, and able to choose culturally appropriate food’ (255).¹³⁶

Other scholars, on the other hand, emphasize the discord and fundamental *insolubility* of the definitional conundrum by positioning food security as a wicked problem.¹³⁷ Such arguments relate closely to framings of the ‘well-functioning’ food system more generally and derive much of their sustenance from scholars who favour systems approaches that emphasize the complexity and totality of the food system (e.g., Hamm 2009; Story, Hamm, and Walling 2009; Neff et al. 2009).

¹³⁵ Still, even Timmer’s (2000) suggestion might be criticised. His aim is essentially to suggest a reframing of the question altogether: ‘Rather than asking how to cope with hunger and famine, the question might be how to escape from their threat altogether’ (283). But even such a repositing of the ‘question’, however, is in effect an attempt to define what food security *is*: in this case, one could suggest, it would become defined as something akin to ‘the complete absence of hunger and famine, and the threats of them’.

¹³⁶ They continue, however, elaborating that this is not so simple a problem as it is an idea: ‘The criteria by which to judge those terms then becomes the problem for policy’ (255). And therein lies the crux, as they say: it is in the negotiation of policy – and the principles and actions it retains and implies – that (immense) complexity arises.

¹³⁷ Hamm (2009) offers a simple – yet accurate enough – definition of wicked problems as ‘ones that are impossible to solve’ (241). In brief, a wicked problem is one that is non-linear, fundamentally complex, comprises discordant voices regarding the nature of the problem, and is ultimately unique.

Chapter 5

Perspectives on development

A review of the literature, Part III

For the first time in history, humanity possesses the knowledge and the skill to relieve the suffering of these people... We should make available to peace-loving peoples the benefits of our store of technical knowledge in order to help them realize their aspirations for a better life.
- U.S. President Truman, 1949

Abstract

In this chapter, I review several important perspectives from the development literature that carry particular relevance in this study of food security, including the conventional family of development philosophies, characterized variably as capitalist, neoliberal or modernization approaches; and several alternative visions, including sustainable development, the capabilities approach the rights-based approach, and the radical critique to conventional conceptualizations – including the variant most important to this study, the postdevelopment perspective.

The development literature: An introduction

When Maxwell (1996) traced postmodern trends in the food security discourse, he observed ‘the value of relating food security ... to [the] wider philosophical and cultural currents’ of the time (165). While his analysis remains valuable also for its documentation of the historical evolution of food security, what is most pertinent, at the moment, is the principle he argued for. Now, two decades later, the food security discourse is especially interesting precisely for its intersection with the ‘wider currents’ that have come to define the evolving academic, intellectual and cultural debates of the contemporary era, and in a special way to those regarding *development*. In particular, I identify four very different but all more or less commonplace strands of development theory that have borne significant impact upon food security literature and programming (as well as upon much of that in the rest of agri-food scholarship and advocacy): the conventional paradigm (considered frequently under labels of capitalist, neoliberal or modernization development under a terminological merger that I discuss here); sustainable development; the capabilities approach; and the rights-based approach. Beyond these, numerous more radical approaches – while considerably less common and certainly not mainstreamed in either consideration or practice – have lent important perspectives from the margins; I take up discussion of postdevelopment theory here for its attentiveness to the matters of discourse, power and knowledge that are central to this research as well as for the critical insight that it offers upon conventional perspectives.

In the most aspecific and ahistorical sense, ‘development’¹³⁸ might be understood simply as the method or process ‘used by a people and their institutions, predominantly the state, to pursue a better or more ideal society’ (Peet and Hartwick 2009, 196). But the term, its meaning and its deployment must be specifically constructed by the social unit, and its pursuit of a ‘more ideal society’ make this a construction that amalgamates and reproduces deeply held beliefs regarding philosophy, economics, justice and reason. It defines existentially and socially fundamental questions about what is ‘progress’, what is owed to the human person, and what is the role of various parties (including the self-responsible individual, governments and international agents) in achieving such progresses and entitlements. The cardinal nature of these questions endows the development discourse with profound psychosocial and political rooting and reach and make it instrumental in defining, creating, recreating, and extending a society’s ‘reality’. Such reach extends in a particularly strong way to the conceptual and material manifestations of food security, largely because of the fundamental and unavoidably essential nature of the relationship

¹³⁸ Even this simple definition, of course, pertains narrowly to *development* as we consider it here. As Rahnema points out – we encounter his observation on the matter shortly – however, even its *use in this context* compels a particular philosophical valuation of human existence that testifies to the value-laden burden shouldered inevitably by science.

between food and human wellbeing. If we wish to understand the food security discourse, then, we must appreciate the development discourse within which it arises.

In the remainder of this chapter, then, we review several important perspectives from within the development literature that are particularly relevant in this study of food security, including the conventional (or capitalist, neoliberal, or modernization) family of development philosophies; several common alternative visions (including sustainable development, the capabilities approach and the rights-based approach); and the radical critique to conventional perspectives (including the variant most important to this study, postdevelopment theory).

Conventional, capitalist, neoliberal or modernization development perspectives

In its recent *conventional* use, ‘development’ has been largely equated with ‘growth’, Laden with notions of technological advancement, productivity, and income prosperity, it has emphasized economic rather than other dimensions of progress (Hopwood, Mellor, and O'Brien 2005; Adams 2006; Giddings, Hopwood, and O'Brien 2002). As Giddings et al. (2002) playfully point out, ‘Bill Clinton famously stated “It’s the economy, stupid”, not “It’s the quality of life” or “It’s people’s happiness”’ (190).¹³⁹ Such an approach does not necessarily dismiss notions of wider (and more widespread) human wellbeing (though in the worst of cases it certainly *can*): the idea, of course, is one of trickle-down prosperity.

But if the aspirations of this conception of development have been benign, they have also been largely unrealised (and this is largely, though not entirely, what has led to the conception of alternative models with which to understand ‘development’ as well as to an intense critique of the very constructs upon which conventional development theory has been built). To the extent that this vision of development *is* an anthropocentric model, it is, in effect, selectively so, and its lack of foundation upon principles of equity is evident in the pronouncedly unbalanced distribution of its benefits (as manifest, for example, in the food security data). As far back as 1987, the Brundtland Commission warned that ‘no trends, ... programmes or policies offer any real hope of narrowing the growing gap between rich and poor nations’ (13). Moreover, complementary data regarding other aspects of human wellbeing demonstrate that the

¹³⁹ It is worth noting, however, that Clinton’s view – though it is that pronounced from the seat of the most powerful government in the contemporary world and likely well represents the prevailing current – is not universal. There is increasing governmental interest in numerous countries in the ‘happiness’ of their peoples (notwithstanding, of course, the difficulty of defining and measuring as subjective a thing as ‘happiness’). Bhutan, for example, has famously installed Gross National Happiness, or GNH, as a prime marker of its national development (and using terminology that clearly challenges the status quo of relying foremost and primarily on GDP as the chief indicator of national success).

ramifications of the enormous global imbalances in prosperity – as well as of the gaps *within* nations – include teeming inequities that extend well beyond income. At the same time, there are clear issues of irremediable environmental degradation associated with the conventional model of development; as Adams (2006) phrases it, ‘the earth is at a tipping point: business as usual is no longer an option’ (8). In sum, the progress achieved by this model of ‘development’ has been largely devoid of the principles of equity and justice that its detractors underline as fundamental.

Conventional development perspectives derive their precepts largely from the capitalist paradigms and power regimes from which they emerge. Of course, neither capitalism nor conventional development is a univocal practice¹⁴⁰, and the permutability of both creates a wide scope of practiced realities. Nonetheless, the family of conventional approaches to development share important fundamental similarities (as do the family of capitalist models of practiced economy), and, though it is certainly a reductive choice to treat these models jointly, it is not one, I believe, that grossly violates their individual identities. Indeed, the dominant specific perspectives – including crucially neoliberal economics and modernization theory – are often jointly exercised and (in any case) frequently co-mingled or used conterminously in discourse. Here, while it may be more precise to refer to specific exercises as deriving from unequivocally modernization or neoliberal perspectives, I generally treat this entire family of conventional approaches under the label of the ‘capitalist’ development paradigm because this is the term that resonates and is used most commonly (though not exclusively) in both New York City and Bogotá.¹⁴¹

Among other similarities, ‘conventional’ development approaches are based in a supreme Enlightenment faith in reason¹⁴², which – at least for the Europeans who devised it and their

¹⁴⁰ For example, Hall and Soskice (2001) and other adherents of the Varieties of Capitalism (VoC) approach point out the great differences possible within capitalism, articulating most centrally the different configurations, aspirations and real outcomes associated with liberal market economies (such as, e.g. the United States) and coordinated market economies (such as, e.g., Germany).

¹⁴¹ Note, however, that I use each of these labels in cases where they are especially significant.

¹⁴² Indeed, to call reason and ‘progress’ such is not out of place. So great are their importance within modern philosophy that Peet and Hartwick (2009) refer to the ‘religion of modernity’ (222, appealing to Rist 1997); Horkheimer and Adorno (2002) refer to the Enlightenment’s ‘relapse into mythology’ (xvi); and Sbert (2010) writes that:

Progress is a faith that is not recognized as such, but remains the genuine soul of the modern West and whatever comes to resemble it in the present world. Modern man has to believe that his ideas and actions are entirely grounded in what is rational and not supported by revelation, or a vision, or hope. His very identity has been forged in the conquests of progress, and centred on the conviction that he can know reality through science, thus overcoming obscurantist dogmas. Nonetheless, trust in progress may in truth pertain to the realm of faith in a sense similar to the Christian assurance of things hoped for in the beyond. Certainly, faith in progress turns in practice mostly into mere ‘false consciousness’ – into ethnocentric, class-oriented and self-interested self-deception (222).

Worse, he continues:

intellectual descendants – signals the revolutionary transition from a (primitive) myth-based *premodernity* to an (advanced) reason- and science-based *modernity*. This corresponds to a ‘linear view of history in which the West is further along a given path of progress than Third World countries’ and ‘an agreement that the proximate cause of development is the exercise of human rationality, especially the application of science to production’ (Peet and Hartwick 2009, 231). It also leads – practically – to ‘an instrumental assumption that means are separable from ends and that moral considerations apply more to ends than means’ (ibid.) and to the lionization of economic outcomes as supreme measures of progress. The CTPD¹⁴³ (2012), in summarizing Colombia’s and Bogotá’s development trajectory, offers a practitioner’s-eye description of the capitalist model (in relation to its critique of it, which we discuss in Chapter 8) that might suffice as a sufficiently summary characterization of its popular appraisal. It is a model

oriented by the logic of capital, whose principles of competitiveness, efficiency, effectiveness, productivity, security and mobility determine the most recent plans for development and territorial management ... basing all of its growth and progress on the “opportunities” afforded by market forces (4).

In my use of the term, then, what I ‘wish to refer to’ by ‘capitalist development’ is a model that presupposes a positivist, rationalist, modernization-based and uni-directional trajectory of progress in which greater productivity, greater profit, and greater wealth are understood as the central benchmarks of achievement (with societal wellbeing, in turn, being the envisioned – or at least enunciated – precipitate of these).

Finally, it is important to note that this conventional or capitalist development discourse (or family of them) is not merely ‘one among many’ (though it is, certainly, *also* this). Rather, it is ‘*the*’ development discourse, in the sense that it is this paradigm that has defined a more or less consistent global development project propagated *from* Western industrialized powers *to* a receptive ‘Third World’ of intended ‘beneficiaries’; its domination during the past half-century constitutes a veritable hegemony of discourse in terms of political and practiced efficacy. Likewise, its manifestations in the food security discourse have similarly constituted ‘*the*’ food security paradigm until very recently.

The believer in progress falls into a sort of inverted Confucianism – a cult of the descendants, not the ancestors. And now this faith in progress faces a traumatic nemesis. For the glory of sacrifice for the sake of a better world for future generations is in danger of turning into its opposite – fear of not bequeathing them anything but a shambles, and the guilt that goes with that tragic anticipation (223).

¹⁴³ CTPD is the *Consejo Territorial de Planeación Distrital*, the Bogotá Territorial Planning Council, a consultative body created to foster and practice the principle of participatory democracy in the planning ambit.

Common alternative visions

In response to the human inequity and ecological imbalance that critics charge to be the failures of conventional thinking,¹⁴⁴ ‘development’ has come to be increasingly understood according to alternative paradigms that reorient its objectives and shift away from disproportionate emphasis on the economic dimension. Numerous of these alternatives have become so common as to enter the mainstreams of scholarship, practice and even to some extent popular discourse. Sustainable development is the most prominent of these alternatives and has gained considerable traction in both scientific literature and popular and political parlance. It is undeniably a malleable, contested, and highly contingent concept (Hopwood, Mellor, and O'Brien 2005; Jabareen 2008; Adams 2006; Giddings, Hopwood, and O'Brien 2002); Jabareen (2008) says that ‘the concept of ethical paradox’ – i.e., between ‘sustainability’ and ‘development’ – ‘rests at the heart of this framework’ (188), and the (at least apparent) insolubility of this paradox leads the concept to its great fluidity of interpretation. The 1987 definition tendered by the Brundtland Commission¹⁴⁵ – which did not give birth to the concept of sustainable development but *did* mark its debut as a rising star in the global development discourse – was ‘a political fudge [...] based on an ambiguity of meaning [...] in order to gain widespread acceptance’ (Giddings, Hopwood, and O'Brien 2002, 188).

Evolving definitions have maintained this early conceptual vagueness, allowing different collectives to interpret sustainable development according to their own interests and to differently prioritize among its multiple dimensions. Indeed, one of the reasons for its current popularity is ‘precisely this looseness’ and flexibility of meaning (Adams 2006, 3). The triadic and perhaps most common conceptualization of this strand of development thinking is of a normative concept that targets ‘an appropriate balance between three “pillars” [...] – the environment, economy, and society’ (Meadowcroft 2007). The perspective has found natural and wide application in agri-food studies, where the multi-functionality of food systems accords perfectly with the notion of balancing environmental, economic and social outcomes. Indeed, ‘sustainability’ has become, as we have acknowledged, perhaps the most prominent theme in the contemporary agri-food literature.

A second alternative concept of development, and one especially relevant in this research for its pertinence to the bogotano discourse, comes from the capabilities approach promulgated most recognizably by Sen (i.a. 1999) and Nussbaum (i.a. 2001). Its basic tenets require understanding

¹⁴⁴ Rahnema (2010) describes the failed projects of conventional anti-poverty campaigns as ‘answers which are not’ (185): a phrase that concisely captures both development’s constructedness and its grave shortcoming.

¹⁴⁵ The oft-cited early Brundtland definition (1987) of sustainable development is of that which ‘meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs’.

poverty as a deprivation of human freedoms and capabilities – rather than simply or largely as a deprivation of income – and is helpful for the way it articulates and emphasizes human wellbeing as the truest end of development. Such an end, of course, is not at all *contrary* to the aims of sustainable development (nor of conventional development), but rather constitutes something of a specific prioritization of objectives, underlining and reiterating the prerogative of broad human wellbeing as the focal goal and measure of genuine ‘development’. The capabilities approach to development is instrumental to progressive food security theorization and work, as it is precisely Sen who thrust issues of food *access* more prominently onto contemporary research and political agendas. Included uncontested among the most basic capabilities are having adequate nourishment and good bodily health (as per, e.g., Nussbaum 2001, 78), and – indeed – understanding food insecurity not as a problem related to the deprivation of (high-quality) food per se but rather to the deprivation of nutrition or health that results from it (i.e., of a *capability* related to human well-functioning) frames the question of food security much differently than does the conventional vision that tends to focus *on food itself*.

Finally, rights-based approaches (RBA) to development posit *human rights* as fundamental, inalienable, and equal among all humans, and, critically, as normative principles ‘underpinning the entire development enterprise’ (Nyamu-Musembi and Cornwall 2004, 45); such approaches are popular particularly among international NGOs and development agencies and are integrated also into the work of many others, especially around issues of food security (e.g. Sen 1999; Fainstein 2010; Riches 2011; Haddad and Oshaug 1998; Oshaug, Eide, and Eide 1994). Anderson (2008) introduces the concept of rights-based food systems (RBFS), associating it with the need to more pointedly define sustainability in the context of food systems by emphasising the rights of their various participants, including, naturally, the right to food for all.

The clearest advantage of using rights to understand development is that rights imply responsibilities, duties, and obligations upon those who are in a position to aid in their fulfilment, and most obviously upon states (e.g. Anderson 2008; Marks 2001; Wheeler and Pettit 2005; VeneKlasen et al. 2004; IDS 2003; Piron 2002; De Schutter 2010). Importantly, rights can be understood as ethical statutes as much as legal ones, and rights remain rights even when they are not recognised. This makes them conceptually as well as instrumentally potent: elevating a particular condition from a ‘nice thing to have’ to a ‘right’ implies either that it will be acknowledged and promoted by the state, or that, in refusing to acknowledge it, the state will be thrust into a de-legitimized position that can subsequently lead to reform in favour of rights recognition (Anderson 2008, 594). Advocates claim that attempting to understand development *without* an adequate emphasis on rights and their inherency enfeebles the concept altogether and loses the opportunity to capitalize on ‘the potential dynamism and power that ... integration

offers' (VeneKlasen et al. 2004, 3). In the context of this research, the notion of a *right* to food bears greatly upon how a state understands its responsibility to assume measures addressing food security: Bogotá's food security policy, *based* upon a foundational assertion of the *right* to food security, contrasts starkly in regard to New York City's, which is not (see also Riches 2011), and how these differences reflect in the construction of policy and programming lends great insight into the relative conceptual valuations of different approaches to development.

Radical critique and the postdevelopment perspective

Beyond these perspectives lie numerous more radical ones. In particular, several from the poststructuralist and postmodern traditions have contributed to raising important critiques regarding the limitations of conventional development theory and practice, generally naming as its central shortcoming the Western creation of and hegemony over the concept and its deployment. These perspectives include, i.a., Participatory Action Research (PAR) (for an overview, see Peet and Hartwick 2009), de-growth (Latouche 2009), and 'development on a human scale' (Max-Neef 1993). In very brief (and with much reductivism) such perspectives collectively charge that 'development', as such, 'monopolizes dreams of progress and destroys alternative conceptions of the future' (Peet and Hartwick 2009, 3). Scholars in the *postdevelopment tradition* have best engaged the theme of *development as a discourse* and offer a collection of critical insights extremely pertinent to the empirical analysis of both the New York City and Bogotá food security cases studied here. Therefore I turn frequently to postdevelopment theory¹⁴⁶, – and particularly to its major proponents Escobar, Sachs, and Rahnema – during the course of the analysis and I introduce briefly the canons of its perspective here.

Though postdevelopment theory has been mostly used to analyse contexts where the 'development project' has been intentionally deployed – that is, in the poor and middle-income countries¹⁴⁷ defined within the conventional discourse to be in need of *development*, it also suggests a penetrating lens for viewing the constructions of progress (generally) and food

¹⁴⁶ Note that, while the postdevelopment perspective to which I turn importantly in this research delivers a particularly harsh critique of capitalism, my critical stance extends to all aspects under study. To be explicit and clear from the outset, *capitalist* should not be understood as a synonym for *wicked*, nor *alternative* as a synonym for *virtuous*. Indeed, my normative evaluation of policy features and social phenomena is *extremely case- and context-specific*, and, at risk of prosaism, I insist that both capitalist and alternative approaches to development contain their virtuous and unvirtuous elements.

¹⁴⁷ Or the *LICs* and *MICs* (low-income countries and middle-income countries), the *unindustrialized* and *industrializing* economies, the *Third World*, the *Global South*, or *undeveloped* and *developing* countries, according to one's provenance, perspective and preference.

security (specifically) in rich countries¹⁴⁸ where ‘development’ is meant (again, within the conventional discourse) to *propagate from*. Indeed it provides a special perspective on the New York context we examine here.

In a world order (and a city order) marked perhaps above all else by inequality¹⁴⁹, the less wealthy and less powerful (and indeed, by nearly any imagined measure, generally less *well*) people of New York City are often (implicitly) regarded as deficient and in need of remediation in much the same unflattering way as the conventional development discourse (more explicitly) regards the ‘underdeveloped’ global South. The treatment of food security in NYC offers a prime opportunity to ‘anthropologize the west’ (Rabinow 1986, 241) and to explore the ways in which an often patronizing West-originating development discourse is so deeply engrained in the Western mind that it pertains *also* within the West’s own confines. While current Latin American (including, without doubt, bogotano) trends make ever more conscious protests to the undignifying constructs of conventional development – and to the largely unrealized results it promises – and make motions toward alternative models, the lack of similar discursive shift and institutional motion¹⁵⁰ in the global North (and particularly in the United States) reveal a deep investment in the pertaining conventions of development and food security.

In the very first place, and most centrally to this research, postdevelopment theory forces acknowledgement of both ‘development’ and ‘food security’ *as discourses* – that is, as *constructed* realities – and demands scrutiny upon what this implies. To recall in several words, the function of discourse is to define the very world of what of possible: to ‘produce permissible modes of being and thinking while disqualifying and even making others impossible’ (Escobar 1995, 5); to impose the ‘unconscious structures that set boundaries on the thinking of our epoch’ (Sachs 2010, xix); and to circumscribe the possibilities for ‘what could be said, thought, ... practiced, [and] even imagined’ (Peet and Hartwick 2009, 224).

The constructed nature of development does not render it any less ‘real’: Escobar (1995) writes that, ‘as a discourse, development is thus a very real historical formation, albeit articulated around an artificial construct (underdevelopment)’ (53), and indeed it is ‘the process through which social reality comes into being’ (39). As he illustrates, the development discourse encompasses a set of systematic and powerful *real* relationships, economic structures, and thought structures that together create a ‘domain of thought and action’ that includes aspects of knowledge, power and subjectivity (10). If anything, the discursive nature of development ups

¹⁴⁸ Or the *HICs* (*high-income countries*), the *rich* and *industrialised* economies, the *First World*, the *Global North* or *West*, or the *developed* world, according to one’s provenance, perspective and preference.

¹⁴⁹ Recall the bleak statistics regarding inequality in the United States and in NYC: see Chapter 1.

¹⁵⁰ There is, however, some *non*-institutional motion, such as that indicated, perhaps most visibly, by the Occupy Wall Street movement and phenomenon.

the societal stakes invested in it, as subverting its foundations would radically disturb the social and psychological landscapes upon which lives are lived and functioning is realized.

The bases of conventional development identified and critiqued by postdevelopment theory – Western-centric ethnocentrism, modernist faith, and economic priority¹⁵¹ – have been evident since the (contemporary) birth of the discourse. ‘Development’ emerged, effectively, in the wake of the world wars, ‘declared’ in so many words in the inaugural address of U.S. President Harry Truman (1949)¹⁵², in which he decried the condition of the half-world ‘living in conditions approaching misery’, whose ‘economic life is primitive and stagnant ... [whose] poverty is a handicap and a threat both to them and to more prosperous areas’. Fortunately, however:

For the first time in history humanity possesses the knowledge and the skill to relieve the suffering of these people . . . I believe that we should make available to peace-loving peoples the benefits of our store of technical knowledge in order to help them realize their aspirations for a better life . . . What we envisage is a program of development based on the concepts of democratic fair dealing . . . Greater production is the key to prosperity and peace. And the key to greater production is a wider and more vigorous application of modern scientific and technical knowledge.

In these beginnings, then, the lasting foundations of development are made clear: the (exclusive) capacity and (moral) responsibility *of* (the particularly construed) developed countries *to develop* the (particularly construed) underdeveloped countries; the key elements of technical knowledge, science and productivity; and the contingency of benefit based upon specified criteria of agreeability *to the developers*. This, then, established the vision for the next half-century of development, a vision designed to replicate the Western/American design of prosperity via industrialization, rationalization, urbanization, technicalization and – not to ignore the also the cultural shortcomings of the primitive peoples of the ‘Third World’ – also mass re-education and cultural transformation toward a more rational, modern, and *Western* weltanschauung.

Postdevelopment theory criticizes how this construction converts the Southern *person* into a distinct Other¹⁵³, a subject-object separate and fundamentally different from the Northern person: ‘the Third World and its peoples exist “out there,” to be known through theories and

¹⁵¹ That is, the *economization* of society (Escobar 1995, 60; Rahnema 2010, 178-194).

¹⁵² Illich (1980) underlines the instantaneity of development’s ‘discovery’, as it were, as evidence precisely of its (advantageously) constructed character. He writes, smartly:

The development paradigm is more easily repudiated by those who were adults on January 10, 1949. That day, most of us met the term in its present meaning for the first time when President Truman announced his Point Four Program. Until then, we used "development" to refer to species, real estate and moves in chess - only thereafter to people, countries and economic strategies (6-7).

¹⁵³ See, of course, Said (2003) and related work in the Orientalist line.

intervened upon from the outside' (Escobar 1995, 8) Perhaps most destructively, this entire vision found its limits nowhere¹⁵⁴ and conquered the fancy (and resources) *not only* of the industrialized West but *also* of the societies and cultures of the 'underdeveloped beneficiaries' *themselves*, displacing preexisting 'vernaculars' and creating new worldviews of poverty, wealth, needs, and progress:

The new fetish of a healthy global economy destined to save all the world's poor not only helped the pauperizing economic and political systems to reinforce and legitimize their positions, but it also led their victims to perceive their own situation in the same terms ... Not only individuals and communities but entire nations and continents were led to believe that they were poor, and in need of assistance (Rahnema 2010, 179-180).¹⁵⁵

Though the vision that development proclaimed may in its words and attitudes seem – and may be – 'amazingly ethnocentric and arrogant, at best naïve... what has to be explained is precisely the fact that ... it made perfect sense' to those who encountered it (Escobar 1995, 4). Such was the power of this hegemonic discourse: it became 'impossible to conceptualize ... reality in other terms' (ibid., 5).

Indeed one of the major critiques made by postdevelopment theory is precisely the charge that devaluation and disempowerment are inherent in the conventional concept of development. The suggestion that some people (the Others of the South) are unachieved, incapable, and dependent upon and *desirous of* remediation from the more advanced humans of the North impregnates the development discourse with a distastefully subordinating supremacy:

There exists a veritable underdeveloped subjectivity endowed with features such as powerlessness, passivity, poverty, and ignorance, usually dark and lacking in historical agency, as if waiting for the (white) Western hand to help subjects along and not infrequently hungry, illiterate, needy, and oppressed by its own stubbornness, lack of initiative, and traditions (Escobar 1995, 8).

Seen in this light, the deprecatory content of the development discourse is largely reproductive of the (passé) colonialist one, rendering the 'Third World'¹⁵⁶ as 'populated by degenerate types'

¹⁵⁴ Except, critics charge, in reality.

¹⁵⁵ We turn later to a more studied inquiry upon dignity. For the moment, however, note the similarities between the critique postdevelopment scholars have made upon the modernist development project and that made by Pope Francis in terms of *dignity* (2013):

The dignity of each human person and the pursuit of the common good are concerns which ought to shape all economic policies. At times, however, they seem to be a mere addendum imported from without in order to fill out a political discourse lacking in perspectives or plans for true and integral development (2013).

Pope Francis (2014b) has more generally criticized the economization of the modernist project, labelling it a 'globalization of indifference'. Such a narrative bears important similarities to postdevelopment's insistence upon the dignity-implying, agentic self-definition of development and progress.

¹⁵⁶ As Escobar understands it, the construction of development and the construction of the 'Third World' were part of the same – discursively violent – project, and he addresses the latter exercise as well as well

... a 'space for subject peoples' in need of control and remediation. Those degenerate types, moreover, are degenerate in many ways, lacking not only in toilets and food, but also in the proper sociocultural and intellectual formation to solve their own problems or define their own futures. The narrative makes 'peasants appear as the half-human, half-cultured benchmark against which the Euro-American world measures its achievements' (ibid., 194).¹⁵⁷ Escobar (ibid., quoting Lewis) elaborates, pointing out the inescapable dispersion of this discourse:

There is [consequent to acceptance of the discourse] the same contrast even within people; between the few highly westernized, trousered natives, educated in western universities, speaking western languages, and glorifying Beethoven, Mills, Marx or Einstein, and the great mass of their countrymen which live in quite other worlds (Lewis [1954] 1958, 408).

In this discourse, the traditional segment of society is a world of economic darkness, where new ideas are impossible, architecture is inadequate (despite the fact that it seems adequate for its dwellers), and there are no communications (because only the airplane, the automobile, and television count as communications)—in short, another planet. It does not matter that those aliens are human beings as well (although those who belong to the modern sector are apparently more human, because they speak prestigious languages, listen to Beethoven, have memorized Einstein's equations, and have mastered Samuelson, Friedman, or Marx) or that they constitute about 80 percent of the world. Their existence can be brushed aside, because they live in quite another age bound to be swept away by the fruits of the Enlightenment and the travails of economists (78-79).

All of this is only partially to broach the representational violence¹⁵⁸ inherent in such constructs. More importantly, it is to underline the powerful social imaginary that informed (and informs)

as the former in *Encountering development* (1995). Indeed, the text's subtitle is telling: *The making and unmaking of the Third World*.

¹⁵⁷ Here we have entered only very shallowly into the plenitude of the postdevelopment critique. Nonetheless, we can begin to see the constructs inherent in development *as constructs*, ones produced by Western executors on behalf of the underdeveloped Other. Illich (1980) contextualizes this accomplishment as an act of representational violence contiguous in a line of gross social constructions by which the foreigner became effectively and totally *Othered* by European society. Illich trace the transmutation of the foreigner from the *barbarian*, less than fully man, who must be 'brought in' to the European fold; to the *pagan*, whom the (Christian) Europeans must assume the duty of baptizing; to the *infidel*, who must be subjected and instructed (by the Europeans); to the *wild man*, who had no needs at all and only posed a threat (to the Europeans); to the *native*, who had distinctly native needs, ones that required meeting by way of colonization (to be conducted, naturally, by the more advanced Europeans); and – finally and actually – into the *underdeveloped*, who needs *developing* (by the Europeans, and their now broadened cadre of *Western* colleagues) (8-9).

¹⁵⁸ The associations between food security, peace and violence (of many types) are very strong. In contexts such as Bogotá (and Colombia generally), the link is material and obvious. In contexts such as NYC, the link is also strong but generally covert: the dissimulation is necessary since New York residents are conceptually and cognitively members of the *developed* regime for whom even the possibility of a violence related to food security should be impossibly menial. In any case, the representational violence that I suggest here is only one of many aspects of possible violences inherent to food insecurity and food

the real project of development that emerged from it, and wherein what is representationally egregious becomes materially so, inasmuch as ‘the economic development conception that comes out of this view is its logical extension’ (ibid., 79). That is, in establishing the particular construction of progress and personality that it did, the now conventional development discourse consolidated specific power relationships that in turn produced (and produce) real material consequence.

In brief, *discourse creates (and is) reality*, and nowhere is this more impactful than with the constructs of development. Escobar (ibid., quoting Foucault 1972) summarizes by

recalling that discourse is not just words and that words are not “wind, an external whisper, a beating of wings that one has difficulty in hearing in the serious matter of history” (Foucault 1972, 209). Discourse is not the expression of thought; it is a practice, with conditions, rules, and historical transformations. To analyse development as a discourse is “to show that to speak is to do something, something other than to express what one thinks; . . . to perform a complicated and costly gesture” (Foucault 1972, 209) (216).

Beyond these criticisms founded mainly upon matters of construct and representation, conventional development is also charged with another major shortcoming: in a word, failure. Escobar (1995) writes that ‘the years go by and [the] promises [of development] go unfulfilled’ and therefore calls its ‘presumed ineluctability . . . puzzling’ (vii). Others have written more ardently on the matter. Sachs (2010), for example, argues that

the idea of development stands like a ruin in the intellectual landscape. Delusion and disappointment, failures and crimes have been the steady companions of development and they tell a common story: it did not work (xv).

Moreover, the primary effects of development on real people and real lives, he says, has often surpassed mere failure of promise to become actively destructive:

The campaign to turn traditional man into modern man has failed. The old ways have been smashed, the new ways are not viable. People are caught in the deadlock of development: the peasant who is dependent on buying seeds, yet finds no cash to do so; the mother who benefits neither from the care of her fellow women in the community nor from the assistance of a hospital; the clerk who had made it in the city, but is now laid off as a result of cost-cutting measures. They are all like refugees who have been rejected and have no place to go. Shunned by the “advanced” sector and cut off from the old ways, they are expatriates in their own country; they are forced to get by in the no-man’s-land between tradition and modernity (ibid., xviii).

To summarize, then, postdevelopment theory harshly criticizes ‘the’ (conventional) development discourse, observing that it established *one* way of developing as *the* way of developing; that it implied major breaches of human respect with a dramatic sense of

security intervention. The matter, understood robustly, is one particularly worthy of exploration, and I commend it a future study. For the moment, I merely call to note the reality of violence inherent to the hegemonic, exclusive, and depreciatory representations grossly deployed by the development discourse.

ethnocentric correctness and a univocal definition of progress; and that, in any case, it failed to produce good results. These critiques lend great perspective as I proceed with the analysis, particularly in light of the simultaneous Northern and Southern geographies considered and the often very different discourses between NYC and Bogotá.

Special place of hunger, nutrition and food security in development

It should be clear by this point that the conventional development discourse was extremely dominant, implied major issues of real political and economic power deployment and produced very real outcomes. Within this conventional discourse, issues related to food security appeared front and centre, usually framed under labels of ‘hunger’ or ‘nutrition’. Food’s *essentiality* to human wellbeing endows it with not only universal and deep *real* consequence but also with a tremendous, almost mythically sympathetic pathos:

The symbolism of hunger... has proven powerful throughout the ages. From famine in prehistoric times to the food riots in Latin America during the 1980s and early 1990s, hunger has been a potent social and political force. From the Bible to Knut Hamsun, Dickens, Orwell, Steinbeck, and, in twentieth-century Latin America, Ciro Alegría, Jorge Icaza, and Graciliano Ramos, writers of many countries have been moved by the individual or collective experience of hunger (Escobar 1995, 102).

The food security discourse that emerged from within the constructs of the conventional development discourse was effectively a precipitate of it and hence was characterized by very similar mechanisms of domination; likewise it faced criticism that paralleled and coalesced with that issued to conventional development theory itself. Escobar (1995) dedicates a full chapter to the exploration of hunger and nutrition as a central motif within the development discourse, situated via a case study of the Colombian experience examining how the problematization of ‘hunger’ became an object of the international development discourse and subject to the ethnocentric constructs, logic and hegemonic power relations that define it. With the onset of the ‘development’ era, he writes that

hunger entered irremediably the politics of scientific knowledge. ...From the 1950s to today, an army of scientists—nutritionists, health experts, demographers, agriculturalists, planners, and so on—has been busy studying every single aspect of hunger. This hunger of (scientific) language has resulted in manifold strategies that have succeeded each other throughout the development era; from food fortification and supplementation, nutrition education, and food aid in the 1950s and 1960s to land reform, the green revolution, integrated rural development, and comprehensive national food and nutrition planning since the late 1960s, the languages of hunger have grown increasingly inclusive and detailed...a battery of experts was always on call to design

strategies and programs on behalf of the hungry and malnourished people of the Third World (103).¹⁵⁹

In this domain of *hunger* – especially here – the development discourse continued, according to postdevelopment critique, its broader implications of devaluation and subjectification. At once hunger became the most saliently ‘human’ face of development *and* the site where that humanity is most viciously violated:

To be blunt, one could say that the body of the malnourished, the ‘starving African portrayed on so many covers of Western magazines, or the lethargic South American child to be “adopted” for \$16 a month portrayed in the advertisements of the same magazines is the most striking symbol of the power of the First World over the Third. A whole economy of discourse and unequal power relations is encoded in that body. We may say, following Teresa de Lauretis (1987), that there is a violence of representation at play here. This violence, moreover, is extreme...[and] most dehumanizing and objectifying. After all, what we are talking about when we refer to hunger or population is people, human life itself; but it all becomes, for Western science and media, helpless and formless (dark) masses, items to be counted and measured by demographers and nutritionists... The language of hunger and the hunger of language join forces not only to maintain a certain social order but to exert a kind of symbolic violence that sanitizes the discussion of the hungry and the malnourished. It is thus that we come to consume hunger in the West; in the process our sensitivity to suffering and pain becomes numbed by the distancing effect that the language of academics and experts achieved (ibid., 103).

The transformation of conventional development theory into practice bore great implications for questions related to food security. Central were strategies that aimed for rural development and agricultural reform in the name of modernization and rationalization. The industrializing priority meant that ‘poor countries would stop producing “the wrong things” and start producing items with a higher exchange value’ (ibid., 74); among the wrong things that countries would stop producing, of course, were low-value, non-exportable food crops intended for local consumption.¹⁶⁰ Specialization – in short, the movement toward export-based mono-cropping –

¹⁵⁹ Note this emphasis on *expertise* and *experts* in the exercise of the development project, and the critique that the postdevelopment theorists apply to this. It is worth noting, too, that it is not only postdevelopment theorists who criticize the exaltation of such experts; the title of Easterly’s (2013) monograph, *The Tyranny of Experts*, summarizes his perspective, and he writes that

The technocratic illusion is that poverty results from a shortage of expertise, whereas poverty is really about a shortage of rights. The emphasis on the problem of expertise makes the problem of rights worse. The technical problems of the poor (and the absence of technical solutions for those problems) are a symptom of poverty, not a cause of poverty ... the cause of poverty is the absence of political and economic rights (17).

Both of these notions, the development project’s fascination with – one might even say fetish for – ‘experts’, and its challengers’ often contraposing prioritization of rights, are ones that we return to in this research.

¹⁶⁰ As Escobar (1995) reports:

One of the most striking features of agrarian change in the period 1950– 1972 was the rapid growth of crops cultivated under modern capitalist conditions – namely, the use of a high degree of mechanization and of chemical inputs and technology – such as cotton, sugarcane, rice, and soybeans. As a group, these commercial crops grew at a rate of 8.2 per cent per annum for the twenty-two years under consideration, almost five times faster than more traditional crops – such as beans, cassava, and plantains – and about three times faster than other crops under mixed

and the enlargement of production enterprises in large part removed possibilities for the subsistence and small-scale agricultural activities upon which rural peasants had subsisted, stripped rural livelihood of much of its viability, and created the conditions for massive deruralization and rural-to-urban migration.¹⁶¹ Again postdevelopment theory framed such ‘developments’ with harsh critique, stipulating that this (massive) territorial-demographic shift in turn created precisely the conditions that fomented many of the current conditions and dynamics of widespread urban *and* rural poverty, inequality, and inhumanity – and their related circumstances of food insecurity – by rendering rootless, disoriented, and largely impotent many who had previously found stable identity and viable livelihood in rural areas.

The attention to hunger during the development era did achieve one thing with extraordinary success: it replicated, reiterated, and further embedded the discourse of conventional development. From a postdevelopmental lens, today’s attention to ‘food security’ accomplishes much the same thing. At the same time, however, the emerging critiques to conventional development – from mildly alternative sustainable development positions to more radical visions of food sovereignty and postdevelopment theory – are also moulding new visions of food security.

This research adopts Escobar’s mode of inquiry regarding the discursive connectivities between food security and development, expands upon it after several decades of evolved history, and examines new contextual geographies and their realities. One important adaptation regards the expansive vision of food security that I have adopted here. Escobar examined matters of ‘hunger’, while I use a Langhian appreciation of food security in which the term effectively refers to the good function of a food system at all levels and for all actors – individually, socially, culturally, administratively, and any other way we might imagine (see Lang 2010, 94–95). Nonetheless, it is important to recognize the legacy of the historically prevalent label of ‘hunger’, as it remains the framing of food insecurity for many people (as well as the

(capitalist and traditional) conditions of cultivation, including corn, coffee, potatoes, wheat, tobacco, cocoa, and bananas. Initially, commercial agriculture based its rapid growth on the dynamism of the domestic market arising from increasing industrial demand for agricultural products and from some increase in family income (the result of urbanization and industrialization). Once this demand was satisfied, it continued its expansion primarily through export markets and thanks to the continual replacement of traditional products by those produced mostly for urban consumption by the growing food-processing industry. Traditional crops, however, lay at the other end of the growth scale. If commercial crops experienced spectacular growth rates, traditional crops became almost stagnant. This is the first feature of Colombian (and most Latin American) agriculture during the first two decades of development: spectacular growth of the modern sector and stagnation of the traditional one (16).

¹⁶¹ In Colombia, deruralization and urban growth have been tremendous. Since the 1950s, for example, Bogotá has grown from a city of 4 million residents to one twice that size. Even the resultant (necessary) spatial expansion of the city is commonly viewed as a destructive shame, so much so that one of Petro’s platform stances is to halt the possibilities for further outward growth of the urban plant.

experiential reality of it for many others).¹⁶² While hunger is not synonymous with food insecurity, the two terms are often comingled in popular use, and in any case – like other common reference terms such as food poverty, food deserts, and food access – certainly serves as an important marker within the contemporary food security discourse.

Summary: The variable ideation of development

This chapter has depicted the variations – at some turns, simply differentiated; at some, contentiously opposed – in the ideation of development. Most importantly for this work, it has illustrated the capitalist construction of the concept, which assumes positivist modernization ideals in striving for a centric objective of economic growth; and the postdevelopment perspective, which understands – and challenges – development foremost *as a discourse*, one pronounced by powerful nations in order to enshrine a particular path of progress (theirs) as univocally correct. These two perspectives contribute importantly to the development ideologies that govern conceptualizations of progress in New York City and Bogotá, and they reveal clear products in the cities' food security discourses. In the coming chapters (Chapters 7 through 10, following an introduction of the analysis in Chapter 6), I endeavour to locate these footprints of development in the two cities' food security discourses.

¹⁶² The poignancy implied in this label, of course, also often lends it great emotive utility.

Chapter 6

The discourse package of food security

An introduction to the analysis

Ordinarily we are unaware of the special lens through which we look at life. It would hardly be fish who discovered the existence of water. Students who had not yet gone beyond the horizon of their own society could not be expected to perceive custom which was the stuff of their own thinking.

- Kluckhohn (1949, 16)

Abstract

In this chapter, I propose the theoretical framework that grounds this project's analysis and situates its findings in response to the originating research questions, suggesting that two chief contextual realities underlie the food security discourses in New York City and Bogotá: the culture of the contexts, and the development ideologies that are embraced within them. In the two case studies, the cultures and the dominant development discourses are very different, and likewise their resulting food security discourses. In this chapter, I draw attention to the fundamental, definitional roles that these two factors perform in creating the cities' food security realities and offer some conceptual provisions in preparation for the close examination of the New York City and Bogotá research findings that follow. In Chapters 7 through 10, drawing from the premises of the framework proposed here, I proceed to address Research Question 1, considering how the cities' development ideologies shape their food security discourses; in Chapters 11 through 13, I likewise address Research Question 2, considering how the cities' cultures do so.

Introduction

By now several points should be clear: that food security and development ideology are intricately interwoven concepts; that both are not merely objective goalposts *to be* straightforwardly reached but rather sociopolitical constructions so endowed and appended with corollary and meaning that ‘*what are we discussing?*’ becomes a more germane question than ‘*what have we achieved?*’; that different actors create very different constructions of food security; and that ‘cities’, taken as large collective identities – including, in important position, their governments, but not *only* their governments – are among the most prominent of these actors.

In short, *food security* is a discourse: a constructed, negotiated, fluid reality rather than a unitary definite object; and, more, it is not *a* discourse but rather *many* discourses, each appended, overlapping, and competing for priority with the others. This food security discourse – inasmuch as we can use the definite article to indicate such an indefinite and non-homogeneous object – is, it is clear, not *just* about food. Nor is it *just* about the wellbeing that people do or do not derive from it (though even this would be an important improvement upon the first-order – and too common – appreciation of it). It is, rather, the precipitation of a diffuse, complex ‘package’ of related discourses that individually and collectively reflect and expose prevailing social values, cultural norms, and political ideologies, and trace specific historical evolutions.

Recognizing the discursive multiplicity and constitutive inseparability and interdependence of the food security discourse is fundamental to understanding both the complex manifestations of food security in practice and the depths with which these are rooted culturally, socially and politically. Examining food security through its discursive roots and relationships, then, allows us to more fully appreciate the character, nuance, and eventualities of it. It also brings into clearer light the values and principles that may not be easily or widely recognized within the particular society – precisely because these are so deeply entrenched as to become unseen and unseeable features of the contextual landscape¹⁶³ – but that nonetheless determine food security practices (and, ultimately, their outcomes). Making these often hidden discursive roots and relationships more *visible* is, I suggest, vital to expanding the scope and promise of practiced food security work in *every* context.

¹⁶³ Indeed, this is precisely the point of using an anthropological lens. As Kluckhohn (1949) writes: Ordinarily we are unaware of the special lens through which we look at life. It would hardly be fish who discovered the existence of water. Students who had not yet gone beyond the horizon of their own society could not be expected to perceive custom which was the stuff of their own thinking. Anthropology holds up a great mirror to man and lets him look at himself in this infinite variety (16).

Here, then, I undertake the project of ‘making visible’¹⁶⁴ the food security discourses – *and, crucially, those that underlie and intersect with them* – in the case studies of New York City and Bogotá. Specifically, I focus on the crucial influence borne upon the food security discourses by (contextually specific) development ideologies and cultures.

The ‘discourse package’ of food security

At the conclusion of this research it is clear that the ‘package’ of interrelated discourses related to food security is widely scoped, deeply anchored, and teeming with populous. The inquiry has exposed links between the food security discourse and (with greater or lesser degrees of connective strength and directional impact) discourses that regard the governance, ethics and soundness of (various) food production and food consumption cycles and models; water systems and their use (including environmental management and governance); land use (including ownership, property rights, and agrarian reform); territory (including territorial reorganization, regional planning, and the valuation of territorially based cultural identities); the roles, relationships and dynamics among and between government, private and civil society actors; community and social movement organization; minority group identity, marginalization, and cultural protagonism; and human rights legislation, violation, defence and remediation.¹⁶⁵

Several more specific discursive connectivities stand out with particular salience and interest in each context. For example, in Bogotá, there is a complex, expansive and well-articulated relationship between food security and peace (or, in the negative, violence), with each of these constructs understood variably by way of numerous and different permutations. In New York, there is an especially salient connection between food security, obesity and public health.

All of these connective points, however, while important to the formation and deployment of the food security discourse and programming in each place, occur on a discursive plane that is more or less comparable with that of food security itself. Two connected factors, however, occur in a more important, foundational way, and because of this, they are the two that I treat in this thesis.

The first is the pertaining meta-discourse on development – indeed, it is the development ideology – that roots, sustains, and defines the scope of possibilities for the food security discourse (and in many ways also for the many other discourses that are ‘coplanar’ with it). **The second is the specific cultural landscape** that broadly demarcates the lived – *interpreted, signified* – reality in each context and that hence permeates *everything* that exists and happens there.

¹⁶⁴ Recall Geertz’s (1973) exhortation to ‘mak[e] other models visible’ (100).

¹⁶⁵ And, of course, others that I fail to list.

These relationships might be depicted as in Figure 15, where the upper and lower ovoids are intended in parallel existence.

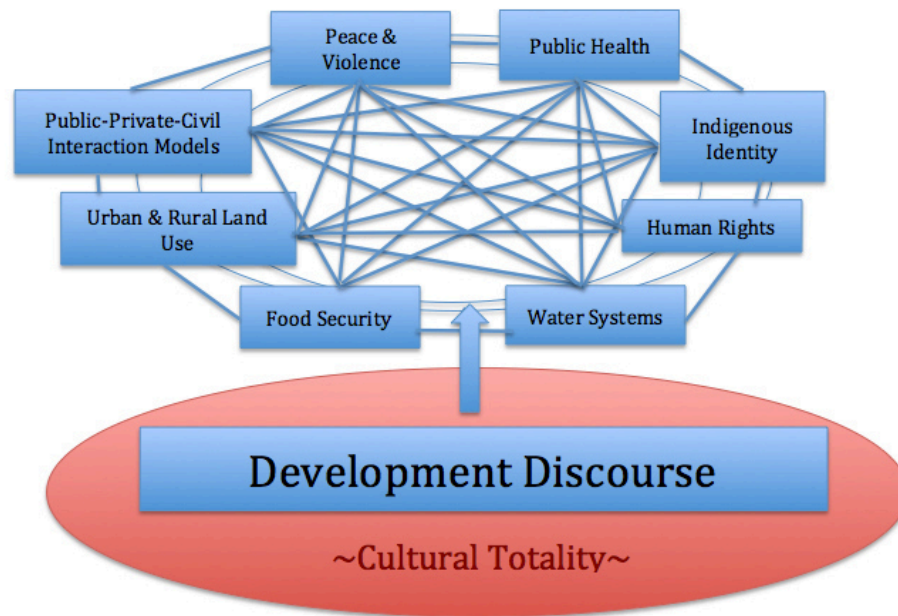


Figure 14: The discourse package of food security (Source: Author)

In the model I propose, two factors – the specific culture landscape that characterizes a context and the development discourse that thrives within it – anchor and impact the food security discourse in a foundationally holistic way.

The analysis

In the following chapters, I present and analyse the ‘findings’ of this research by discussing these two foundational themes – the specific pertaining development discourses and cultural totalities from which and within which these proceed – and their precipitation and reflection in the food security discourses of New York City and Bogotá. To again draw upon the canons of the interpretivist tradition, I insist that to describe the coming explorations as research *findings* is not the best characterization of the exercise: rather, the content that I present stands as one interpretation – mine – drawn from a particular collection of information made at specific moments in time in specific geographical, historical, and social contexts.

The ‘small facts’ that I have been able to outline in this exercise, though, offer a precious vehicle for exploring and understanding issues that, as Geertz (1973) would say, come with

‘capital letters’ (21). That is, the ‘small facts’ drawn from this research in Bogotá and NYC might point us towards larger truths.¹⁶⁶ To suggest this is not the same as making the claim that, as in the error Geertz criticizes, ‘Jonesville-is-America writ small’ (ibid.). I do not claim that the insights presented here capture the fullness of a single, consolidated, and ‘true’ food security narrative – or, as it were, *Food Security*. But they do capture a glimpse of it. To recall Geertz’s observation (1973), ‘it is not necessary to know everything in order to understand something’ (20).

Looking ahead

In the coming chapters, I illustrate the close relationships between development ideology, culture and food security as these have manifested empirically in this research. In Chapters 7 through 10, I tackle Research Question 1, querying the discursive links between the development and food security discourses; in Chapters 11 through 13, I tackle Research Question 2, querying the discursive links between culture and food security.

Chapter 7 considers the capitalist development perspective, drawing mainly on the case study of New York City. Chapters 8 and 9 examine how the human development perspective, and particularly its central themes of human rights and dignity, defines Bogotá’s food security context (and how these same themes appear in the New York City case). Chapter 10 looks at the ambivalent food security discourse that manifests where different development ideologies coexist, depicting via the lens of the Bogotá case study a negotiation between the pronounced human development discourse and the influential legacy of capitalist practice.

Chapter 11 turns to the link between culture and food security ideation by examining how New York City’s (culturally specific) foodways contribute to the particularity of its food security discourse; in Chapter 12, I treat the same question in Bogotá. In Chapter 13, I focus on the culturally contingent construction of food policy on the basis of societally dominant – and specific – food-health narratives, showing how these constructs act to construe food security discourse in both cities.

¹⁶⁶ Geertz (1973) offers an excellent discussion of how ‘small facts speak to large issues’ (23):

The anthropologist characteristically approaches such broader interpretations and more abstract analyses from the direction of exceedingly extended acquaintances with extremely small matters. He confronts the same grand realities that others – historians, economists, political scientists, sociologists – confront in more fateful settings: Power, Change, Faith, Oppression, Work, Passion, Authority, Beauty, Violence, Love, Prestige; but he confronts them in contexts obscure enough ... to take the capital letters off them (ibid., 21).

Here, then, I do hope to speak to large issues: in this case by summoning whatever notional morsels *food security* (as I examine it here) might tell us about *Food Security*.

Following this empirical work, in Chapter 14 I propose a new construct for understanding food security – dignified food security – that draws insights from but transcends the development- and culture-based model that I demonstrate functioning in Chapters 7 through 13.

Several points are worth noting a priori. First, the very different cultures and (actual) development discourses in New York City and Bogotá come into a special relief when seen in light of each other, and I take advantage of opportunities to draw comparisons and contrasts between the cases where it is fruitful to do so.

Second, we have seen the usefulness of postdevelopment theory in dismantling the constructs of the conventional development discourse as it has been (and often still is) deployed globally in so-designated ‘underdeveloped’ nations. Neither the same critical perspective (in general) nor the application of postdevelopment theory (in particular), however, has been used to examine the discourses of ‘development’ – progress – in the non-designated nations of the North. But applying such a lens might help to bring the same critical spirit and lend unconventional illumination to the New York City case (as well as to other cases in the global North), and I therefore apply such a lens in important measure here.

In many ways, NYC’s (economically) poor people (and their problems) are encumbered with similar personal and situational constructions as those (conventionally) applied unto the ‘un(der)developed’ subjects in the global South. At the same time, the principles that define the (conventional) development discourse – that administered exclusively *from* developed *to* developing countries and in no other construable context – are articulated nowhere more strongly than in New York; here, though, they are dissimulated beneath distinctly different dressing. NYC, bastion of wealth, must leave *its* projects of these sort largely unnamed, since, as a (highly) *developed* city, it is not – *cannot* be – a subject site for either the state of underdevelopment itself or the activity of development (again, as used in its conventional, global construction).¹⁶⁷ Examining the constructs that define ‘development’ in New York, then,

¹⁶⁷ In response to a question regarding whether he thought that there might (ever) be potential for one of the UN agencies to do work – even in partnership with the national government – in the United States, an informant from one of the major UN agencies answered in no uncertain terms: *No*. Since the United States views itself as a *donor* country and not as *beneficiary* country – in other words, it *dominates*, financially, organizationally and discursively; it is not *dominated*) – this would be politically and cognitively infeasible. Nonetheless, a more removed view suggests the substantial similarity of certain conditions, efforts and perspectives (particularly regarding food security), and suggests the utility of recognizing the U.S.’s shortcoming in equitably meeting the basic wellbeing needs of its residents – *naming* it – precisely as such. Escobar (1995) also makes passing reference to this possibility, saying that in his writing he is ‘talking primarily about the geographical Third World, or South, but also the Third World within the First. The connection between the Third World within and without can be important in terms of building a cultural politics in the West’ (245). With the recent increases in inequality in many

proves a revealing exercise for its telling testimony to the powerful machinations of this often-invisible discourse. On the other hand, the bogotano case is more straightforward – not to say simple – in the discursive plane but reveals its own good dose of complexity on the practiced one.

Finally, what falls under the ‘food security’ label in Bogotá (and elsewhere in the world) is often named by other terminology, such as ‘food system reform’, in New York City.¹⁶⁸ In this research, I have argued for a wide, Langhian appreciation of food security, and the contents that New York City actors often refer to by other terms fall well within this scope. Hence, in this analysis, I (also) use several alternative terms for food security – and draw from the texts and discussions to which they pertain – in general making efforts toward distinction or precision only when it is crucial for generating the proper nuance.

In continuation, then, I advance to the empirical work, in an attempt to understand ‘*something*’ (Geertz 1973, 20) – something new – about *food security*, its discursive particularity and the important, contextually variable influences delivered to it by discourses of *development* and *culture*. In the next chapter, I examine the depth and pervasiveness with which the capitalist development discourse marks New York City, and how this creates a food security paradigm based upon ideals of market, economy and expertise.

cities of the world – and, increasing or not, the extraordinary magnitude of it in nearly all countries – drawing such similarities may indeed be increasingly fruitful.

¹⁶⁸ This dissimulation may speak also to the discursive dissonance unleashed by the city’s confrontation of profuse food insecurity with formidable discursive constructions of development, wealth and power.

Chapter 7

The capitalist development discourse

New York City and the priority of the economy

The economic approach to life may well lead for a time to a massive or more efficient production of goods and commodities – that is, a development of things. Yet both the resources and the needs it creates inevitably lead to a situation of permanent scarcity where not only the poor and the destitute, but even the rich, have always less than they desire.

- Rahnema (2000, 186)

Abstract

This chapter begins a response to Research Question 1, examining the relationship between food security discourses and development ideologies. Here, I consider the capitalist development discourse, drawing mainly on the case study of New York City, where – indeed – this discourse makes an impressive mark. First, I illustrate the dominance of the capitalist development discourse (with particular attention, of course, to its precipitation in the food security discourse), exposing its general and generalized manifestation throughout the city's public and extra-public communications and practices. Next I probe three aspects of the capitalist discourse that emerge with particular salience: a supreme faith in market mechanisms as solutions to food system problems; leverage of the food system as an economic generator meant to favour consequent food security; and the recurrence to technology, science and expert knowledge as keys to food system progress.

The capitalist development discourse and its dominance in NYC

The capitalist development discourse in NYC is manifest in the general and generalized overall framings of development and food policy that place emphasis on economic factors, measurable outcomes and apposite verbal framings while limiting alternatives to these from the human and affective domains. To be clear, the discourse does not altogether *neglect* to mention people or their problems – that would be not only inaccurate but also politically untenable – but such appraisals carry little empathic charge and fail to suggest the same tenor of moral outrage and human concern that we observe, for example, in Bogotá. This does not imply that those who deploy the discourse lack affectivity or ethic, nor that NYC's efforts are, for their replication of the capitalist discourse, either meaningless or misguided. Indeed, judged independently of the motivational and ideational content that lies behind it, NYC's programming constitutes some of the most progressive in contemporary food policy anywhere in the world; the city's policies have implied some measure of positive real impacts upon many real people, and the city itself is looked to as an exemplar by other municipalities.

In some ways, too, it must be acknowledged that NYC's discourse even challenges the conventional food security discourse, albeit discreetly. For example, *FoodWorks*'s¹⁶⁹ discussion acknowledges the relation of both hunger and obesity to the unhealthy food environments and lack of purchasing power that afflict many low-income New Yorkers, *explicitly* rejecting the common capitalist sustention of a supply-based problem in favour a more progressive consumer-based one. 'Hunger', it says, 'is ... not due to a lack of supply, but rather the inability of people to purchase enough food' (7). Similarly, *FoodWorks* identifies an important government role in tackling the food security challenge, again from a consumer-focused perspective:

As the New York City population increases in the coming decades, adequately feeding all of our residents will continue to present a challenge. To do so will not only require enabling more New Yorkers to afford healthy food, but also enhancing public programs that provide a safety net to those who lack financial resources. The city has begun to pursue these policies, but additional improvements to public meal programs, benefits administration, and economic development efforts can be made (ibid.).

Such motions, then, indicate minor shifts within the capitalist discourse. Note, however, that they remain distinctly *within* that discourse. Hunger, here, though not due to a lack of supply, still does not transcend the priority of the economy: it is attributed not to a complex integrality of factors but rather to a specific and economically defined parameter: 'the inability of people to

¹⁶⁹ The *FoodWorks* (2010) plan is a 'vision to improve New York City's food system'. The report 'outlines a plan for key legislative changes, public and private investments, infrastructure improvements, and partnerships to improve [NYC's] food system' (2). The plan itself does not constitute binding policy, but it has generated a related series of 'FoodWorks bills' that do.

purchase enough food'.¹⁷⁰ In brief, despite some important distancing motions from conventional practice, it remains correct to assert that the conventional capitalist discourse is the clearly dominant one, pervading all parts of food policy and influencing nearly all actors.

The prioritization of economic consideration throughout NYC's food security work is very widely generalized. It is uniquely logical, reflecting the (only) ideation 'permissible' within NYC's wider discursive landscape and underlining the cognitive boundary-setting consequences of capitalism's genuine discursive dominance: in the capitalist discourse, of course, economic growth is precisely the way to advance human wellbeing (not to dismiss it). Let us briefly examine NYC's two most authoritative statements on development and food policy, *PlaNYC*¹⁷¹ and *FoodWorks*, viewing how each transmits the capitalist model of generalised economic prioritization and reflects a strong capitalist ethic throughout.

PlaNYC's first signal of capitalist framing is in its subtitle, which announces on the cover NYC's striving for a 'Greener, Greater New York'. The inclusion of a strong environmental focus in the plan is worth commenting, as it might mislead one to deduce an important deviation from the capitalist ethic that does not veritably exist. 'Sustainable development' (the 'green' motif to which the subtitle points), as it is espoused in the NYC plan, is clearly a continuation of the capitalist development trajectory (rather than a subversion of it), its dominant values of rationalism and industrialism and its central aims of profit, wealth, and growth; it is simply a less reckless version of it in which rationalism, industrialism and the pursuit of profit make more pointed efforts to cope with unavoidable environmental constraints. Notably, it fails to include even the explicit social dimension that more holistic perspectives of 'sustainability' entail.

The failure of 'sustainable development' to represent a genuine paradigm shift – despite the wide popularity it has earned as an 'alternative' – is precisely the critique levied by postdevelopment theory toward it and toward alternative developments more generally: these, it says, represent only alternative models *of* development rather than more total (and more genuinely virtuous) 'alternatives *to* development' (Escobar 1995, 215). Esteva's (2010) critique is harsh and a propos: 'In its mainstream interpretation', he writes, 'sustainable development has been explicitly conceived as a strategy for sustaining 'development'', not for supporting the

¹⁷⁰ Note both this framing's similarity to and distinctiveness from Sen's (1981) explication of food *entitlements* in the context of the Bengal famine.

¹⁷¹ *PlaNYC*, released by NYC Mayor Bloomberg in 2007 and updated several times thereafter, constitutes a holistic city plan that while not strictly a *development* plan, serves, in the context of this dissertation, much the same purposes. The titular vision – of a 'greener, greater New York' – and the text of plan express an importantly economized vision of progress. Important to note in the context of this text, is that the plan's 2011 update expressly recognizes the importance of food systems to the city's prosperity.

flourishing and enduring of an infinitely diverse natural and social life' (13). Such a characterization applies well in the case of NYC's adoption of the sustainability ethic, where, despite the decorative pleasantness of a new and more agreeable label, economy still reigns supreme.

PlaNYC's framing assumes a generalized capitalist modelling *even where it addresses very human themes*, as in the framing of progress that it proposes in the issue area of housing:

In the past year we continued to make steady progress toward our *PlaNYC* goal of accommodating a million more New Yorkers and making housing and neighbourhoods more affordable and sustainable. The economic vitality of the city depends on a range of housing to accommodate a diverse population (5).

In other words, such housing 'progress' was required foremost to ensure the 'economic vitality of the city' (and if better living conditions for people happened to result, it was happily received as a welcome side benefit).

In the food policy ambit specifically, *PlaNYC*'s 2011 publication was notable for its first-time inclusion of food as an explicated issue area – this had not been the case in the earlier version of this or any other mayoral plan – included in a section dedicated to 'cross-cutting issues' that highlighted important themes (including, in addition to food, public health, natural systems and economic opportunity, among others) that worked across multiple issue streams. The report's introduction of these cross-cutting issues described how 'it's all related' (160) and concluded by delivering a take-home point that might serve as the motto of the capitalist discourse so prevalent throughout the plan: 'Finally, of course, everything we do should contribute to our residents' financial well-being' (ibid.). In other words, economic progress is the most primary interest, and if an action has no economic benefit, it interests neither the administration nor the city residents it serves.

FoodWorks, too, evokes the dominant capitalist paradigm, though rather more subtly. Like *PlaNYC*, *FoodWorks* does not fail to address human considerations. The document's stated vision in fact places health as the first in its list of food-related concerns to be addressed via the plan, as it proposes '59 strategic actions to improve health, community and economic development, and environmental sustainability' (3) (an ordering that is generally but not always preserved in internal statements of multiple priority). Beyond their explicated ordering, however, the prioritization implicit in the plan's totality and message is (again like *PlaNYC*'s) that of *economic* wellbeing.

The structuring organizational framework of *FoodWorks* – a 'ground-to-garbage food system' (ibid., 3) model that comprises the five (identified) food system stages of production,

processing, distribution, consumption, and postconsumption and is used to analyse and situate intervention activities – also serves to replicate a capitalist development ethic a priori to the specific considerations of the vision. Indeed, conceiving of food foremost as a ‘product’ (and, moreover, a product *of* a highly schematised, rationalized ‘production system’) implies a fundamentally different perspective than conceiving of it as ‘food’. The overarching food-as-product frame¹⁷², and the embedded capitalist discourse to which it points, defines and delimits the way it is possible to think about food policy in the context of the report.¹⁷³

Only one section – that dedicated to the consumption phase¹⁷⁴ – maintains a strong human perspective (via its great attention to ‘hunger’ and ‘healthy food access’) while the other four predominantly regard the economic consequence of the food system. The report’s heavy focus on urban agriculture – portrayed nearly as *the* solution to urban food insecurity – similarly reinforces a discourse of production and productivity.¹⁷⁵ The volume-of-content difference makes its own point impressively.

While *FoodWorks* does give notable attention to what might be understood as problems primarily of human suffering – most centrally, to diet-related health problems – it generally implies that these are problems not primarily because of the sufferings they invoke but rather because they create an avoidable economic burden for the city:

As paradoxical as it seems to the problem of food insecurity, three of the five leading causes of mortality in New York City can be linked to diet and are mostly preventable: heart disease, stroke, and diabetes. Each of these is strongly rooted in the problem of obesity. Over the past 20 years, obesity among children and adults has doubled and is now considered epidemic. The economic costs of these health problems are also considerable. Obesity-related medical expenditures in New York State are over \$6 billion, 81 per cent of which are paid by Medicare and Medicaid. Currently, Medicaid comprises 30 percent of all state revenues. New York City alone spends an estimated \$2.65 billion on health care each year, at a cost of roughly \$315 per resident (7).

¹⁷² This is not a quantitative analysis. Nonetheless, a figure here might communicate at least an idea of the force with which the capitalist framing asserts itself in *FoodWorks*: food is referred to in its productive identity (i.e., as a ‘product’ or a result of ‘production’) 168 times in the 86-page report.

¹⁷³ Recall the way that discourse ‘produces[s] permissible modes of ... thinking’ (Escobar 1995, 5) and circumscribes ‘what [can] be said, thought, ... practiced, [and] even imagined’ (Peet and Hartwick 2009, 224).

¹⁷⁴ Even the consistent use of the labels ‘consumer’ and ‘consumption’ in the portrayal of human food-related activities reveals the capitalist ethos, and this is one feature that capitalism has impressed even upon the Western academe, where such labels run rampant. However, such perspectives do not hold *universal* sway, and some scholars intently reject such characterizations in favour of ones deliver a more human appreciation. Goodman (2015), for example – who more generally exercises in this direction, frequently and notably using the term ‘eater’ in place of the far more customary ‘consumer’ – refers to ‘what might be called the “visceral” turn in food geographies’ and to ‘a number of different threads exploring the “vital” (re) materialities of food’ (2).

¹⁷⁵ The document’s attention to urban agriculture is not exclusively oriented to production, but its focus tends heavily toward it.

Beyond *PlaNYC* and *FoodWorks*, other official and unofficial documents, interviews, and media statements similarly testify to the predominance of the capitalist discourse in NYC's food security (or food policy) ambit. Several themes key to the capitalist development discourse consistently manifest with strength:

- A credence in the market as the ultimate site, source, and instrument of food security 'solutions';
- A faith in technology, science, and expert knowledge as central sources, instruments and agents of the food security 'solutions' package;
- The importance of the food system as an economic generator, and this functionality as a food security achievement mechanism;
- A deployment of the development term per se to indicate 'the building of *things*'.

In the remainder of this chapter, we consider these prominent themes¹⁷⁶ by way of examples from numerous different NYC sources.

Credence in the market

Perhaps the most primary way in which NYC's food policy discourse replicates the capitalist development paradigm is in its explicit and implicit expressions of faith in the market as the best site, source, and instrument for solving food-related problems. For the most part, it appreciates a government that is subject to the forces of the market rather than a market that is subject to the forces of the government.¹⁷⁷ Bloomberg's publicized and problematized public health efforts that depart from this model – and, more to the point, the marked and sometimes successful resistance to them – demonstrate its strength and tenure.

Texts and media make it clear that food security work is to be deployed largely within and via the private sector, and the government's role is often limited to incentivizing and promoting virtuous private-sector actions.¹⁷⁸ Thus even many of the government-'led' food security efforts are (or, where they are futuristic, are planned to be) deployed through 'partnerships' (of various levels of formality) with the private sector, and likewise many non-governmental efforts depend either upon charitable (that is, in the sense of not-public, *private*) beneficence or good-willed (or at least well-incentivized) private sector intervention to undertake the designated actions. These types of intervention models contrast sharply with, for example, the direct provisioning of food to poor people undertaken so prominently in Bogotá: recall that NYC does *not even have* the

¹⁷⁶ I identify and discuss the salience of these themes *in NYC*; but compare the content of this list with Sachs' (2010) comment upon the (global) development project: 'Market, state and science have been the great universalizing powers; admen, experts and educators have relentlessly expanded their reign' (xviii).

¹⁷⁷ Note that this is not viewed as problematic, since the market is, in any case, the optimum arbiter.

¹⁷⁸ Again, while this is not a quantitative study, a figure may be at least suggestive: the words 'incentive', 'incentivize' and other variants of these appear in *PlaNYC*, the city's strategic plan, a total of 90 times.

equivalent of Bogotá's *comedores*, and hungry people frequently turn to charitably operated food pantries and soup kitchens to satisfy their immediate food needs.

Numerous of the city's recently implemented and envisioned near-term programming efforts demonstrate this strong recurrence to the market. For example, the *Healthy Bodegas* and *Green Carts* initiatives are two attempts that incentivize small entrepreneurs to expand and create new fresh – that is, per the reigning discourse, 'healthy' – food retail points in underserved areas. Similarly, the *Health Bucks* program incentivizes poor consumers toward the purchase of healthy foods by providing an addition \$2 in spending power for each \$5 in individuals' SNAP¹⁷⁹ allocations spent at farmers markets. Meanwhile the city's health department (DOHMH¹⁸⁰) recently undertook a massive publicity campaign aimed at curbing the city's high obesity and diet-related disease rates by increasing awareness and promoting more healthful eating choices among citizen-consumers; the effort used high-cost, well-designed contemporary advertising materials and fora – precisely the same instruments used in and by the dominant capitalist markets – including a series of popular YouTube-published publicity spots (DOHMH 2015) and giant posters plastered throughout the NYC subway such as this one (DOHMH 2009) (Figure 16):



Figure 15: A subway poster from New York City's "Are you pouring on the pounds?" campaign (Source: DOHMH 2009)

¹⁷⁹ SNAP, the United States's federally administered *Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program*, disburses food-purchasing assistance to low-income citizens. It was formerly known as the *Food Stamp Program*.

¹⁸⁰ The DOHMH is the New York City *Department of Health and Mental Hygiene*.

New York City's progressive food-centric public health efforts have featured YouTube spots and giant subway posters (such as this one).

In all of these efforts, then, the government maintains the pronounced 'freedom of choice' ethic integral to the capitalist paradigm as it 'nudges' (see, e.g., Thaler and Sunstein 2008) entrepreneurs and consumers, via market incentives, advertising strategies, and information campaigns, to assume the bulk of responsibility for autonomously creating and 'choosing' their own situations of food security: 'We'll give communities better options and depend on them to make good choices' (FoodWorks 2010, 75), goes the logic. Similar responsabilization of the individual and maintenance of a strong freedom of choice posture are evident throughout much of the city's work; as *PlaNYC* enunciates – *even* where it makes important gestures of government involvement in remediating poor food access environments – 'a good part of being able to protect and improve our health depends on the choices we make as individuals' (163).

Note that this ethic is consistent with a strong – even alarmist – national American narrative of freedom and choice, one that applies to food system issues as much as to others. For example, consider not only the tenor but also the content of the rabid oppositional voices when the Dietary Guidelines Advisory Committee (DGAC), charged with making an evaluation of the scientific literature and updating national nutritional recommendations each five years, issued its most recent scientific advisory report. In the report (2015), it included not only nutritional advice but also (some) progressive policy recommendations, some of which – such as those to impose a tax on high-sugar foods – earned it derision from leading free-market advocates across the nation. Conservative writers at the Washington Legal Foundation (WLF)¹⁸¹ (2015), for example, lambasted the recommendations, warning of 'policies and litigation hostile to consumers' and encouraging consumers not to 'let self-appointed consumer advocates substitute their judgment for yours as to what you should eat or drink'; it commenced an 'educational project' on the matter that it titled 'Eating Away Our Freedoms' and published a McCarthyesque list of people and organizations it charged with doing precisely that.

Notably, where the government *has* intervened, or attempted to intervene, more directly upon the free market (i.e. by restricting its 'free operation' via regulation), it has received great publicity¹⁸², both positive and negative, and widespread resistance for violating sacrosanct capitalist discourses of free market operation and laissez faire government policy. Among the most visible manifestations of the reluctance to transgress the capitalist paradigm in this way are

¹⁸¹ WLF (2015) is 'America's premier public interest law and policy center devoted to creating a legal and regulatory environment that supports free enterprise, job creation, economic rights, and business civil liberties'.

¹⁸² For example, in 2013 Mexico passed an internationally notable tax on sugary drinks that was quickly dubbed as the 'Bloomberg Tax' (Bajaj 2013).

the widespread portrayals of Mayor Michael Bloomberg as ‘Nanny Bloomberg’¹⁸³ that appeared in the wake of several of his more interventionist food policy proposals, including one to limit the size of sugary beverages sold in take-aways. The conservative organization The Center for Consumer Freedom (CCF) published this full-page publicity in the New York Times (2012) (Figure 17):



Figure 16: The Center for Consumer Freedom’s full-page ad portraying New York City Mayor Bloomberg as “The Nanny” (Source: CCF 2012).

NYC Mayor Bloomberg’s progressive public health efforts earned him the scorn not only of many New Yorkers but of many Americans. Following Bloomberg’s imposition of a (later judicially overturned) cap on the size of sugary beverages sold in NYC take-aways, a conservative consumer organization published this full-page advertisement in the New York Times. Its ‘Nanny Bloomberg’ personage has come to represent the assault on freedom, privacy and choice that many of its opponents identify in progressive food policy.

¹⁸³ After joining the audience of a panel discussion on food system reform held by a leading international NGO, I spoke with the panellists individually. One offered this candid response to the portrayal of ‘Nanny Bloomberg’, and it is one that I consider to be well-reasoned and under-publicized: ‘I believe in capitalism – I started my own business! I believe in capitalism, in the free market, and so on. But we do not have a free market right now. The food system *has* a nanny, and she’s not doing a very good job!’ The in situ nanny the speaker referred to was the combination of dominant multinational food system corporations (i.e. such as Monsanto, Coca-Cola, etc.) and the national and international government policies that together created a highly subsidized food system and produced an extremely choice-edited, deceptively priced set of (largely unhealthy) market options to the consumer. In other words, as the informant continued, ‘It’s time to fire the nanny’ and get a new one. Her statement raises an important issue inherently problematic to the capitalist discourse. While the notion of a free market remains sacrosanct within capitalism to the point that any suggestion of (new) government intervention via regulation or restriction – these, typically, interventions that favour the non-capital classes – stands readily unmasked and opposed. Yet (extant) interventions – these, such as, most obviously in this context, agricultural subsidies, typically ones that favour the capital classes – remain masked, invisible, and largely uncontested.

The headline underscores the capitalist logic that defines and verily dominates the NYC landscape: ‘The Nanny. You only *thought* you lived in the land of the free.’ The text reads:

Bye Bye Venti¹⁸⁴. Nanny Bloomberg has taken his strange obsession with what you eat one step further. He now wants to make it illegal to serve “sugary drinks” bigger than 16 oz. What’s next? Limits on the width of a pizza slice, size of a hamburger¹⁸⁵ or amount of cream cheese on your bagel?

As a result of the public outcry in opposition to the law, the regulation was subjected to court examination and overturned by a judge, who ruled that the government had overstepped its limits.

Interestingly, those who supported Bloomberg’s proposals (and other proposals in a similar vein) *also* recurred heavily to a strong and transparent capitalist reasoning, arguing that it all comes down to a matter of economic sense. For example, numerous respondents to a New York Times opinion piece on the ‘soda ban’ (Bittman 2012b), as it came to be called, communicated the perspective with great popular directness. One respondent sustained his position by opining:

At the end of the day, we pay for SNAP benefits. IMO that entitles us to decide what people eat, especially since we pay again when they raise unhealthy children who are prone to chronic diseases, can’t function in school and ultimately can’t go to work and support others in need ... If I’m paying [as a taxpayer], I get to call the shots.

And another wrote:

As a society we will pay for these people, either through “entitlement” programs or through prisons. But a better option would be to step in and be the parents of these kids...and I know there will be howls of disbelief and derision when I say this.... but this is a matter of national productivity, economic prosperity for the Middle- and Upper-classes as well, and of national security.

The capitalist development discourse’s entrée into food policy, then, is ubiquitous, implicating the thinking space of actors conservative and progressive alike.

To be clear and to reiterate, NYC has taken many progressive actions in which the government has assumed an important role, and some of these have indeed infringed upon capitalist sensibilities with regulations that limit market freedom (including, for example, the introduction of calorie labels on menus, the banning of trans fats in restaurants, and the introduction of stricter than federally required nutrition standards in school menu designs).¹⁸⁶ However, in

¹⁸⁴ The Venti is a 20-ounce beverage size offering at the popular Starbucks coffee chain; the beverages purchased in ‘Venti’ format are generally sweetened ones that would (for their sweetened character and supersize status) have been banned under the new law.

¹⁸⁵ Given the also well-publicized appearance on the KFC menu of the *Double Down Burger*, a hamburger not encased in a bun but nestled between two deep-fried processed-chicken patties, perhaps this is a good idea.

¹⁸⁶ Of course, even Smith’s stipulation of free market operation assumes an all-knowing and rationally acting consumer, and it is easy to argue that efforts such as calorie labelling serve (correctly) only to better capacitate the requisitely knowledgeable consumer; and that others such as school nutrition standards serve (correctly) to mediate the *irrationality* of pubescent minds (which, moreover, have been manipulated even further from the fully rational ideal by a heavily funded – and proven successful – onslaught of advertising from powerful food system actors).

doing so it has faced major resistance from inertial capitalist forces and well-entrenched political and food system actors, and – in any case – these efforts are outpaced by more numerous and weighty efforts toward ‘soft’ – and more market- and capitalism-friendly – interventions that return primary responsabilization to the individual and to the market.

The food system as economic generator

Another central way in which the capitalist development discourse is manifested in NYC’s food policy work is the recurring emphasis, in both official and non-official contexts, on the potential of a well-functioning, well-designed, and well-practiced food system to act as an economic generator. The beneficiaries of enhanced food-related economic activity are envisioned to include many: individual New Yorkers, particularly those who are poor, food-poor, or formally food insecure, who will (it is hoped) derive access to better employment and income possibilities; the ‘city’ as a unit, whose economic productivity and corresponding investment will grow; and ‘regional’ food producers (i.e., those in ‘the NYC region’, New York State, or another of the various definitions used to circumscribe the ‘region’ and the ‘regional’ in the NYC context), who will find business expansion and growth opportunities in a better-served urban market.

The supposition of the individual as beneficiary is conflictive, and it suggests flaws with which critics charge the capitalist logic to be intrinsically and generally imbued: the generation of corporate profit, even that generated by ‘entrepreneurs’, does not necessarily trickle down well to the labour upon which it which relies. (This is a theme addressed in important ways by the ‘Good Food Jobs’ report that I discuss shortly.) Growth of the city’s and the region’s total economic productivity is less contentiously accepted¹⁸⁷: increases in the number of food businesses, food jobs, production output, or sales receipts all generally spell profits for business balance sheets. This, of course, is the very *point* of capitalism – and, at the end of the day, of the city’s policy, as well.

Importantly, the centralized representation of the food system *as* economic growth engine is also intended (both explicitly and, all the more so, implicitly) to achieve a positive impact in the domain of ‘food security’ specifically: the more food-sector jobs that exist, and the better the

¹⁸⁷ Though not entirely so: critics who make a fuller evaluation of the city’s economic prosperity – i.e., those who apply a life-cycle or systems perspective – charge that in fact the growth of low-wage jobs ultimately costs the city more money via the greater social security costs it must assume as the low-wage, insurance-deprived workers of those jobs access city-funded social services; thus the balance of the local economy may or may not be positively affected. For example, the UC Berkeley Labor Center published a report titled *The High Public Cost of Low Wages* (Jacobs, Perry, and MacGillvary 2015), which announced in bold print that ‘poverty-level wages cost U.S. taxpayers \$152.8 billion each year in public support for working families’ (1). Regardless, however, it is certainly true that the productivity and income side of the ledger will reflect growth, and this, ultimately, is the point of the capitalist discourse.

wage conditions of those jobs, the greater economic wellbeing of the (largely low-income) people who execute them, and (ergo) the greater their food security. Note that this is, at core, the very same capitalist ‘development’ logic that has been deployed in poor countries to support the global development project for decades: the surest way to help the poor and food insecure, the logic goes, is to make them less poor.

Many exemplars from both official and unofficial actors testify to the prominence of the economic generation motif in NYC. In *PlaNYC*, for example, the city boasts of recent actions to generate new food manufacturing businesses:

In partnership with the City Council, we are also creating food retail and production opportunities by maximizing the use of City-owned land. The City has helped establish both the Kitchen Incubator at La Marqueta in East Harlem, and the Entrepreneur’s Space (E-Space) in Long Island City. These programs provide facilities, equipment, and other resources to entrepreneurs starting businesses in the ever-growing food manufacturing industry. The City currently serves 100 clients at E-Space. We will graduate 25 new businesses from that incubator and an additional 40 at La Marqueta, so that food entrepreneurs can bring healthy food and economic development to neighbourhoods throughout the city (29).

It is worth noting the supposition of a *dual* food security mechanism at play here: not only is there to be a potentiation of entrepreneurial activity and the entrepreneurs who engage in it, there is also the assumption that the resulting activities will ‘bring healthy food’ to underserved areas and hence improve the food capabilities of *all* those who live in such neighbourhoods.

FoodWorks shows the discursive importance of this type of food-borne economic generation in the text’s organizational structure. Before (finally) arriving at a section dedicated to ‘improving public health’ – ostensibly the NYC food policy hallmark –, it first presents three *other* topical sections (in addition to giving an introductory overview of the US food system’s history):

‘Moving from food system insecurity to opportunity’ (with the notably opportunistic use of opportunity); ‘Seizing economic opportunity’ – including the subsections ‘supporting a diverse retail sector’; ‘expanding food manufacturing’; and ‘supporting regional farmers’ – and ‘Improving environmental sustainability’. In its section dedicated specifically to ‘seizing economic opportunity’, it presents its case that ‘New York City is not fully capitalizing on its economic power to create good jobs and economic opportunity at each phase of the food system’ (3), detailing the ‘market opportunity’ presented by the city’s large population:

The New York City food market consists of over 8 million residents, \$30 billion in food spending and a budget for institutional meals second only to the United States military. With such vast purchasing power, New York City is uniquely positioned to stimulate the food economy, strengthen our regional food system, and drive local and regional business activity... In terms of fresh food retail alone, New York City has the potential to capture an additional \$1 billion in grocery store sales each year that are not met by existing stores ... This market has a surplus demand of nearly \$600 million annually that could be captured ... Food processing is a valuable part of our city’s economy, providing \$1.3 billion to the Gross City Product. Additionally, every 100 jobs in the City’s food manufacturing sector supports 76 jobs in other industries (3-4).

The document goes on to name objectives that include to ‘generate growth and employment in the food manufacturing sector’ (34) to ‘revitalize New York City’s market system’ (36), and to ‘pilot a food retail workforce development program’ (51).

Meanwhile the intersectorial New York City Food Policy Center¹⁸⁸ recently published a report titled *Jobs for a healthier diet and a stronger economy: Opportunities for creating new good food jobs in New York City* (2013b). Nicknamed the *Good Food Jobs* report, it was widely circulated and enjoyed considerable praise and publicity. It paired a data-intensive mapping of NYC’s current food-sector employment with a critical quantitative-qualitative analysis of both its shortcomings and its potential. It declared its mission to act as a call ‘for the next Mayoral administration to create partnerships with employers, labour unions, educational institutions and others to produce 10,000 new Good Food Jobs in New York City by 2020’ (I).

Notably, the report made important gestures of reorienting the food-as-economic-generation discourse away from its sometimes exclusionary focus on the aggregate profit to be generated and closer to the issues of human flourishing and suffering that affect and afflict the (often vulnerable) people who comprise that aggregate. It emphasized the need to create – as well as the challenge inherent in creating – not simply ‘food jobs’ but ‘*good* food jobs’, which it defined as ones ‘that offer some combination of living wage jobs, greater availability of healthier food, and local economic development’ (III). It gave explicit attention to the need for a living wage and repeated concern for the vulnerable human person:

With more than 326,000 workers and a growth rate of 33% in the last decade, the city’s food production and distribution sector provides many entry-level opportunities for low- and moderate-skilled workers, making it an important target for new job creation. The food sector also offers career paths that allow those with limited education, recent immigrants, and entrepreneurs with high ambitions but little capital an opportunity to build a career. To date, however, many of the jobs in this sector are low paying, lack benefits and expose workers to unsafe conditions. Many of these jobs also involve the production of the food most associated with diet-related disease. Any plan to create Good Food Jobs will need to overcome these daunting realities (I).¹⁸⁹

¹⁸⁸ The New York City Food Policy Center at Hunter College was founded in 2013 and develops intersectorial, innovative and evidence-based solutions to preventing diet-related diseases and promoting food security in New York and other cities. The Center works with policy makers, community organizations, advocates and the public to create healthier, more sustainable food environments and to use food to promote community and economic development. Through interdisciplinary research, policy analysis, evaluation and education, we leverage the expertise and passion of the students, faculty and staff of Hunter College and CUNY. The Center aims to make New York a model for smart, fair food policy (NYCFPC 2015).

¹⁸⁹ The low wages and poor working conditions endured by the majority of food chain workers in the United States have made national headlines in recent years as strikes, marches, and well-publicised protest campaigns underlined the generalized absence of a ‘living wage’ for food-sector workers. For example, the average entry-level fast food worker in NYC earned \$16,920 annually; in comparison, the average fast food CEO made \$23.8 million. The current minimum hourly wage in New York State is \$8.75, following a raise from \$7.50 in 2013; New York State governor Andrew Cuomo proposed further raising it to \$11.50 in NYC and \$10.50 in the rest of the state, but the proposal was rejected by the state

Despite such points of reorientation within the report (which are major and important), however, the underlying discourse remains largely that of economic growth, and the paradigm of capitalist development is as apparent here as it is elsewhere. The above paragraph, for example, though its intent is to make a case for paying greater attention to the *human* concerns related to unliveable wages and poor working condition, verily began with a reporting of the magnitude and growth of the food sector: in other words, the reader should attend to these matters not necessarily (or at least, not only) because the described poor-labour conditions do not represent optimal human wellbeing, but rather – and even first – because the sector is (very) large and growing.

Throughout the report, human concerns are framed largely (and impressively) in terms of their economic consequence. The section on food-related health in its entirety serves as a good example. Its first justification of the claim that creating good food jobs would create better health outcomes for people was not that good health is good for people, but rather that ‘making healthier food more available and affordable can help to reduce the growing health and economic burden that diet-related diseases such as diabetes, heart disease and some forms of cancer impose on New York City’ (19). Particularly interesting in this statement is the depersonalization inherent, as the challenges described affect ‘New York City’ – the abstract, multiple, faceless geopolitical entity – rather than ‘the *people* of New York City’.

Similarly, in the summary table related to the same theme, a collection of veritably bad human health outcomes is presented not in terms of the poor individual consequences of these (i.e., sufferings) but rather in terms of the economic burden these impose on the city. One cell recounted the number of people suffering from diabetes ‘who required dialysis’ and ‘diabetes-related amputations requiring hospitalization’ and concluded by underlining its clear central message and most salient point: ‘In NYC, Medicaid spends more than \$3 billion dollars a year to treat diet-related illness’ (ibid.). Another cell regarded the ‘health and economic costs’ related to high rates of hunger and food insecurity and similarly reported human sufferings primarily as economic and productivist burdens, reporting that ‘poorly nourished children have lower school test scores and require more costly health care’ and that ‘hunger reduces the productivity of workers, which reduces their earnings, which, in turn, reduces their ability to purchase nutritious food for their children’ (20). That the most highly prioritized concern related to hungry children

legislature (Cuomo 2015). Compare any of these figures with the ‘Fight for 15’ – that is, for \$15 per hour pay – demanded nationwide in strikes and rallies by fast food workers (Greenhouse 2013, 2015), and the considerable distance between ‘food jobs’ and ‘good food jobs’ becomes apparent. Hence, while efforts to generate individual wellbeing via the creation of food-related jobs do perfectly replicate the discourse of the capitalist development model, critics charge that such strategies may fail to deliver even the promised (economic) results.

is their ‘more costly health care’ and that hungry workers display, first and foremost, ‘reduced productivity’ testifies again to the very strong capitalist ethic that pervades NYC food security work, even when it comes from reformist sources.

Faith in technology, science and expert knowledge

Another central element of the capitalist development discourse, seen particularly sharply via its deployment to the ‘developing world’ as ‘modernization’, is its faith in and emphasis upon rationalization, specialization, technology, science, and expert knowledge as the known, prescriptive paths toward societal progress. Rahnema (2010) describes the discourse as it is applied in the global development project:

The poor are assumed to be “underdeveloped” and – momentarily at least – deprived of their capacity to define their own interests. It is up to those in a superior position of knowledge and power (governments, institutions, professionals, competent authorities) to assist them on their behalf. People’s ‘participation’ is indeed welcomed whenever that could help the populations concerned to manifest their support for the professionally designed programmes (180).¹⁹⁰

Anti-development activists charge this element of the capitalist discourse with crippling autonomous food systems (in favour of the more rationalized, industrialized, export-based ‘modern’ ones they promote) and, more generally, with depreciating traditional knowledge systems and ways of knowing; indeed a central feature of the global project has been its near total exclusion of local, traditional, and non-elite actors (and the cultural knowledge traditions to which they pertain) from positions of authority. Leadership is instead deposited with ‘experts’ who unidirectionally deliver their ‘expertise’ to the local, traditional, and non-elite people who are to adopt and benefit from it.

The model, exported to poor countries under the label of development *per se*, was precisely the one understood to have been the West’s ‘proven’ path to progress; to this day, though it is not classified with the development appellation in rich countries, it remains there – and perhaps especially there – impressively intact. Viewing its manifestation in New York’s discourses of progress and food policy proves an interesting reflection upon the consistency, coherency and totality of the capitalist development discourse as the development gaze is returned to *the*

¹⁹⁰ This postdevelopment commentary insists on the correlation between the development-context faith in experts and the discursive power of the same so-labeled experts. Illich (2010) writes that ‘the condition of post-modern man and his universe has become, according to this view, so complex that only the most highly specialized experts can function as the priesthood capable of understanding and defining “needs” today’ (107). Rahnema (2010) elaborates, emphasizing the popular debilitation implied by this:

Following a consensus reached among the world elites on the diagnosis of the disease (underdevelopment and lack of income) as well as its cure (economic and technological development), armies of experts, politicians, planners, bureaucrats, socio-economists and even anthropologists started acting as pauperologists, seeking to refine the discourse and practices related to world poverty (178).

developed. In NYC this model proves extremely strong throughout the discourse and programming, with many government and extra-government efforts to leverage new technologies, to ‘innovate’ new designs for production and management, to partner with hard-science research institutions, and – also central – to disseminate knowledge and know-how from authority-bearing experts to common folk who will adopt and derive benefit from newly specialised knowledge, skill sets and rationalized work models.

Recalling that *PlaNYC* treats food issues less attentively than others, apprehending this element of the development discourse in *PlaNYC* is more abundantly possible by turning to other, quasi-related elements of the city’s development project in which the city pledges to embrace new science and technology, trial pilot innovations, and depend upon the leadership of scientific experts: its Jamaica Bay ecological project¹⁹¹ will ‘leverage limited funding and scientific knowledge to produce sustainable and cost-effective restorations’¹⁹² (71); its climate resilience efforts will comprise ‘work with academic institutions, scientists, engineers, and designers to develop pilot projects and evaluate their potential costs and benefits’; and its clean waste efforts will depend on ‘advances in technology [which will] allow us to pursue alternative disposal methods by safely and efficiently converting our waste into a source of clean energy’ (137). Innovation, understood primarily as scientific-technological innovation, is embraced, pursued, and even regulated¹⁹³ by way of a new ‘Innovation Review Board to bring together multiple agencies to review new codes or technologies’ (108). There is to be training of all kinds throughout the city and for all publics: ‘stewardship training’ (to be held in the parks), brownfields trainings for the general public (which ‘will produce a permanent online library of brownfield educational videos’ (57)) and, separately, for those who aim to find work in the sector; a general ‘Green Jobs’ training program; and a specialized training program, STRIVE, which ‘prepares its trainees for work in a variety of emerging green technology fields’ and allows participants to ‘get specialized training in areas with demonstrated demand among local employers’ (54).

All of this interest in science, technology, and expertise retains a clear primary aim: to create economic growth in the midst of a competitive – and most capitalist – world *market*. *PlaNYC* extends regular reminders:

New York City is an engine of economic growth. Our globally significant harbour and transportation system move goods and people around the city and far beyond; our financial services industry supports entrepreneurship; our universities, museums, and theatres draw talented and hard-working people from around the world. But today’s

¹⁹¹ Jamaica Bay is an area of New York City located on Long Island. Its marshy habitat rich with birds and wildlife make it home to a protected national recreation area.

¹⁹² If it is not manifest upon first reading, it is worth noting the density of capitalist language in this rhetorically frantic sentence: *Leverage! Knowledge! Produce! Sustainable! Cost-effective!*

¹⁹³ The last of which seems a curiously paradoxical possibility.

global economy is tougher than ever. We are vying with cities as near as Stamford and as far as Shanghai to be the city of opportunity in a world where people and capital investment flows are highly portable. Our policies to make New York a greener and greater city are part of a larger strategy to make us a more competitive one. We will spur new industries, drive innovative practices and technology, maintain critical infrastructure, create a skilled workforce, and improve the quality of life which is critical to attracting companies and talent. *PlaNYC* policies will contribute to our economic transformation by driving new markets for businesses (172).

This is the general development paradigm, then, that ultimately enters the food policy arena in the city's practiced food system reform efforts. The city's emphasis on generating new food system jobs and profits that I have illustrated in the previous section, for example, relies precisely on the same set of *modernization* values and practices discussed here: rationalization, specialization, increasing use of technologies, emphasis on sector-specific training, and unidirectional expert-to-layman knowledge transfer.¹⁹⁴

This paradigm is made more explicit in direct treatments of food policy such as *FoodWorks*. Indeed, while many scholars consider characterizing the dysfunction and identifying the 'solution' to a problematic contemporary food system to be a multifactorial, systemic, and complex amalgam analysis, *FoodWorks* more or less declares this a *fait accompli* – saying that 'fortunately, unlike other public health problems, the solutions to food insecurity and obesity are known and achievable'¹⁹⁵ (8) – and points to the technocratic promises of modernist interventions. This excerpt from a section on urban agriculture reproduces many elements of the discourse at once:

[Proposal]: Support urban agriculture technology development.

Because of New York City's dense environment and industrial history, agriculture and gardening can be challenging enterprises. Not only is finding space difficult, but implementing the appropriate growing systems – whether greenhouses, hoop houses, rain water harvesting, vertical indoor systems, or any of the countless other technologies available – can be overly complex as well. However, there are engineers, architects, and seasoned growers in our city that have been leading the way to the development and execution of new technologies. These technologies can be found on the ground, on roofs, inside, outside, and all over the five boroughs. Moreover, there is a growing community of innovators across the country who are sharing best practices.

This expertise and interest in urban agriculture nationally presents a unique opportunity here in New York City. We are fortunate to boast a great number of well-known academic institutions, a rich talent pool in urban design and planning, and a highly

¹⁹⁴ Note also the consistency and similarity of these lemmata with the principles invoked in the context of the (international) development project. For example, Escobar's (1995) comment regarding the Integrated Rural Development project in Colombia – that it 'subjected peasants to a set of well-coordinated and integrated programs that sought to transform them into rational, business-minded entrepreneurs' (143) – does not seem out of place here.

¹⁹⁵ It continues by listing the strategies that are, to the report's authors, known to be successful:
By improving utilization of public programs, supporting a healthier food environment in the city, and making good food more affordable, we can achieve better health outcomes for all New Yorkers, regardless of their income (8).

motivated and active community of growers. By connecting these resources and using them to solve urban agriculture problems in such a large, dense city as ours, we can position ourselves as leaders in urban technology development. The City Council will partner with academic institutions, such as Columbia University and the New School, to identify strategies for encouraging innovation and dissemination of new technologies. Not only would this support the efforts of growers here, but if we can begin to formalize and commercialize these technologies, we can also lay the foundation for potential economic activity in the future (30).

The common person, then, is left incapable – but not helpless, as ‘help’ is on the way! – in the face of a ‘challenging’, ‘complex’ urban agriculture task; fortunately, technology, innovation, and academic experts are on hand to come to the rescue with their knowledge and expertise. (Notably, in its conclusive line, the text again arrives to remind of the most important outcome in the entire venture: creating ‘economic activity in the future’.)

Elsewhere in the document the strong emphasis on solutions based in technology and rationalization continues: The city must assist distributors to identify ‘optimal routes, adopt new technologies, and help ... navigate our city more quickly and easily’ (11); help ‘households and businesses to reduce environmental impacts with new technologies and equipment’ (6); aid companies ‘with adopting new technologies ... to address the high energy usage and greenhouse gas emissions characteristic of our food system’ (8); ‘explor[e] citywide composting technologies [so as to] begin to recapture more food system waste and reduce our municipal burden’ (11); and leverage ‘new technologies [that] are even able to grow food inside buildings’ (26).

Similarly strong emphasis on the role and importance of training and knowledge building occurs throughout the rest of *FoodWorks*, as well. Goal 10 of the Consumption phase offers a good example:

Goal: Increase quantity and quality of opportunities for food, nutrition and cooking knowledge.

Along with a healthier food environment and meal options, consumers must also be equipped with knowledge to make choices about what to eat. Currently, education about food, nutrition, and cooking is delivered in a variety of settings. New and expecting mothers receive nutrition education through the Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC). Young children receive education about where food comes from and what to eat from countless innovative programs. Additionally, thousands of Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) recipients receive nutrition education through the Food Bank for New York City's Cookshop program and the Cornell Cooperative Extension, both programs funded by the federal SNAP-Education program. While these programs have grown in recent years and offer valuable services, they are not enough to confront the loss of food knowledge over the past several decades. Better coordination among these programs and expanding other innovative, successful models of education will help restore some of this knowledge to New Yorkers. For example, school garden programs nationally and within the city have demonstrated immense promise in connecting children to their food and encouraging consumption of fresh, healthy foods. The city should assess the various services

currently available through SNAP-Education and other programs, their target audience, and their effectiveness to improve nutrition and health outcomes (63).

Another excerpt underlines the importance of training by turning (again) to the familiar economic danger of underemployment:

The City Council is partnering with the Hope Program to pilot a new food retail training program called GroceryWorks. The program is being designed with the input of the food retail industry, labour unions, and other experts to ensure that high quality training is provided and that program graduates will be placed in good jobs. In its first year, the program will train 100 unemployed people (158).

It also reports that ‘the initial investment of \$2,400 in the training and job placement of a former welfare recipient through this program will save taxpayers \$6,290 in the first year alone’ (55).

The emphases given here jointly to *training*, *experts*, and *economic benefit* make their imagined linkage very clear.

Meanwhile, the *Good Food Jobs* report also replicates this modernization element of the capitalist discourse in its implication that the more specialized the economy and the workforce, and the more rationalized the production process, the more modern, efficient, and (economically) successful they will be. Among the first of its recommendations is ‘workforce development’, a phrase it repeats 39 times in the report’s 47 pages – it uses ‘training’ a further 82 times – with bets on certifications and audits that reinforce the capitalist development penchant for professionalization (see also Marquand 2004).

Again, all of this is not to indiscriminately discredit NYC’s initiatives that promote training efforts. Indeed, from my perspective, there is much worth in many of them, and recurrence to expert advice might bring about either positive or negative results (or, perhaps, both simultaneously). In brief, it is important to reassert my opening premise that capitalism is not necessarily to be equated with negative connotation. It might – and I believe it does – assume real negative permutations in particular and specific application, but it is not inherently or even necessarily overwhelmingly so. The discussion – the critique – of NYC’s emphasis on training and expertise that I engage in up to this point is not (here) to issue normative evaluation but to demonstrate the widespread and faithful replication of a capitalist-inspired development and food policy discourse in NYC.

Summary: Capitalist ideology’s firm hold on NYC

This chapter has illustrated how a capitalist development ideology shapes food security discourse in the New York City case study. Despite the veracity of variation in capitalist

expression brought to light, for example, in the Voices of Capitalism (VoC) literature (e.g., Hall and Soskice 2001), and the real progressive motions made in the name of public health legislation in NYC, the cultural hegemony of the capitalist development discourse in NYC stands extremely dominant. This paradigm permeates the discursive landscape, circumscribes the ways in which it is possible to understand, think, and act in pursuit of progress, and ultimately determines NYC's food security discourse and its emanant policies. In the next chapter, I turn to the Bogotá case study to examine an alternative 'way of thinking' about development and food security: the *human development* perspective.

Box 3

A development of *things*: The circumscription of thought space in NYC

One semantic curiosity offers testimony to the hegemony of thought space that capitalism retains on the NYC development and food security discourses: the extent to which a single and particular interpretation of the term *development* itself has colonized and monopolized the totality of semiotic possibility. I discussed earlier how the term *development* means something highly specific when it is applied to poor-country contexts (i.e., in the conventional *international development* sense); in NYC, the meaning accrued is quite different but also very specific. In a few words, ‘development’ in NYC becomes equivalent to ‘urban development’¹⁹⁶, and this, in turn, is more or less equated with the ‘development of *things*’¹⁹⁷ (Rahnema 2010, 186) – the building of buildings, mostly. ‘Developers’ or ‘urban developers’ are ‘those who build’, and quite often real estate moguls with a hefty supply of the capital required to secure NYC’s costly property and to build things upon it.¹⁹⁸

A remarkable feature of this definition is that, even in contexts where alternatively stanced actors are sensitive to or critical of capitalist shortcoming, the term’s prebounded meaning remains intact; the 2013 NYC Mayoral Candidate Forum on the Future of Food in New York City (The New School) offers a good example. Progressive mayoral candidate Sal Albanese discussed his efforts and plans to expand opportunities for New Yorkers to pursue urban agriculture projects and the great challenges imposed by the economic-political concentration of power among ‘developers’ who made competing (and generally more economically enticing) claims on land. Even the reporting of Albanese’s discussion remained true to this use of development, leaving it without elaboration, query or question¹⁹⁹ precisely because *such elaboration is not needed* in NYC. That the category ‘developers’ might conceivably include those who develop urban gardens, for example – that *development* might comprise something *other than the building of buildings* – remains unthinkable.

In brief, then, even in the midst of charged conversation specifically addressing the poor human wellbeing outcomes that derive from New York’s extant food system – an arena that would constitute the consummate site for ‘human development’ discourse in Bogotá (and in much of the Latin America) – in this NYC example (like countless others) even the most progressive of actors were unable to articulate (or, it seems, even engage) a conceptual deviation from the generalized, dominant and exclusionary capitalist development discourse.

¹⁹⁶ Esteva (2010) commented regarding this use that:

By the beginning of the twentieth century, a new use of the term [urban development] became widespread. “Urban development” has stood, since then, for a specific manner of reformulation of urban surroundings, based on the bulldozer and the massive, homogeneous industrial production of urban spaces and specialized installations (5).

He goes on to explain that this meaning, however, failed to take hold in the context of the global development project.

¹⁹⁷ From philosophical and critical perspectives, Rahnema’s (2010) continued insight is worthy of reflection here:

Certainly, the economic approach to life may well lead for a time to a massive or more efficient production of goods and commodities – that is, a development of things. Yet both the resources and the needs it creates inevitably lead to a situation of permanent scarcity where not only the poor and the destitute, but even the rich, have always less than they desire (186).

¹⁹⁸ This use of development also reflects well Harvey’s (2012) characterization of ‘the city’ as *the* (privileged) place in contemporary capitalism where excess capital is disposed of: mostly, again, by *the building of things*.

¹⁹⁹ The NYC Food Policy Centre (2013a), for example, wrote simply and straightforwardly that ‘Mr. Albanese noted that he is the only candidate not accepting contributions from developers.’

Chapter 8

The human development discourse Bogotá and the priority of the person

Destitution, or imposed poverty, undoubtedly hurts, degrades and drives people into desperation. In many places, hunger and misery cry out to heaven. Indeed, few development concepts find their proof in such a glaring reality. Yet poverty is also a myth, a construct and the invention of a particular civilization. There may be as many poor and as many perceptions of poverty as there are human beings (Rahnema 2010, 174).

Abstract

In this chapter, the research continues its response to Research Question 1, examining the close relationship between the development discourse and the food security discourse. Here, I examine the human development discourse, drawing mainly on the case study of Bogotá, where the perspective expressly dominates food security efforts (and most social programming). I illustrate the dominance of the human development discourse in Bogotá and discuss how two of its central aspects, preferentiality (or prioritarianism) and dignity, manifest importantly.

Introduction

In response to discontent with the recent hegemony of capitalist discourse in the global development project, alternative development perspectives have begun to find entry – and salience – in particular contexts of the South, and particularly in Latin America. Protests from the margins, led by theorist-activists, social movement adherents and indigenous actors, among diverse others, have collectively challenged extant development realities not only *within* the margins but also in mainstream political sites. To be sure, capitalist direction has by no means been uprooted and repealed: how else to explain the continuing processes of urbanization and expansion, massive industrial investment confronted by radical popular poverty, and the kowtowing of governments to the powerful influences of multinational corporations and influential foreign nations? But the rise of leftist national governments in some Latin American countries – Chavez in Venezuela and Morales in Bolivia are no doubt the most visible faces of this movement – and of progressive city administrations (including Bogotá's) offer testimony to a rising assertion of sovereign priority and an ascending call that peoples more independently define their trajectories of progress.

This clamour to stand freer from mechanisms of international capitalist power has found tread in 'alternative' development concepts that prioritize the human person, dignity and rights, and I have collectively termed such perspectives and paradigms here as 'human development approaches'. To be clear, the existence of these motions does not indicate the total disappearance of capitalist development discourse and action, even where human development approaches are strong: for the most part, these are alternative models *of* development rather than alternatives *to* development, and only the latter would genuinely upturn the current hegemony (Escobar 1995, 215). Still, these are important motions: they call into the light of day and 'name', at least to some extent, the deficiencies of the capitalist model²⁰⁰, and they create spaces of realized protest, even if these are not revolutionary in volume.²⁰¹

In the remainder of this section, we view the prominence of the human development discourse in Bogotá and see how this manifests in the city's food security discourse. First, I show how the city enunciates, articulates and affirms the virtue and necessity of human development approaches generally, and how this discourse is expressly positioned in opposition to the conventional (capitalist) model. Then I examine several framings and features of the human development discourse that figure with prominence, with emphasis on two especially salient

²⁰⁰ See also Friedmann's (2005) discussion of 'framing and naming'.

²⁰¹ See also Harvey's (2012) discussion of cities' emerging roles as 'spaces of hope' that play host to alternative social models with revolutionary potential in the face of capitalism's generalized hegemony and sometime abusiveness.

notions: prioritarian (or preferential) justice ethics and human dignity. Throughout, I consider how principles of the human development ethic impact and manifest within the food security discourse and policy. I also avail of the unique opportunities broached by the two-case design of this research: there is often a stark contrast between Bogotá's treatment of a particular issue and New York's that helps to demarcate the cities' different development models and underline the distinctiveness of the two perspectives.

Just as we began our study of the NYC context with an overview of the capitalist development discourse, we begin our study of Bogotá with a survey of the generalized appearance of its human development discourse.

The express human priority

As in NYC, let us begin by considering the centrally positioned, highly visible and explicit testimony to the city's stance expressed in the titling of the city's development plans (the most authoritative official statements on development, after all). Just as NYC's title, 'A Greener, Greater New York' (Bloomberg 2011) spoke to its underlying development paradigm, so too does the title of Petro's plan – and indeed the titles of *all* of Bogotá's recent plans – speak to its. The Petro administration currently executes the plan 'Bogotá Humana' ('Human/e²⁰² Bogotá', also referred to here as the PDBH, short for 'Plan de Desarrollo Bogotá Humana'), (PDBH 2012)²⁰³ and the three prior administrations deployed plans called 'Bogotá Positiva: Para Vivir Mejor' ('Positive Bogotá: So We Can Live Better') (Alcaldía Mayor de Bogotá 2008a), 'Bogotá Sin Indiferencia: Un Compromiso Social Contra la Pobreza y la Exclusión' (Bogotá Without Indifference: A Social Commitment to Fight Poverty and Exclusion') (Alcaldía Mayor de Bogotá 2004), and 'Bogotá Para Vivir: Todos del Mismo Lado' ('Bogotá is for Living: Everybody on the Same Side') (Mockus, 2001-2003) (Alcalde Mayor de Bogotá 2001).

Even the *general* name given to Bogotá's development plans – the title of the titles – is suggestive (again, particularly when viewed in relief to that used in New York). In Bogotá, a development plan must be issued by each mayoral administration and approved and adopted by

²⁰² While I leave the plan titled throughout this work in its Spanish form, 'Bogotá Humana', a philosophical pause – for writer and reader alike – is required in the moment that I translate it. The words *human* and *humane* were in fact interchangeable until the 18th Century (Harper 2015), and it is worth at least loitering for a moment to reflect on the relationship and difference between these two words in contemporary English. In Spanish, it seems that people must necessarily be viewed both *humanly* (in the sense that others must necessarily *recognize* them as humans) and *humanely* (in the sense that others must necessarily *treat* them as humans); in contemporary English, it seems that this latently unavoidable ethical connectivity is compromised.

²⁰³ For a concise summary of the plan's central features, see also the mayor's press release announcing the 'ABCs' of Bogotá Humana (Alcaldía Mayor de Bogotá 2012g).

the City Council (the *Consejo Distrital*)²⁰⁴; referred to in common parlance simply as ‘development plans’, these are, in their full appellation, denominated ‘Economic, Social, and Public Works Development Plan(s)’. The simple presence of the articulated ‘social’ modifier indicates its intentioned prioritization within the city’s development project. To mark the contrast, while NYC’s plan carries no general referent ‘name’, it makes clear in announcing its framework of priorities – namely growth, infrastructure, a global economy, and climate change – that its understanding of ‘development’ exists primarily or wholly in the economic sense.

The existence of an institutionalized social focus within Bogotá’s plans – in other words, that a social priority is borne in legislation and transcends administration – is remarkable. It is worth commenting upon the adjectival order inherent in the title, which would seem to place higher priority on economic than on social development. However, contrary to this anticipation, the titling and programming of the four most recent plans explicitly invert this expected prioritization – at least at face value. The reality beyond face value, of course, is less immediately clear, as, despite extraordinary and central discursive commitment and important realized programming in the social realm, these occur in the face of continuing major (and, argue the activists, insuperably large) power deployments by reigning capitalist hegemony, including most notably the Northern nations and multinational corporations that continue to realize significant interventions in Colombia’s trade and governance schema. We resume this consideration in Chapter 10, but, for the moment, it is sufficient to recognize the fundamentally important expression and institutionalization of a social priority within Bogotá’s recent and current development plans.

In any case, the city’s effective development plan is ‘Bogotá Humana’, and its election of foci speaks volumes about the development vision and priorities of the Petro administration. The plan makes explicit its orientation from the start, declaring a priori that ‘the human being is the centre of the development project’ (20) and elaborating in the opening paragraph that ‘among the orienting threads of this [plan] ... is the positioning of the human being as the centre of public policy, in an environment that promotes his capabilities and liberties of citizenship without any form of segregation’ (11). It is worth also observing here the immediate deployment of capabilities language, prefacing the generalized appearance of capabilities language and philosophy throughout the text. The plan’s primary objectives and work packages include the reduction of social segregation and discrimination; the foment of what it calls ‘equal access to

²⁰⁴ Acuerdo 12 of 1994 (Consejo de Santa Fe de Bogotá 1994) requires ‘the formulation, approval, execution and evaluation of the [administration’s] *Economic, Social, and Public Works Development Plan*’. Note also that the importance of the plan goes far beyond the meeting of legislative requirement: it constitutes a coherent platform upon which mayoral administrations campaign, execute their work while in office, and, in an important way, leave their post-governing legacy.

the city'²⁰⁵; the guarantee, protection, and reestablishment of human rights; and the achievement of wider citizen participation and decision-making, along with the 'capacity' for it.²⁰⁶

Programming in the PDBH is aligned along three axes. The first axis addresses segregation and discrimination and is most directly the one concerned with 'making the human being the centre of the development project' (20). Among the 16 distinct programmes that fall under the first axis are the central food security-related lines of work, with named efforts to define Bogotá as a territory that broadly defends, protects and promotes human rights, including implicit – later explicit – rights to food and to health; to create a situation of broad 'food and nutrition sovereignty and security' (64); and to achieve a more 'humane/human rurality (320)'. The second and third axes regard water planning²⁰⁷ – Bogotá is located in the midst of the world's largest *páramo*²⁰⁸, a resource it has thus far badly abused – and good governance. (While these latter two axes are neither insignificant nor irrelevant – indeed, both bear important consequences upon the city's ultimate food security paradigm – they are less so than axis one and I do not address them at length here.)

At a broad, schematic level, then, the plan's framing and structure communicate the centrality of the human prerogative, and its financing substantiates this discursive prioritization: 61% of the plan's budget is dedicated to achieving the aims of Axis 1 (445)²⁰⁹, due to Petro's insistence that 'the bulk of funds should be invested in the human being, and should focus in a special way on reaching children and youth', since such a targeted focus is 'essential in a human rights approach' (Alcaldía Mayor de Bogotá 2012g, 3). (This broaches the theme of preferentiality, which I return shortly.)

The lexicon and framing of the entire plan make clear the influence that rights and capabilities thinkers and advocates have made on Bogotá's political climate and leaders – indeed, the terms *rights* and *capabilities* themselves are repeated throughout the text – and the plan expressly recognizes – and, to the extent that a government document can do so, also extends a sort of formalized empathy upon – the preponderance of situations in which bogotanos suffer more

²⁰⁵ Consider the similarity of this language with the theory of the 'right to the city' (see, e.g., Harvey 2012); the theme is strong throughout the administration's work, and it often employs the same term.

²⁰⁶ Capacity should be understood to include both the 'preparedness' or 'capability' of the people to exercise as 'citizens' and the governance structures able to receive and value such participation.

²⁰⁷ Of course, *water* security is inherent to and inseparable from food security, despite their generally separate address.

²⁰⁸ A *páramo* is a high-mountain ecosystem variably defined; that near Bogotá is of vital importance because it constitutes the main source of water for the region and gives hospitality to an extraordinary biodiversity of flora and fauna.

²⁰⁹ A sum of just over 32 billion COP is allocated to Axis I work in a total plan budget of just over 53 billion COP.

than flourish. While there are no direct citations of academic theorists in the plan²¹⁰, their influence is clear and conspicuous in the extent to which themes and language of *rights*, *freedoms*, and *capabilities* emerge throughout the document.

The thematic emphasis and language evident in the PDBH is also widely evident beyond it, and a preponderance of official documentation reinforces the administration's insistence on people-centred governance and makes wide use of rights and capabilities concepts. For example, consider several excerpts from two documents preliminary to the plan that addressed the plan's bases and the administration's motivations:

- The citizen as a human being is therefore regarded as the centre of “development”, with the objective [of development] being to widen his capacities and to develop his potential, on the public dime, so that society [as a whole] can progress and evolve (Alcaldía Mayor de Bogotá 2012d, 2).
- Socioeconomic, spatial, and cultural segregation continue to considerably affect the capabilities of the population to use and enjoy the [public] goods that the city has available ... Development and progress, therefore, have been achieved without most of the human beings in the city being able to fully benefit from it (ibid., 2).²¹¹
- Within the framework of respect for all forms of life, for the dignity of the human being, the politics of love, and the defence of the public space, the Bogotá Humana Development Plan 2012-2016 aims to construct a different kind of city, one that includes and does not segregate the population, advances [everyone] in the full enjoyment of their rights, so that everyone can enjoy and live to the fullest all that the city offers, recognizing their potential; and they can choose the type of life that they want to live (ibid., 6).²¹²
- The human vision of the plan distances itself from conceptions of development that reduce [development] to the satisfaction of basic necessities.²¹³ Public policy must go beyond this to create a space that fosters the expansion of the choices afforded to people and allows for their exercise of freedom. People must find the kind of environment in which they can achieve the kind of life they consider valuable and desirable²¹⁴, having available to them the total

²¹⁰ The influence of such thinkers upon the bogotano politic, however, is not an imagined one. For example, in the text of Garzón's Bogotá Sin Hambre (2003)– the massive food security project of his Bogotá Sin Indiferencia plan – Amartya Sen is twice directly quoted.

²¹¹ Note the subtle contradiction that the construction of this phrase entails: while the total discourse of the plan insists that development is (really) something different than what is proposal by the dominant econocentric model, this passage protests the gross exclusion realized in ‘development’ achieved *by that model* – effectively recognizing the rejected model *as development*. This points to the unsettled, contingent character of the relationship between development models in Bogotá, a matter we return to Chapter 10.

²¹² Compare this phrase in particular, for example, with Sen's (2009) summary characterization of the capabilities approaches, which, he writes, concerns itself ‘with people's ability to live the kind of lives they have reason to value’ (244).

²¹³ This is a clear distance from previous development approaches that featured top-down implementation and the discursive subjectification of ‘beneficiaries’. While I do not elaborate, it is important to recognize this as a statement of differentiation from perspectives that the administration views as outdated and diminishing to the fullness of the human person.

²¹⁴ Note again the similarity with Sen's and others' characterizations of the capabilities approach.

offering of goods that they need in order to achieve their [specifically desired] ends (Alcaldía Mayor de Bogotá 2012c, 11-12).

- Since the 1990s, the UN human development reports have reiterated that the true wealth of nations lies in their people, in individuals as agents of their own development who have the means necessary to grow their capabilities and possibilities (ibid., 16).

These quotations begin to suggest the strong human development character of the Bogotá discourse. They also broach three themes that emerge as central in the total bogotano development discourse: an assumption – made without significant defence of it: it is, in the discourse, *obviously valid* – of a preferential or prioritarian justice ethic; a constant pursuit of and return to the notion of human dignity; and the ubiquitous presence of the rights leitmotif.²¹⁵ I illustrate the salience of the first two of these priorities in the remainder of this chapter and dedicate to the third – so portentous is it – the next chapter in entirety.

Preferentiality or prioritarianism

The embrace of preferentiality in Bogotá's food security discourse is ubiquitous and unquestioned. It is most visible when held in contrast to a generally contrary (or at least disputed) situation in New York (and in the United States more generally), where the notion of preferentiality, particularly when named as such, carries distinctly negative baggage, breaching sensibilities with its violation of the strong 'American' ethic of 'meritocracy'²¹⁶ and treading dangerously close to vilified grounds of socialism.²¹⁷

In Bogotá, though, articulations of preferentiality abound, and they are named, enumerated and celebrated. The press release announcing the PDBH (Alcaldía Mayor de Bogotá 2012g)

²¹⁵ It is worth, too, making the brief prefacing observation that neither the term *rights* nor the term *dignity* appears at all in *PlaNYC*, the *PlaNYC* 2012 progress report, *FoodWorks*, or the *FoodWorks* 2013 update, New York's most authoritative statements on food policy. Preferentiality *is* expressed, but it is with much inferior salience and a distinct characterization.

²¹⁶ The language of preferentiality used here, and in rights and capabilities thinking generally, is similar to language used in Catholic Social Teaching (CST), in which the 'preferential treatment of the poor' – in essence, the insistence that the poor have greater right to benefit – is a strong theme. This may be only coincidence, but it may be also more than that. In the present study, it is interesting to contrast the dominant religious heritages of the United States and of Colombia. In contrast to the strong Catholic patrimony of Colombia, the U.S. is ascribed with a distinct Protestant tradition as derived from its early British and Northern European colonization (acknowledging, of course, considerable diversity of actual religious affiliation). The Protestant ethic is often associated with the same individualism and meritocracy that mark North America's dominant capitalist sociopolitical and governance discourses: it is an 'up by the bootstraps' world. Of course I do not suggest that either religion or its professed philosophies are universally accepted in either context. Rather, I simply point to the possibility that there is a certain cultural 'porosity' by which religious values have historically interacted with sociopolitical ones.

²¹⁷ If it is necessary to substantiate the negative connotations of socialism in American culture, I must point no further than to the McCarthyist witchhunt of the 1950s.

communicated the plan's inbuilt preferential ethic in its choice of subtitle, declaring the plan's central mission to be that of 'overcoming inequality' in Bogotá (1). Indeed, overcoming inequality is, recall, the express framing of the plan's Axis 1, its most important, most publicized and best-funded component. It pointedly elaborates the prioritarian principles underlying its food security efforts, which aim

to create the conditions for the healthy development of all people throughout their life cycle – children, adolescents, youth, adults, and seniors – improving physical and economic access to a basic food basket and a healthy environment, and incorporating a preferential focus and prioritized attention to children, teens, seniors, the disabled, and victims of the armed conflict. It prioritizes the matters of nutrition, care, and education particularly during the early childhood period (27).

Much of the plan's food security work testifies to the textual embrace of preferentiality as a programmatically foundational principle. For example, efforts to expand to 890,000 the number of children served school meals, special services extended to women and migrants, and efforts to strengthen the 'informal economy' all target groups understood to be 'vulnerable' or 'marginalized'.

While there are charges in Bogotá that such an embrace of preferentiality within food security programming only reinforces an *asistencial* character that several informants claimed to be inherent to the Colombian character²¹⁸, preferential treatment of disadvantaged groups is generally regarded in Bogotá as 'correct'. This normative atmosphere is distinctly different to that in NYC and the United States, where (to repeat the by now recurring theme) the contrary is generally true, and examining the intensity of this difference underlines the comparably remarkable character of Bogotá's discourse.

In the United States, there has been an increasingly voluminous dose of public attention to food security in the context of important recent social, political and economic events. Key issues of great popular interests have included, at a national level, the most recent Farm Bill negotiations and passage of new school meals regulations; at a local level, NYC's motions toward more aggressively interventionist public health policy; and, in an ideological plane, the increasingly troublesome effects wrought by the economic recession on the poor and working classes. The content and character expressed in the great public attention given to these themes is useful for recognising a dominant American perspective: one that begrudges preferentiality of any form and upholds the sense of meritocratic individualism that critics charge it violates.

²¹⁸ A rough translation of the *asistencial* charge is *welfarist*, naming and blaming the target individual as suffering from a deficiently *dependent* and *unmotivated* character. It might be considered as similar to the colloquial *moocher* label used to implicate moral culpability among (North) American welfare recipients, which we discuss shortly. Note well that these charges are written with emic rather than etic voice.

In general, instead of viewing the preferential treatment of disadvantaged, marginalized and vulnerable groups as ‘correct’, the American ethic holds this as evidence of a moral deficit afflicting ‘the poor’ that must be constantly monitored and managed²¹⁹: this, effectively, is the ‘moocher’ discourse that I discuss shortly. First it is worth noting, however, that, beyond the ‘poor’, there are other – less typically maligned and more imaginably ‘innocent’ – groups that are often *also* begrudged the special benefits they receive (or might receive) via preferential public policies. One commentator upon a recent New York Times article on food stamps (Bittman 2012a) well captured this prevailing (and, in the writer’s patent estimation, absurd) view in his written caricature: ‘All those loafing seniors in their 80s and 90s ... how dare they ask for food!’

Seen alongside New York City, then, Bogotá’s emphatic and celebratory adoption of a preferential hallmark in its development and food security discourses becomes an impressive testimony to a wholly different philosophy and stands as a marker of the strong human development ethic that dominates the city’s politic. Dignity rises as another such marker.

Dignity

The bogotano discourse on dignity – levied extensively in official contexts and even more impressively beyond them – marks a second important indicator of the human development perspective, and again the discourse is most remarkable when seen in contrast to New York’s. First, though, we must recall the esteem given to dignity in transnational spaces, for this is what provides much of the conceptual fuel and galvanizing inspiration that abet Bogotá’s endorsement of it.

Even among the central actors of the international development community – the UN agencies, intergovernmental organizations and major NGOs, whose collective recent motions at least *tend* away from the heretofore dominant capitalist model, yet whose sincere commitment to a capitalist alternative is widely debated – the idea of dignity has earned a gold star. For example, one recent UN Secretary General’s statement (2013) regarding the construction of a post-2015

²¹⁹ Again, compare this perspective with the perspective of moral inferiority that pervades the global development project. Rahnema (2010) writes about the assigned association between material and moral poverty:

Most traditional societies had resisted the view that all poverty reflected personal inadequacy. This view, that became characteristic of every capitalist society, especially in its Protestant versions, was now advanced as a major component of the new value system. Economic poverty was now to be perceived and acted upon, on a global level, as a shame and a scourge. The vast increases in wealth offered, or achieved, by modern societies fostering greed and profit making, played a significant role in the sharp devaluation of moral poverty. Thus, the race for enrichment became not only a desirable goal for the economy but also a morally justified end (180).

development agenda²²⁰ is verily titled *A life of dignity for all*. The slogan of the major humanitarian organization CARE (2013) is ‘Defending dignity. Fighting poverty’, and its vision statement announces that the organization ‘will be known everywhere for [its] unshakeable commitment to the dignity of people’.

In the context of intellectual and social movements, dignity is fundamental – indeed, as we have already seen, it is central to rights and capabilities approaches and to Catholic Social Teaching, and Harvey (2012) confirms that ‘to be treated with dignity’ is ‘a recurring theme in many anti-capitalist struggles’ (134). Liberation theology positions its radical politics precisely upon the assertion that profit-centred capitalism’s²²¹ crime is precisely that of ‘crush[ing] the dignity of human beings under foot, turning them into the victims of a cruel and sacrilegious cult’ (Gutiérrez 2007, 25). Likewise, Sayer (2011) dedicates great attention to dignity in his study of critical social science, and, in a point germane to the often emphatically material treatment of development, he observes that

in thinking about the nature of well-being, it’s easy to get drawn back to the physical aspects of health and security, but dignity is sometimes valued more highly than those, and it is much more dependent on how others interpret and treat us, particularly in terms of relations of equality and difference (21).

In Bogotá, dignity appears frequently in the development and food security discourses and, importantly, plays a major role in the expression of the PDBH itself. It is used both to endorse a general principle (that is, to affirm a foundational ethic of *universal* human dignity) and to communicate a commitment to specific ameliorative action on behalf of individuals whose dignity has been violated, depreciated, or ‘simply’ overlooked.²²² This dual usage is most obvious in observing that the notion is expressed in both noun and verb forms: *the dignity* of every person is in the first place recognized and expressly valued, and efforts are made *to dignify* the person (or to enhance, restore, or promote his dignity).²²³ Both forms are employed in many different contexts and with diverse targets.

Dignity is emphasized in a special way in relation to victims of conflict-related violence and displacement, even – and particularly – in the context of food security.²²⁴ For example, the

²²⁰ This intends to replace the MDGs when they ‘conclude’ at the end of 2015.

²²¹ A ‘savage capitalism’, per Gutiérrez (2007, 25).

²²² Of course, the last of these is really not simple at all: it is the invisibility of one’s very humanity.

²²³ It is worth noting that, just as *to dignify* transforms the more common noun form of this concept into a verb, there are also the lexical – and real – possibilities for its opposite: *to undignify*.

²²⁴ Though I do not discuss it at length in this study, the relationship between the armed conflict and food security in Colombia is extraordinary. Aside from individual concerns related to displacement and migration, food security (understood broadly) might, at a robustly political level, be seen as *the* issue at the heart of FARC’s demands. Indeed, in recent ‘peace talks’ between FARC and the Colombian government, the first point of negotiation demanded by FARC regarded systemic land use and access

PDBH describes food security programming intended specifically for victims of conflict-related violence and migration, housed under a line of work titled ‘Dignity for Victims’ (54); it titles another line of work ‘Dignification in Pursuit of Peace and Reconciliation’ (227). Elsewhere in the plan, the concept of dignity appears in a heightened way as the rationale for and objective of various labour-related efforts, referring to the *dignification* of work among different classes and functional roles, including specifically for informal sector workers (27), teachers (28), the recycling community (187), public servants (227), and government workers (229).

An excerpt from a PDBH section dedicated to strengthening the informal economy exemplifies both the nature of the text’s appeal to dignity and the particular attention it reserves for marginalized individuals; the line of work aims

to strengthen the productive fabric of the city with emphasis on the popular economy... The administration will promote, through its policies, the right to work in conditions of equity and dignity, with special attention to low-income families, women, young people, ethnic minorities, afro-descendants, palenqueros raizales, indigenous and Rom, LGBT, and (other) discriminated and segregated populations (27).

Dignity appears in the PDBH, then, not only as a universal but vaguely applicable principle but as a construct for attending pointedly to groups considered vulnerable or marginalized – in short, to those whose due dignity is considered to have been violated. In this way, the concept serves to justify and frame the strategies of preferentiality so important within Bogotá’s programming.

Importantly, these references to dignity transcend programming sector and throughout all three of the plan’s axes. That is, the concept is expansive: it is not restricted to Axis I (and its articulated dedication to achieving equality), where a more limitative understanding of the concept’s importance might confine it. Indeed, so expansive is dignity’s deployment that, in the context of a programming effort related to environmental responsibility, the concept is affirmed even extra-humanly in arguing for the necessity of ‘dignifying animal life’ (207)!²²⁵

At the most official level of Bogotá’s development discourse, then, dignity is amply celebrated. Moving the examination beyond the PDBH and turning it to lesser governmental texts and extra-municipal efforts, the strength and articulation of the dignity concept emerges even more impressively. For example, the CTPD (2012), the Bogotá Territorial Planning Council²²⁶,

reform, and another top item on its agenda regarded more specifically its envisioned reforms to the food security ‘system’ in Colombia (Castellón 2012).

²²⁵ Of course, this use also exposes *dignity* to a danger of fetching the facile criticism of hollowness.

²²⁶ The CTPD (the Bogotá Territorial Planning Council) (2015) is a consultative body created to develop the principle of participatory democracy in the planning ambit. It includes representatives from many different social, economic and professional sub-groups in Bogotá and submits evaluations of and commentary upon Bogotá’s plans, policies and programmes (which, it is hoped, will be taken into consideration by the executors of those efforts).

dedicates several pages to discussing the concept of dignity in its (lengthy) formal comment to the PDBH. Its remark foremost recalls and reiterates the conceptual substance of dignity as it has been expressed in the major intellectual and social theories (which we, too, have surveyed here). But the report extends this general theoretical framing with a more practicable discussion of the concept's judicialized affirmation by way of Colombian Supreme Court rulings.

Indeed, legal consequentiality is a point that some human rights advocates list among the most important of their approaches – recall the advantage of *justiciability* that their arguments often rely upon - and in Colombia the *legal* framing of dignity itself is significant. Respecting dignity is, apart from its philosophical merit, required by the Colombian Constitution (Asamblea Nacional Constituyente 1991) and indeed stands as the State's central and determining principle: 'As the Court has affirmed, "Beyond rights themselves, dignity is the essential basis for the consecration and existence of the entire system of rights and assurances guaranteed by the Constitution"' (CTPD 2012, 14). The report continues by showing that the Colombian Court has held 'human dignity' to be understood in at least three ways: to live as one wishes; to live *well*, having satisfied certain material conditions; and to live without humiliations and injustices (15). In appealing to these rulings and to the substantial legal foundation for dignity in the Colombian jurisprudence, the CTPD report effectively positions dignity as the rightful justification of the rights approach espoused in the Bogotá Humana platform.

In a food security-specific ambit, City Councillor Juan Carlos Florez (2012) realizes another lengthy discussion of human dignity in his evaluation of the *comedores comunitarios*, positioning the concept as the basis and foundation for all social action and government programming. He identifies the primary challenge facing the *comedores* as their general failure to realize acceptable standards of 'quality and of dignification of the service' (5), referring by the latter to 'the quality of foods that beneficiaries receive and the quality of the service given to them' (5). Here the term is an active one, its use deployed in nominal, adjectival and verbal forms: human dignity is not merely an abstraction but rather implies specific possibilities – indeed specific responsibilities – *to dignify* the service *by* providing high-quality food and respectfully serving it to the individual recipient. In other words, the quality of programming derives from, responds to, and acts as an indicator of recognition of and respect for human dignity (and indeed specifically for the dignity of the most vulnerable of people).

Another lemma in the Bogotá development discourse linked to dignity is that of fraternal or selfless 'love'²²⁷, which might be viewed as an activated response to one's affirmation of the

²²⁷ 'Love' as used here is not intended in the romantic but rather in the fraternal or selfless sense. Greek philosophy identified three (at least; and perhaps more) distinct notions of love (Halm 2013); *agape*,

due dignity owed to all humans. Petro and his administration are the boldest users of this concept in Bogotá (though not the only ones) and appeal to it repeatedly in their language and imagery. For example, the Petro administration even uses a heart logo to graphically construct the Bogotá Humana ‘brand’ – and it is very much a brand – with the letter ‘M’ moulding a heart (Figure 18):



Figure 17: The Bogota Humana logo (Source: Alcaldía Mayor de Bogotá 2012a)

The Bogotá Humana logo features a characteristic heart, a motif that underlines the expressly human priority of the city’s development discourse

The same heart motif is recalled in the ‘Armar o Amar?’ (‘To Arm or Love?’) campaign for disarmament and non-violence (Figure 19):



Figure 18: Graphic for Bogotá’s “Armar o amar?” (“To arm or to love”?) campaign (Source: Alcaldía Mayor de Bogotá 2012a)

The ‘To arm or to love’ campaign similarly reinforces, in both words and imagery, a motif of fraternal love that is emblematic of the Bogotá Humana discourse.

While these examples do not treat food security specifically, they are fundamental to understanding the context in which Bogotá’s food security policy is devised and its programming levied. The examples discussed here present dignity pronouncedly; many examples – particularly in food security – appear much more implicitly, apparent in the work

captured somewhat in the phrasal noun *fraternal love*, is a good approximation of the term’s meaning as used in Bogotá’s public policy and campaigning.

executed and the general project framing. In a way, the sometime subtlety of its appearance only underlines the centrality of dignity: it is not explicated *because it does not need to be*.

Bogotá's treatment of dignity is more observably extraordinary when its development discourses are viewed alongside New York's. For example – to begin at the beginning – where Bogotá's most authoritative development document (the PDBH) makes central its embrace and pursuit of dignity, NYC's (*PlaNYC*) does not mention the term a single time. Respect for dignity, of course, must not necessarily be called as such in order to *be* such, and it is no doubt possible to cite countless examples from diverse contexts that demonstrate profound but unnamed regard for dignity. Nonetheless, it is significant to distinguish such instances from those in which dignity is expressly pursued and intentioned: the naming-of *does* carry important symbolic and cognitive weight, and the failure to articulate a concept of dignity is at least suggestive of a perspective that is either less conscious of or ambivalent about its normative merit.

In any case, it is quite clear that an appreciation for human dignity is *not* the driver of food security programming in New York City. (Indeed, in some instances, it may be quite outrightly denied.) While in Bogotá's discursive landscape people are understood to *deserve* food security because this respects their innate human dignity, in NYC's people must either *earn* an entitlement to it or be kindly *gifted* it in an act of charitable benevolence. The first of these rationales is well expressed in this excerpt from the public discussion at an activist-led information session in NYC regarding the consequences of the imminent congressional vote on the Farm Bill. During the discussion, I intervene to clarify the emerging position regarding the *earned* entitlement to food assistance.

[Participant 1] Food stamp money is taxpayer money. Social Security is taxpayer money. And when we retire, whatever age you retire, we're the first in line to get our Social Security because we feel like we've earned it. Our taxpayer money has gone to it. Well, why do we have this sort of different double-sided approach for people getting food stamps? It's still taxpayer money and they've still earned it.

[Participant 2] Most people think that they didn't earn it. So we have a habit of saying 'they didn't earn it...'

[LMA] When you say that they've earned it, essentially you're saying that, by virtue of being human [they have earned it] ... ?

[Participant 1] [No.] By virtue of being a taxpaying citizen of the United States!

[Participant 2] Or I'd say it's being by virtue of being human.

[Participant 1] Well, but then that's food as a human right, that's a whole 'nother thing. We don't even consider healthcare a human right here. Yet.

[Participant 2] Yeah. And we don't give SNAP to folks who are not part of the legal American [citizenship]...

[Participant 1] We also have citizenship requirements on that. So I don't say human, I say by virtue of - if in America we put so much value on, you know, my taxes paid for that. Guess what, poor people pay taxes. Their tax dollars go to your Social Security, they go to Medicare, they go to Medicaid, and they go to food stamps. So why do we try to make it so hard for them, then, to feed themselves, but it's so easy for other people to get other tax benefits?

In other words, then, if in Bogotá *all* people ought to be food secure by virtue of *being human* (and, more to the point, realizing a rightly dignified human existence), only *certain* needy people in NYC ought to receive food assistance – and whether this must be of a certain dignity-conveying quality and service standard is not considered – *because they have earned it*. The distinction is a crucial one.

The conversation also brings to light briefly, though well, another point important to the discussion of dignity: the special attention it implies towards the most vulnerable humans, among them, migrants and immigrants. While, as we have seen, Bogotá lends special and prioritized attention to migrants, NYC attends to them *less well* (and in some cases, very badly) than it does to others. This inversion of preferentiality, as it were, is of course perfectly consistent with – indeed, it might be said even to derive from – the understandings of human merit implied by the dignitarian perspectives that prevail in each case: Bogotá attributes this merit universally; New York, selectively; and the two cities' approaches to food security follow suit.

The discourse (or discourses) exemplified in this excerpt prevails throughout discourses in NYC and throughout the United States generally, which customarily reprise the institutionally embedded recognition of earned – rather than inherent – merit. But, in the face of this prevailing discourse, recent visibility to the rampant food insecurity, hunger, and poverty in the United States – particularly that given by various alternative forms of media – has borne a piqued activist debate precisely on the *lack* of justice and dignity that pervades the U.S. food system.

In the mainstream media, the New York Times pointed to the issue numerous times in reporting the debate and (long delayed) passage of the Farm Bill in 2013. In one article (Stolberg 2013), it

incredulously quoted Congressman Stephen Fincher, who turned to the Bible²²⁸ for support of his anti-welfare perspective: ‘The one who is unwilling to work shall not eat’. Satirical media including *The Colbert Report* and *The Daily Show* have addressed the issue handsomely, and, from their comic outposts, have managed to lend genuine insights upon the matter in precisely the ways that jesters, caricaturists, and satirist do. Of particular relevance here, they have pointed to a prevailing bias in the USA that characterizes the poor as lazy, unmotivated, and generally undeserving. In his interview with Lori Silverbush and Kristi Jacobson, the filmmakers of the documentary on the large but largely invisible problem of hunger in America, *A Place at the Table* (2013), satirical television news host Jon Stewart (2013) captured in perfectly descriptive American slang the generalized, popular perception of the poor and food insecure in America: they are not vulnerable, disadvantaged and unfortunate, but rather constitute a ‘mooching class’ profiteering from its stint on the government dole.²²⁹

Indeed, the idea of the ‘moocher’ is widespread and well captures the American value of *earned* merit. It is an idea expressed widely not only in satirical media, but also among common individual citizens and activists (as in the Farm Bill discussion in New York City) and in the government’s own discourse (as in the perspective of Congressmen Fincher). Examples from the mainstream media also abound. A National Public Radio service (Goodwyn 2013) featured the ashamed emic voice of working mother and food stamp recipient Joanna Cruz: ‘too often, people think that individuals on public assistance programmes are lazy. I would like for them to spend one day in my shoes’. Meanwhile, journalist and activist Mark Bittman recently wrote several articles in his New York Times column that received loud responses from readers; some of the reader commentary at the Times website well captures the prevailing discourse; indeed it is notable that much of this commentary only confirms the dominance of the prevailing discourse rather than supporting Bittman’s problematization of it.

For example, in response to a piece about the high and rising incidence of food insecurity, hunger, and obesity in the United States and the insufficiency of safety net programming that address it (Bittman 2012a), the commentary made by numerous respondents reinforced the pervasiveness of the capitalist development discourse and reminded that it is not only a discourse levied by policymakers but also one carried in the minds of common Americans. Respondents so frequently assigned precisely the characterizations of villainy and Otherness with which poor and food insecure people are often viewed in the United States that one writer,

²²⁸ In reality, Fincher’s quote was biblical in syntax but not in textual fact (nor, most would argue, spirit). The *Times* articles subtly pointed this out, writing that Fincher had ‘cited his own biblical phrase’.

²²⁹ This characterization is, of course, consistent with the capitalist development discourse entirely. As Rahnema (2010) writes, ‘most traditional societies had resisted the view that all poverty reflected personal inadequacy. This view, that became characteristic of every capitalist society, especially in its Protestant versions, was now advanced as a major component of the new value system’ (180).

originally from Germany, observed how this discourse in fact reflected precisely the structural formulations of American food assistance policy itself:

I have a feeling that food stamps (or SNAP, if you prefer) are unique to America. At least in Germany, society would be loath to stigmatize its poorer members at the grocery store. ... German “Hartz IV” welfare payments are made in cash form, albeit electronically (even the poorest of the poor have basic bank accounts here). This of course means that they're free to spend the money however they wish, e.g. on cigarettes, schnapps, potato chips, flat-screen TVs, soccer tickets or whatnot. In America, where the Victorian notion that you can't trust the poor with money still seems to prevail, this would probably never do. Arguably, though, the German approach at least gives people the chance to behave in a responsible way and make autonomous decisions, rather than treating them like children.

Indeed this issue of mistrusting the poor is at the heart of the moocher representation and recollects the characterization of the poor in the global development discourse that converts them from agents into objects, restyled as incapable and dependent upon the benevolent but paternalistic actions of ‘white fathers’ from the West (Escobar 1995, 158). The prevalence of such sorts of dismissive, depreciatory representations of the poor – captured in the international development and moocher manufactures alike – underlines the importance that power holds in questions of discourse. This is the Foucauldian knowledge-power-discourse liaison at work: just as the ‘pauperizing’ (Rahnema 2010, 179) constructs of the international development discourse were shaped by and for the West, so too are thought and understanding *within* societies (that is, domestic to them) shaped by and for the domestically privileged. Thus wealthy Americans often deploy narratives that reinforce their superior positions – and the welfare-taking *moocher* is but one of these.

Another Bittman article (2012b) came in the wake of a proposed NYC reform to remove soda as a SNAP- (food stamp-) eligible purpose, a proposal that stirred great debate between the anti-hunger and public health communities in NYC and nationwide, and also received considerable commentary online (with 415 comments as of 27 December 2012). Again numerous respondents testified to – some affirming and some renouncing – the prevailing impression that the poor are discreditable moochers who cannot be trusted. Consider a sampling of the comments:

- *[Comment]* People with food stamps are already under pressure, and are looked down upon as “moochers” by a lot of our Scrooge-like population.
- *[Comment]* When I was a kid, my single mother was on food stamps and I remember the choruses that went along with “welfare mom” (they get pregnant on purpose so they can collect). The verse went like this. “I see those welfare cheats buying potato chips all the time. And beer BEER for god's sake”.
- *[Comment]* Because they cannot buy tobacco and alcohol with their SNAP card, people just take the card to unscrupulous criminal retailers who will give them a greatly discounted amount of cash for the credits. This cash then buys the tobacco and alcohol...

- *[Comment]* A few people see someone buying steak with food stamps and suddenly an entire group of working poor people are labelled as dishonest, lazy scammers. Is this really any different than the story of the welfare queen with the Cadillac?

Indeed, if there is one image that could summarize the public imaginary of the moocher, it is this last: ‘the welfare queen with the Cadillac’. For our purposes here, the pervasiveness of the moocher characterization is most significant because it points to the ingrained notion of *earned* merit that dominates New York’s food security discourse – this markedly contrasting, to repeat the score, to Bogotá’s universally applicable human development posture.

As a final example of the contrasting NYC perspective, let us view the commentary that food security *practices* themselves make upon dignity in the two cities. While Bogotá’s formal, articulated embrace of human dignity is used to justify its robust, consequently framed formal food security work, New York’s lack of such embrace likewise translates into diminished state responsabilization for such work (though clearly not a total lack of it). For example, NYC does not have the equivalent of Bogotá’s *comedores comunitarios* (though it does have subsidized programmes in publicly operated institutions such as schools and hospitals): in New York City and in the United States generally, food aid administration is largely understood to be outside the purview of the state and instead is relegated to the realm of charity.

This is not to denigrate the service of charitable organizations nor to deplore acts of charity; indeed, many charities operate their food (and other) services *precisely* from a perspective of human dignity (including, e.g., religious ones whose ideologies require this), and this may in some ways even create possibilities even for *elevating* the dignity of the service (that is, by imbuing it with a more intentioned sense of individual or associative goodwill). But the relegation of food security to charity also renders the service constitutionally *less* dignified, making food security contingent and leaving the vulnerable individual in a state of perpetual precariousness and subject to a host of both uncontrollable external factors – might the provider run out of funding or food? – and the possibility of compromising behavioural and personal obligation. For example, must the recipient embrace, or at least outwardly profess, a certain religious credence²³⁰? Must he be clean-shaven and actively searching for work?

Further, as charities themselves depend upon the charitable acts of people – the individuals, associations, and enterprises that act as donors to it – their ability to serve is beholden to the financial largess and (often) the ideological or economic interest of those donors. Consequently

²³⁰ Recall the well-known and at-scale modelling of precisely this in historical examples such as the ‘Soupers’ of Hunger-Era Ireland and the ‘Rice Christians’ of India.

the quality of the food distributed often results to be – and the word is opportunely appropriate – ‘second-class’.²³¹ Informants in this research testified, for example, that the foods donated by individuals to food banks are often foods that donors themselves would not eat, and the dependence of food pantries on weight-based performance assessments makes for something of ‘an unholy alliance with the [unhealthy-] food industry’²³² that replicates, in many ways, the quality-poor conditions of the ‘food deserts’ in which many beneficiaries live: soda, chips and processed foods are often readily available at food banks while broccoli and apples are not.

Perhaps most importantly and most problematically, converting food from an entitlement to which all humans are due to a privilege contingent upon merit, luck and circumstance fundamentally impoverishes man’s inherent worth and imperils the social obligation to him.²³³ Escobar (1995) describes how, in development contexts, the poor are transformed into the ‘assisted’ (22), and this becomes their primary identity: clearly a degrading characterization (see also Rahnema 1991, to whom Escobar is appealing). Perhaps nowhere is this discourse more abundantly clear than in New York City’s – rich-country – context of food security: if we pose questions similar to the ones that Florez asked regarding the *dignification* of food security provision in Bogotá (which he related, recall, specifically to the quality of product and service in the city’s *comedores*), we arrive at distressing conclusions. In NYC, not only are many of the practices themselves undignifying (such as the relegation to ‘second-class’ food), but, more fundamentally, *these occur within a structure that is inherently undignifying*.

²³¹ The food quality distinction based on class is one with long history, both practically and philosophically. For a classic historical example of the latter, I heartily refer the reader to the tragicomic parable of the poor Bertoldo, who died from eating food – administered to him with the best of intentions by royal physicians – that was too good for his ‘lowly nature’ (Montanari 1991, 174-175, citing G.C. Croce, 1606).

²³² In other words, food pantries’ achievements are evaluated, both institutionally and discursively, on the basis of ‘how much’ food it has been able to collect and distribute. Inasmuch as bottles of soda weigh more than salad greens, it is strategically more advantageous for a food pantry to receive donations of the former. At the same time, strategic partnerships between corporations and charities offer public relations opportunities to processed food powerhouses. Together, these circumstances create precisely the ‘unholy alliance’ identified one of the informants. Note, though, that neither is such practice universal – some food banks do emphasize the provision of fresh foods – nor is it received with univocal criticism.

²³³ See Poppendieck’s (1998) problematization of relegating food assistance to charitable status. Her argument, in a nutshell, is that

This massive charitable endeavour serves to relieve pressure for more fundamental solutions. It works pervasively on the cultural level by serving as sort of a “moral safety valve”; it reduces the discomfort evoked by visible destitution in our midst by creating the illusion of effective action and offering us myriad ways of participating in it. It creates a culture of charity that normalizes destitution and legitimates personal generosity as a response to major social and economic dislocation. It works at the political level, as well, by making it easier for government to shed its responsibility for the poor, reassuring policymakers and voters alike that no one will starve... Charity food is increasingly substituting for adequate public provision ... [and] it is time to take a closer look at the costs of kindness (5-6).

Summary: The permeation of human development discourse in Bogotá

This chapter has illustrated how the human development ethic to which Bogotá professes allegiance challenges the constructs of the conventional development discourse and instead make principles that include prioritarianism and dignity central to its policy work. These express social priorities are distinctly different than – that is not to say opposed to – the capitalist reverence for economic growth, and the difference is made manifest in contrasting the discourses that envelop food security programming in Bogotá with those in NYC.

Importantly, Bogotá's insistence on the human development ethic seeps into the spectrum of its policy ambits, including food security but not *only* there. In this sense, the city's example is potent for its demonstration of the *connectedness* between food security discourses and other social discourses, and the coherence of all of these within the prescripts of the dominating development ideology. To be sure, Bogotá's articulation of human development principle does not imply its whole realization in food security or elsewhere, but even the specific formulation of critique to its failures – as, for example, in the *failure-to-dignify* charge applied to the *comedores* – signifies the embedded principles at work. In the next chapter, I extend this examination of Bogotá's human development ethic by examining more closely a theme and a politic with sharp implication for the food security discourse that interests this study: human rights, and, in particular, the right to food.

Chapter 9

Development and human rights Bogotá and the right to food

The right to food is not a right to a minimum ration of calories, proteins and other specific nutrients, or a right to be fed. It is about being guaranteed the right to feed oneself.
- UN Special Rapporteur on the Right to Food

Abstract

In this chapter, the research continues to address Research Question 1, examining the close relationship between the development and food security discourses. Here I emphasize how a core element of the human development paradigm, human rights, is precipitated in social practice. The chapter focuses on Bogotá, where human rights themes are express, profuse, and robustly endorsed; it describes the tangible food security product of this focus in the city's discursive embrace of the Right to Food, and the imperative that this framing creates for food security practices that honour principles of participation, democracy and empowerment. Examples taken from New York City provide relief-giving salience.

Introduction: The transformative power of rights

Literature often describes the rights perspective as ‘transformative’ (e.g., De Schutter 2014), with the indicated *transformation* roughly understood as progression *from* the neoliberal-capitalist development perspectives that have so dominated recent history *to* a superior, individually empowering one. Bogotano writers and commentators consider its application in Bogotá in similar light (though few would propose that this transformation has been either fully realized or a genuine rights vision fully achieved). CISAN²³⁴ (2007), Bogotá’s food and nutrition advisory council, for example, writes that Garzón’s adoption of a right to food perspective constituted ‘a fundamental change in the orientation of [food security] policy’ (11).

Just how a rights perspective is (or intends to be) ‘transformative’ often remains mysterious to actors little familiar with the approach – I fielded many such ‘why does it matter?’ questions during fieldwork in NYC – and it is worth beginning this discussion of Bogotá’s rights discourse with an excerpt that begins to answer precisely this question in its intent distinction of the rights perspective from other ones. In its response to the PDBH, the CTPD (2012) explains and affirms – with not a little sense of righteousness, and *rightness* – that a rights approach represents a ‘transformation in the way of understanding the person, who ceases to be a being interpreted from a perspective of his needs and becomes understood rather as person [justly due] his rights’ (16). Government and its policy, then, ‘no longer act to respond to an individual’s happenstance needs and satisfy them with assistance of welfarist form, but rather to guarantee each individual’s effective enjoyment of his rights, which are lasting and permanent’ (ibid., 16-17). Efforts therefore ‘cannot be analysed and evaluated simply on the basis of achieving goals, results, or budgetary compliance but rather fundamentally on the basis of whether they effectively realize the enjoyment of the rights of the citizens’ (ibid., 17). Why it matters, then, is only partially to do with quantitatively measureable outputs, and *everything* to do with *how people are treated*.

Human rights in Bogotá: The big picture

If one must extract a single characterizing feature from the bogotano discourse, it is the *total permeation of the rights throughout the development discourse*. One fundamental tenet of rights theory is that human rights are inseparable and non-hierarchical – that is, rights are mutually reinforcing, and none is more important (or, in terms unfortunately closer to reality, more dispensable) than any other – and this makes incoherent the idea of a right to food that is

²³⁴ The Comité Distrital Intersectorial de Alimentación y Nutrición, literally the Intersectorial District Committee for Food and Nutrition.

isolated from a broader rights framework. By the same token, an isolated notion of the right to food in the absence of a more widely adopted rights perspective is unlikely to find either discursive or implementational traction. It is therefore important to first consider the broad picture of human rights treatment in Bogotá, where – with greatly summary brevity – the notion of human rights is *generally* fundamental to the governance paradigm and is expressed widely in verbalized, textual and enacted forms.

To begin, we immediately note that rights veritably dominate official texts and spoken communications. The objectives and processes of a much government programming and procedure is framed in terms of rights: health care services, for example, are not framed as an optional (and privatizable) matter of contingent insurability – as is largely the case in NYC – but rather as an obligatory discharge in the satisfaction of people’s [due] right to health; in a similar fashion, issues of mobility, transport and housing are not framed *primarily* as issues of economic competitiveness or ecological greening (though these appear with varying intensity as supplementary framings) but rather as infrastructural remediations requisite for the satisfaction of people’s full ‘right to the city’.²³⁵

Procedurally, the rights framing demands a way of seeing people that is fundamentally different than seen by way of the neoliberal-capitalist one: people are not objects of governance but rather subjects of it; they are not governed but rather they govern. Consequently, this understanding emphasizes and centralizes values such as ‘informed citizenship’, ‘active participation’, ‘democracy’, and ‘joint decision-making’, and it demands the governance structures, decision-making facilities, knowledge and capacity development opportunities, and – to raise an ambiguous term that we discuss more extensively in Chapters 11, 12 and 13 – also the *cultures* that allow for their maximal realization. A rights perspective requires that individuals be both well knowledgeable about and sufficiently active in affirming and asserting their rights that they refuse to accept violation: in plain terms, ‘the rights holder must demand the fulfilment of his rights by the Colombian state’ (CTPD 2012, 17).

Importantly, this procedural aspect of the rights framing is not supplemental to other aspects but rather integral to them – indeed, they are mutually reinforcing – and the consequent requirement for an informed and active citizenry underlines the necessity of sufficiently strong educational

²³⁵ A comprehensive pursuit of the ‘right to the city’ became the hallmark of Moreno’s ‘Bogotá Positiva’ administration and development plan. This is a term that has retained traction in the city and, in its bogotano deployment, expresses a vision of the rights framework as it is to be applied in the particular contexts and spaces of Bogotá. While the terms mimics (and likely draws inspiration from) the use by theorists such as Harvey (2012) and Lefebvre (1996), there is (actually) neither explicit conceptual connection with such theory nor precise replication of its content; it is not a concept altogether removed, but neither is it directly conversant.

and personal developmental opportunities (since one can be an active citizen only if he is capable of doing so). This priority is not overlooked in Bogotá's planning²³⁶, which emphasizes the need to improve and expand both educational and developmental opportunities and build opportunities for citizen activity and involvement.

The expression of these emphases repeatedly underlines the importance of citizen awareness *about rights themselves*. For example, the PDBH announces that

the quality of education will improve with the encouragement of scientific and critical thinking, based in basic competencies in math and language skills, citizenship formation for democracy and human rights, as well as the development of a second language (Alcaldía Mayor de Bogotá 2012c, 53).

That education for democracy and human rights sits alongside the need for basic math and language skills testifies to its perceived importance and consequence. Similarly, the plan continues to discuss the theme of rights more completely in Article 13, framing Bogotá generally as 'a territory that defends, protects and promotes human rights' and elaborating upon the importance of fomenting an active citizenry that finds access to justice 'formally, informally and via the community' and operates in a public space defined by trust and participation (57). The plan's strategies include campaigns to spread the wide embrace and pursuit of rights among citizens and institutions via educational and publicity campaigns and the preferential informational targeting of groups whose rights have been routinely violated (including women, ethnic minorities, afro-Colombians, LGBT, displaced persons, and children).

The Petro administration is explicit and insistent on the rights framework.²³⁷ Appealing to the highest internationally recognized authority, the administration professes its accord with the highest UN principle, thus validating its own human rights position: 'The government of the city shares in the spirit of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and ... accepts the principles of universality, inseparability, non-discrimination, participation, and accountability' (Alcaldía Mayor de Bogotá 2012c, 12). The PDBH frames individual issues largely in terms of rights and frequently uses the capabilities-informed language²³⁸ that we discussed in Chapter 8. It repeatedly underscores the centrality of the rights concept *itself* to the plan – insisting, for example, that 'each component in the family's consumption basket (food, housing, health, education, transport, public services, culture, among others) can be expressed as a right' (ibid.,

²³⁶ Of course, as with many worthwhile efforts subject to the constraints of real-world politics, it is without question under-realized.

²³⁷ I focus here on Bogotá's formal, government-deployed discourse. However, and important to note, the discourse is not limited to official actors but transcends sector and scale to find widespread popular manifestation (as exemplified, e.g., by media services and private conversation).

²³⁸ To cite one example of such language here, consider this line from a preparatory document for the PDBH (Alcaldía Mayor de Bogotá 2012c): 'Changing this circumstance means significantly improving the capabilities of the population by [improving] their possibilities to choose – freely – the "goods" that that they desire in order to [best] develop their potential' (54).

54) – and in doing so clearly establishes as the mission of public policy the creation of just, permanent, and discretionary access to all of these things *as rights*.

One less conventional – and, for this, noteworthy – example of the administration’s central positioning of rights is its sponsorship of a weekly radio program, *En Sentido Contrario*²³⁹ (Dirección de Derechos Humanos 2013), specifically dedicated to human rights issues (which it advertises in the free city-published monthly mayoral magazine *Humanidad* (2012e)) Another is the inclusion within the city’s governance structure of an Office of Rights and Responsibilities, dedicated largely to ensuring and redressing circumstances for those whose rights have been abused, and particularly to treat the petitions of displaced persons. The office is headed by the *Personería* of Bogotá, the *Ombudsman* or *Rapporteur for Human Rights*, whose formal mission is ‘to support the citizens in the effective defence of the public interest and human rights’ (Personería de Bogotá 2015).

Importantly, the Petro administration is neither original nor exclusive in its formal appreciation of human rights in the bogotano context – indeed, quite the contrary: the perspective has predominated the city politic at least since the Garzón administration (2004-2007). Indeed Garzón, famous for creating the revolutionary ‘Bogotá Sin Hambre’ (2003) food security program, established it within the context of his larger development plan ‘Bogotá Sin Indiferencia’ (Alcaldía Mayor de Bogotá 2004), which espoused rights as the foundational principle and established ensuing – and manifold – priorities around multi-dimensional poverty alleviation and the promotion of greater equity (understood in many regards) among the city’s residents.²⁴⁰ Moreno (2008-2011) named his vision for Bogotá as a *city of rights* to be the leading objective in his administration’s development plan, and each of the plan’s programmatic activities invoked this theme and language reiteratively. The first two goals named in Moreno’s development plan even make a meaningful *jeu de mots* upon the theme, declaring objectives of assuring ‘a city of rights’ and a ‘right to the city’ (Alcaldía Mayor de Bogotá 2008a).

The right to food

This introduction to Bogotá’s brisk human rights discourse has been thus far nearly void of food security content – at least explicitly. But I have broached it precisely because it *is* a discussion, in the end, *about food security*: to repeat our entrée, the right to food – the right to *anything* –

²³⁹ The program was later expanded to comprise also a television series of twenty episodes.

²⁴⁰ The necessary multifunctionality of this programming underlines the close relationship between insufficiencies in food and insufficiencies in other basic necessities – material and non-material alike – and, in a related way, necessary interdependence among human rights.

cannot be separated, in theory or in practice, from a larger understanding of the human rights framework. This is the fundamental concept of inseparability brought to bear.

If the larger picture of Bogotá's development concept, then, is one in which human rights stand at front and centre of the discourse, the right to food²⁴¹ is a particular manifestation of it. More than that, however, it is a *central* manifestation of it. As right to food advocates underline, food is perhaps the most basal, immediate, and salient of human needs (though it is also much more than that) and hence its lack creates a suffering of particular harshness for those who endure it (and, often, a response of particular empathy by those who do not). The right to food discourse has thus assumed central importance and priority in Bogotá's policy domain, so much so that it sometimes subsumes the food security discourse altogether.

To summarize neatly and simply here²⁴², the concept of a right to food expresses the imperative that every person in every moment has adequate access to adequate food²⁴³ – with 'adequate', of course, remaining the thorniest of terms.²⁴⁴ The international sustenance of a right to food is significant and growing, as testified to by the instalment in 2000 of the UN's first Special Rapporteur on the Right to Food; FAO's recent affirmations of and focus upon the right to food (e.g., FAO 2014); and the growing list of nations with constitutional (and other) supports for the right to food (Knuth and Vidar 2011). Popular and political support for the right to food has been expressed with particular strength in Latin America; of the nine countries that have given the right to food its highest possibility of institutionalization – an explicit, universally applicable

²⁴¹ See Chapter 4 for an introduction to the Right to Food framework.

²⁴² This is a necessarily reductivist exercise; see also the discussions in Chapters 4 and 8 for a somewhat more expansive discussion of particular aspects of the right to food.

²⁴³ Recall the formal definition of the right to food (see Chapter 4) issued by the UN Special Rapporteur on the Right to Food (SRRTF) (2012) as

The right to have regular, permanent and unrestricted access, either directly or by means of financial purchases, to quantitatively and qualitatively adequate and sufficient food corresponding to the cultural traditions of the people to which the consumer belongs, and which ensure a physical and mental, individual and collective, fulfilling and dignified life free of fear.

The SRRTF elaborates:

The right to food is not a right to a minimum ration of calories, proteins and other specific nutrients, or a right to be fed. It is about being guaranteed the right to feed oneself, which requires not only that food is available – that the ratio of production to the population is sufficient – but also that it is accessible – i.e., that each household either has the means to produce or buy its own food.

²⁴⁴ The UN Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (CESCR) (1999), in its *General Comment 12*, examines this particular polysemy along with several further intellectual challenges inherent to the right to food doctrine. It pronounces a robust appreciation of *adequacy*, writing:

The concept of adequacy is particularly significant in relation to the right to food since it serves to underline a number of factors which must be taken into account in determining whether particular foods or diets that are accessible can be considered the most appropriate under given circumstances for the purposes of Article 11 of the Covenant. The notion of sustainability is intrinsically linked to the notion of adequate food or food security, implying food being accessible for both present and future generations. The precise meaning of "adequacy" is to a large extent determined by prevailing social, economic, cultural, climatic, ecological and other conditions, while "sustainability" incorporates the notion of long-term availability and accessibility (Para. 7).

constitutional affirmation – six are in Latin America (Bolivia, Brazil, Ecuador, Guyana, Haiti, and Nicaragua), with Brazil's 2010 constitutional amendment for the right to adequate food²⁴⁵ among the most prominent of recent motions. Hence Bogotá's embrace of the concept is strong but neither isolated nor unique from the international flux.

The assertion of a right to food, as that of any right, implies the involvement of the state, which assumes the obligation to 'respect, protect and fulfil'²⁴⁶ the right. At the same time, state involvement is also suggested for other (sometimes related) reasons, which, broadly speaking, tend to revolve around the state's interest in and obligation to the public good. Eslava (2009) presents an excellent discussion justifying the state's assumption of an active role in the food system, defending his position that 'food supply has been left in the hands of market forces, and its operators are people or entities who act as private agents. However, food supply is – should be – a matter of the public sphere'.

Eslava links ideas of human rights, state obligation and the common good as he enumerates five reasons *why* food supply should be so: first, because the guarantee of food security is an obligation of the state; second, because 'income redistribution is one of its essential functions, helping to develop and democratize access...and to avoid monopolistic practices on the part of large actors'²⁴⁷; third, because of the need to group small actors for investment possibilities (as none could achieve this on their own); fourth, because it will help to reduce functional and therefore also social vulnerability, especially of the most poor; and fifth, 'and not least important', because it is necessary to guarantee that the food supply system will functioning indefinitely and without interruption: 'the common interest clearly requires it'. In other words then, state intervention in the food system services its responsibility to fulfil and promote citizens' right to food *by* fulfilling, inter alia, a number of other interests.

The Colombian legal framework includes opportunities – often unobliged – for deducing a national understanding of a right to food. While the Colombian Constitution (Asamblea Nacional Constituyente 1991) does not include the expression of a universal RTF, it *does* expressly guarantee this right for children (Article 44). Activists also insist that Colombia's

²⁴⁵ Note again the ambiguity – which might be viewed either as a pretext for failure or as an opportunity for robust satisfaction – carried in the framing of a *right to adequate food* rather than simply of a *right to food* (even though the latter necessarily includes an *implicit* requirement for adequacy).

²⁴⁶ Recall also the opportunity for further elaborating the third of these terms as duplex: to facilitate and to provide (see Chapter 4).

²⁴⁷ Since this is, in the end, a comparative exercise, note that this argument would resonate very badly in the United States, where 'income redistribution' carries the negative baggage of associations with socialism.

signatory status to the UDHR – whose Article 25 declares a universal right to food –implies and imposes the obligation to universal guarantee upon the Colombian State.²⁴⁸

Though the national state has at least some construct, then, of a right to food, it is not one that has been either loudly pronounced or well realized nationally²⁴⁹, and it is the *city* of Bogotá that has assumed the concept and the project more positively.²⁵⁰ The last several administrations have made rights central to their development projects and have enunciated and promoted the right to food in particular. Garzón's adoption of a right to food perspective and his application of it via the Bogotá sin Hambre programme constituted 'a fundamental change in the orientation of policy' on food security (CISAN 2007, 11), and the following administrations have followed suit. Moreno-administration presentations and publications on food security (e.g., SDDE 2010) link the food security project with the administration's overall vision for a 'City of Rights', universally heading them with the tagline '*A City of Rights: The Right to Food and Nutrition*'.²⁵¹ In this context, the Petro administration's prominent use of the rights discourse is consistent with Bogotá's recent political history, and, similarly to its predecessors, the vast majority of *Bogotá Humana*'s programming avails of a rights-based framing.

One recent example testifies simultaneously to numerous different elements inherent in Bogotá's rights-based food security work: to the importance generally endowed by the administration in the concept of rights; to the prominence of the right to food within it; to a *robust* appreciation of the right to food in light of the newly bimodal and dynamic food security context; and even to an intentioned practice of the inseparability precept inherent to rights theory. In 2012, the administration's Office of Human Rights and Judicial Support²⁵² hosted an eight-hour special episode of its rights-themed radio programme *En Sentido Contrario* dedicated to interrogating the right to health (Dirección de Derechos Humanos 2012). A full hour of the programme treated the relationship between the right to health and the right to food, extending

²⁴⁸ Such *non-universal* guarantees as Colombia's are common in the context of the right to food movement. While understood by those adherent to the movement as a (necessarily universal) *human* right, the right to food is 'new' in the political sense in that it is only recently beginning to receive recognition in judicial and institutional form. Likewise, legal claims based on states' signatory status to the UDHR are common but have garnered only incipient success: the vast majority of UDHR signatories have yet to *nationally* institutionalize the right to food implied in this *internationally* signed pledge. I again refer the reader interested in the national and international institutionalization of the right to food to the excellent presentation by Knuth and Vidar (2011).

²⁴⁹ Indeed, as we have seen in Chapter 1, the national rate of food insecurity in Colombia is 42.7% (ICBF 2011, 17).

²⁵⁰ Again, it must be reiterated that this has necessarily emerged within the city's similarly fuller assumption of the generalized human rights discourse

²⁵¹ Similarly, and constantly reiterating Moreno's embrace of the human rights perspective, the administration's materials regarding other subjects use a similar framing. Reports that address access to health services, for example, bear the tagline '*A City of Rights: The Right to Health*'.

²⁵² The Dirección de Derechos Humanos y Apoyo a la Justicia de la Secretaría Distrital del Gobierno de Bogotá

the discussion beyond questions of quantity into themes of nutritional quality and contextual access and discussing the administration's interventions in these lights.

The PMA (Consorcio CPT-CIPEC 2004) is also presented and framed largely in terms of a right to food, though this is more inferentially executed than in other government work. The verbatim text of the PMA refers to a right to food only implicitly. With evident intent to steer clear of any possible charge of radicalness, it operates within a philosophical framework based upon the Colombian constitutional legacy (which, to remind, does *not* guarantee the universal right to food). The PMA *infers* a right to food²⁵³ – or, more precisely, it infers the right to a well-functioning food system capable of assuring it – from other rights guaranteed by the Colombian State, such as those to health and to a healthy environment (435). The plan's political objective²⁵⁴ is 'to orient and focus State and government action, public investment, and private actors toward the attainment of ... the effective exercise of the social, economic and cultural rights of the people, by creating a new food supply system for Bogotá' (218).²⁵⁵ Hence it frames the right to food not as an explicit requirement of the Colombian Constitution – it cannot – but rather as locating within a dense and unavoidably integrative – *and constitutionally guaranteed* – set of ECSR.

Taking rather more liberty in interpreting state obligation elsewhere in the document, the PMA defines a set of central terms. The first term listed – it is not given alphabetically but rather in terms of importance – is 'food security', for which it offers this (rather original) definition:

a collective right and an obligation of the State to plan for the management and use of natural resources in order to guarantee sustainable development; to promote the integral development of agricultural, livestock, fishery, forestry and agro-industrial activities, the construction of physical infrastructures, and the improvements of land resources; to regulate and oversee the quality control of the production, distribution, transformation and sale of [food-] goods and services offered to the community, when such responsibilities are transferred to other actors; to prevent and control factors related to environmental deterioration; and to prevent activities that damage the health, safety, or adequate supply of food to consumers and participants in the [food] system (517).

Documentation *related* to the PMA, such as that detailing its application in particular localities and that designed for public information divulgation, *do* give explicit and very prominent place

²⁵³ More precisely, it infers the right to a well-functioning food system capable of assuring it, which is not strictly the same thing. We return to this point shortly.

²⁵⁴ The plan has four categorical objectives – 'rural and regional', 'economic', 'social', and 'political' targets – and it is the final of these that proves most interesting in the examination of rights.

²⁵⁵ The reader may doubt the importance of these objectives, and of the attention to any rights at all, given the distant page numbers referenced, and it is correct that such discussion appears late in the document. While this may reflect to some extent a lacking assignment of importance, it seems more likely to be the fault of an unconventional document structure: the first several hundred pages present a lengthy background of the current food system and the PMA methodology to finally arrive at the objectives and content of the indicated plan only in Chapter 6.

to the notion of a right to food. For example, in one (important) presentation given by the city's Secretary of Economic Development (SDDE 2010), the very first slides position the right to food as the starting point for the rest of the presentation – and, effectively, for the entirety of the PMA's conceptual content and the practical work that follows from it. The priority given in the presentation to the RTF appeals not to Colombian or bogotano law for justification and validity but directly to the UDHR's Article 25.

The plan for development of an *agrored* in the locality of Sumapaz²⁵⁶ (Equipo de Trabajo Agrored Sumapaz 2005) similarly begins with an assertion of the right to food and uses strong rights language throughout the document, not only in its immediate framing of the right to food itself but also to frame possibilities such as foodstuff mishandling, misdirection, and even instrumental co-optation that might occur in a malignantly operational food system. Straightforwardly, if not verbatim faithful to the original, it introduces the PMA by discussing the its aim 'to guarantee the fundamental right to food and the effective and sustainable supply of food to the entire population of Bogotá, with emphasis on the most vulnerable' (4). A full reading of the PMA and the Sumapaz plan makes it clear that the association between the right to food and the effectiveness of the food supply system is not merely incidental but rather the central point: *assuring the latter is akin to assuring the former*. That is, the right to food exists in in a one-to-one bond with an assuredly effective – and 'efficient', another telltale term that we consider shortly – food supply system. Thus, in this construction, not only can *food* itself be supplied, but so too can *food security* and the *right to food* be. Indeed, in the successful, complete execution of the PMA, these *are* to be supplied.

It is important to comment also upon the wide assimilation of the rights discourse within the bogotano community: this is not only a stance formally enshrined by the government but also a perspective assumed²⁵⁷ by many people outside of it. One conversation underlined the extent to which the right to food perspective is embedded in the bogotano psyche:

[Participant] Anyway, it would be better to talk about "food *sovereignty* and security", since countries are obligated to provide [food] "security" [in any case].

[LMA] They are?

[Participant] Yeah. Of course! Aren't they?! As far as I know. Yes.

²⁵⁶ The design of the PMA is such that each of Bogotá's localities performs an important decentralized role in executing and communicating the plan and acting subsidiarily to involve and respond to its citizens. Sumapaz is one of Bogotá's poorest localities.

²⁵⁷ Here, *assumed* is bisemically correct: a right to food perspective is *adopted* by nearly the entire public, and it is also *taken for granted* by them.

[LMA] So ... every country, in every part of the world ... has the obligation to provide food security for its citizens?

[Participant] Yes. Yes, exactly. Yes ... Yes, food is ... I believe it is a fundamental right and [hence governments] have to take care of it.²⁵⁸

The unexamined presumption of an (innate, inherent, preexisting) right to food is possible only for a person who lives in a context in which this perspective is so wholly normalized as to exclude other visions of reality – visions that, in different contexts, not only compete with but displace it. Indeed, viewing different contexts simultaneously, as we do in this study, makes clear the outstanding distinctiveness of the bogotano perspective. During my interviews with citizens, policymakers, scholars and activists in New York, the notion of a human right to food persisted as mostly unfamiliar and, when recognized, almost universally dismissed. Scholars generally recognized the concept but discarded it as politically nonviable; activists were mostly but not universally cognizant of the concept, and those conversant with it stood, while intellectually approbatory, even more sceptical than the scholars of its political potential; and policymakers and unaffiliated citizens remained almost universally ignorant of the idea altogether.²⁵⁹ Consider this brief exchange with a high-ranking NYC policymaker who regularly interacts with food issues:

[LMA] What do you think about the idea of a *right* to food?

[Participant] (*Lengthy pause. Obvious unawareness.*) I'm not familiar with that idea. It seems interesting, though. Can you explain it to me a bit?

This official's total lack of familiarity with the right to food – a marker much beyond the declination to embrace or advocate it – contrasts emblematically with the near-total familiarization, sensibility, and embrace of the right to food in Bogotá.²⁶⁰

²⁵⁸ If it is not clear upon first reading, it is important to recognize that this statement was made with great surety of answer and incredulity at the question.

²⁵⁹ This, of course, suggests the correctness of the scholars' and activists' overwhelming doubts regarding political viability.

²⁶⁰ This is not to dismiss the intellect, preparation, capacity, or good intent of NYC policymakers or citizens or of this official in particular. Indeed, quite the contrary. Many people work fervently in support of human rights realities whether or not they support the political institutionalization of those rights, and indeed whether or not they are aware of that possibility. Moreover, I admire the response of this policymaker; her acknowledgement of terminological ignorance and genuine interest regarding the idea rather than outright rejection of it – and her straightforward response to me, much her inferior in rank – speaks volumes of her wide mind and sincerity of purpose.

Agency, participation, democracy and empowerment

In the context of Bogotá's centralization of rights and of the right to food, a final point should be raised regarding the importance of participation, democracy and citizen empowerment. In the last chapter we discussed the renewed vision that a rights perspective gives to the human being and to the human spirit: people are *dignified*, and their *agency* – perhaps that character which most carries their dignity²⁶¹ – is a definitional component of rights realization. Since the person is understood to be – is 'transformed' into, if we draw more explicitly the *act* of distinction from dominant development perspectives – the subject of his own governance, agentic values such as social participation and self-empowerment take on special importance.

Scholars widely discuss the value of participatory citizenship, and their voices are not limited to a human rights ambit, some writing even from disciplines and fields that incise upon human rights only obliquely. Sen (1999), of course, puts great emphasis on agency in his framing of freedoms and capabilities; Marquand (2004), in the context of renewing the 'public sphere'; Patel (2009), in the context of food sovereignty; and Hassanein (2003), in the context of 'food democracy'. However, agency and participation are doubly central in the human rights perspective, where they are framed as both constitutively essential (that is, as *goods* in and of themselves) and instrumentally so (since they permit people to pursue the satisfaction of other rights) (see again Sen 1999, for considered elaboration). In Bogotá, agentic values and their politically practicable counterparts – participation and democracy – are expressed and embraced throughout Bogotá's development plans, and they are embodied with particular attention in instances of its food security programming.

I focus here on motions that the city has made toward citizen empowerment, and arguably these are many; the city has been recognized internationally and praised specifically for its recent efforts to promote participatory governance (UN Habitat 2010a, xviii). It is important to recognize, however, that, in a reality testified to and agreed upon almost universally among informants, the consummation of these efforts has been fractional at best. To be sure, this is in large measure because of the capacious measure of transformation that they pursue, as governance culture and social practices in Bogotá have both long emphasized precisely contrary norms.²⁶² The sharpness of language used by the CTPD (2012) indicates the radical change in perspective that an agentic, empowered, vision of the bogotano citizen implies upon the city's government, which (embracing such a vision)

²⁶¹ See also Chapter 14, where I re-assume this matter in theoretical form.

²⁶² Regardless of any such dispositional barriers, larger cultural factors are also at play, as drastic and well-entrenched contexts of poverty in Colombia have in many ways enslaved individuals to their social and economic condition and precluded opportunities for autonomy, personal development, and other forms of civic access.

must recognize that bogotanos are adults and ... cannot continue to treat the people who live in its territories as though they are incapable of thinking ... [People must be given the opportunities] to imagine alternatives to their problems and to offer solutions to them (7).

Participatory strategies that have been emphasized during recent administrations, therefore, align with human rights theory and with the calls of its promoters, but they differ greatly from the heft of historical experience that Colombians have sustained. This inertial lethargy has implied great difficulty in transforming the articulated celebration of rights tenets in the bogotano discourse into their practiced celebration in programmatic and social realities. Nonetheless, the expression and reiteration of agentic values²⁶³, and the deployment of programmatic efforts to promote them (again, both within the food security context and outside of it), have been notable and should not be overlooked.

The PDBH underlines the importance of such an approach throughout its text, referring to the essentiality of ‘participation and deliberation’ and of ‘participatory mechanisms that aim for a confluence between information, discussion, and choice’ and in which ‘people [come to] know their rights and the ways in which they can demand their fulfilment’ (ibid., 12). The *entire third axis* of the PDBH is dedicated to strengthening the reign of democracy, participation and good governance in the city, aiming to

defend and strengthen “the public space” ... guaranteeing and building upon participatory processes that promote the widespread and well-informed mobilization, organization, deliberations and decision-making of the citizens in the management of the city, strengthening of democracy, working toward peace and tolerance²⁶⁴, and ensuring the transparent and responsible use of the city’s patrimony and resources with zero tolerance for public or private corruption (212).

The importance of such celebrated agentic principles is reiterated time and again across the administration’s offices and programmes. Luz Mery Vargas of the administration’s Secretary of Economic Development underlined the reason why in the *En Sentido Contrario* radio special (Dirección de Derechos Humanos 2012) that linked as inseparable the right to food and the right to health:

²⁶³ The Petro plan formally embraces the shift toward citizen-agentic development governance, validating it²⁶³ by appeal to the international gold standard of political authority, the UN:

Since the 1990s, the UN human development reports have reiterated that the true wealth of nations lies in their people, in individuals as agents of their own development, when these people have the means necessary to grow their capabilities and possibilities (2012c, 16).

Of course, the *need* to validate such a perspective speaks to its difference from the historical norm.

²⁶⁴ The word used is *convivencia*. This translates best here as ‘tolerance’ or ‘harmony’, but it would better communicate the word’s substance to use the inelegant but more direct translation of ‘living together’, which beckons to the thorny history and actuality of violence, criminality, and discrimination in the city and the country.

If we as citizens do not work for and do not advocate for our rights – our right to health, our right to food and nutrition security - all of this [poor food security and inadequate programming to assure it] is not going to change.

Several elements of the Bogotá's food security programming illustrate the priority for participatory citizenship particularly well. First, for example, there are plans to reinvent the *comedores comunitarios* as 'Referral and Capacity Development Centres' where 'vulnerable people are not only guaranteed food but also educated and trained' (Consejo de Bogotá 2012, 7). This is more broadly construed as an effort to transcend the problem of *asistencialidad* that many allege to be inherent – and problematic – to both the current food security program design and to the Colombian culture within which it operates.²⁶⁵

Second, Axis III of the plan – dedicated specifically and explicitly to the foment of democracy and participation – includes numerous elements related to food security, including the devolution of certain responsibilities, programming, and funding to localities; the strengthening of educational and training opportunities within the context of food assistance delivery efforts; the generalized strategic emphasis on empowerment across programming (as exemplified well in the redesign of the *comedores*); and improved communications and anti-corruption vigilance mechanisms in the context of the *comedores* (PDBH 2012).

Third, the PMA's (Consortio CPT-CIPEC 2004) vision of *agroredes* and *nutriredes* is effectively as mechanisms to facilitate participation. These respond to an understanding that people can participate effectively in the food system only if (1) there are sufficient and sufficiently accessible opportunities and processes extant in the food system for them to do so, and (2) individual actors are organized such that their collective voice becomes powerful enough to parallel, co-exist, and negotiate equally alongside the voices of more powerful single actors in the food chain (such as large national and international food corporations). Hence the creation of these networks of small food system actors (i.e., small producers and small grocers) both structures a functionally enabling context and offers specific organizational opportunities for the participatory empowerment of citizens.

Finally, to once again profit from the comparative possibilities offered by the formulation of this study, I comment briefly on the same theme as it appears in New York City. This is a curious case to analyse: at once, there is no articulated right to food movement in New York that might lay claim to a discourse of citizen empowerment. Some might link the absence of such a discourse with observations of the gross exclusivity and castelike tiering evident in the city's food system structures.

²⁶⁵ Here I must reiterate that I write this charge with emic voice.

Nonetheless, the strength of the food movement, as it were, is as strong in NYC as it is anywhere – some have suggested the city as its focal point and epicentre (Nestle, in *The New School* 2013) – and many actors within this movement make strident calls for a more participatory system of food governance and a food system marked by greater citizen involvement. At the same time, the prevailing American ethic of meritocratic advance and individual responsibility entails a constitutional expectation of citizen involvement; indeed, at the limits of this discourse, the individual ought to be the only and ultimate point of responsibility for his food security. In this sense, then, there is a strong, underlying discourse of ‘participation’ in New York, devolved, as it were, in the guises of individualism and freedom. But – and this is crux of the matter here – there is little to no effort to consolidate such perspectives articulately or to formalize their existence – much less celebration – within the city’s food security programming. In this instance, then, the comparison is curious: NYC is likely more advanced in its generalized practices of celebrating participatory democracy, but it does so from a completely different motivational value set. At the same time, despite New York’s historically practiced tradition of citizen participation generally, this does not extend to (actual) participation in food system governance. In this sense, it lies as something of a mirror image to the bogotano actuality.

This murky comparative exercise broaches a point that I have now portended several times: things are not at all clear-cut. Here, we can see that New York’s underlying political ethos places a high value on participation, but its food security discourse does not; and, while Bogotá’s historical trajectory has been exclusionary to the extreme, its current discursive positioning of democracy and empowerment is ubiquitous, persistent and pursued. At the same time, these dominant discourses aside, there is an extant food movement in New York whose adherents grow corn, make yogurt and raise chickens, and there are *comedor* workers in Bogotá who decry the system’s undignification of *comedor* users. In short, if the dominating discourses – in either city – are only tenuously decided, their deployments are sometimes even more bashful.

Summary: Visions of the right to food

This chapter has demonstrated how the permeation of the rights theme in Bogotá’s policy discourse has manifested specifically in the food security context as the embrace of a human right to food. This perspective contrasts markedly with that in New York City, and examples examining the concept of a right to food in each context testify to the deep-seated constructs that ‘make possible’ (only) specific food security discourses in each one.

Despite this aspect of deep-seated tenure, however, particular food security discourses are neither inevitable nor binding. In the next chapter, I examine the potential for dynamism and evolution in development-borne food security discourses, discussing how the contentious co-existence of a lingering historical capitalist development ethic and a currently articulated human development one in Bogotá gives indeterminate shape to the city's food security discourse.

Chapter 10

Two developments at once? Skirmishes for discursive domination in Bogotá

To speak is to do something – something other than to express what one thinks ... To add a statement to a pre-existing series of statements is to perform a complicated and costly gesture.
- Foucault (2002, 230)

Abstract

In this chapter, I conclude the examination of Research Question 1, and its emphasis on the discursive liaison between the development and food security paradigms, by showing how Bogotá's discursive landscape, differently from New York's, is ambiguously governed: while the human development discourse is well pronounced and widely celebrated, a legacy of capitalist practice often continues in its realized dominance of food security questions.

The co-existence of development discourses in Bogotá

At this point, we have surveyed the manifestations of a strong human development discourse in Bogotá's food security landscape and a strong capitalist development discourse in NYC's. However, while the dominance of the latter is overwhelming to the point of near exclusivity, the dominance of the former is not. That is, in NYC, there is very nearly *only* the capitalist development discourse; but in Bogotá, the human development discourse co-exists alongside the vestiges of a long historical capitalist legacy. On the one hand, the strong human development perspective contains and expresses often-explicit opposition to the capitalist perspective; on the other hand, practiced food security activities often display a manifest capitalist prerogative. This creates a complex and interesting discursive landscape of simultaneous contention and dialogue between two generally opposed philosophical perspectives and the practices that emerge from them.

This discursive co-existence poses a series of analytical and political uncertainties: is what I have suggested to be the dominant paradigm, that of human development, genuinely dominant? Do the two paradigms compete for discursive space oppositionally and exclusionarily, or is there rather a manner of hybridization – perhaps even a virtuous hybridity – between them? The answers to these questions are not clear, but the questions are nonetheless worth raising, and I attempt here to lend at least some preliminary insights.

The construction of a human development discourse in Bogotá is achieved not only in the positive, articulating the values that this perspective affirms, but also – and quite substantially – in the negative, identifying the values and protagonists that it expressly rejects. Specifically, human development is discursively situated opposite to the growth-centric capitalist development model, which its opponents charge as having failed to benefit (in the least critical versions of the accusation) or actively harmed (in the more critical ones) the wellbeing of most of Bogotá's people.²⁶⁶ Disapproval of the capitalist model is strong, and criticism is liberally applied across its spectrum of ideological attributes, political engagements and practical outcomes; several points of particularly strong criticism relate closely to food security²⁶⁷: the USA's 'dumping policy'; the international speculation that has defined the recent agricultural

²⁶⁶ It is worth acknowledging the relationship between the important anti-neoliberal discourse in Bogotá and the real development outcomes most recently achieved – or missed – by projects in Colombia adherent to that discourse. While there have been recent significant achievements in some aspects of human wellbeing, there remain *major* shortcomings in the development project; of special note is the remarkable inequality that these have generated. (Recall the evidence cited in Chapter 1.) What's more, the context in which the *best* outcomes in Colombia have been achieved – Bogotá – is that where policies have most severely *deviated* from the capitalist and toward the human development ethic.

²⁶⁷ Interestingly, during my interviews, these food security exemplars were often put into service by informants as springboards from which to launch more comprehensive attacks on the larger capitalist or neoliberal economic models.

economy; the widespread use of agrifuels; and the preponderance of agro-technical efforts and ‘green revolution’ projects.

This criticism sometimes approaches bellicosity when it regards the actors regarded as proponents – or, in more faithful replication of the discourse, ‘perpetrators’ – of capitalist development, particularly those seen as its greatest champions, the United States and the most powerful multinational corporations. Lesser but still considerable criticism is also issued to actors in Bogotá and in Colombia who have recently embraced (or at least insufficiently resisted) capitalist development measures (even though such actions are often acknowledged as having occurred ‘under the influence’ of more commanding villains). Indignant charges of hegemony and colonialism (or neocolonialism)²⁶⁸ are expressly and frequently voiced, with the fullness of meaning carried in these charges variable according to speaker.

Such ideological confrontation is carried out to some extent in government texts, but it is much stronger outside of them. At the ‘most official’ levels, opposition to the capitalist development model tends to tread carefully, issuing criticism that is thematically rich while leaving the condemned opponent unnamed (though generally apparent). For example, a preparatory document for the PDBH (Alcaldía Mayor de Bogotá 2012c) distinguishes the plan’s human development vision from a wealth-based (i.e. capitalist) one that might tend (and, we can read easily, *has tended*) to profoundly confuse ends and means to the great detriment of most people’s wellbeing:

A vision centred upon the human being distances itself from one that conceives of development solely in terms of economic growth. An increase in wealth is a necessary condition for development, but it is not sufficient to create the conditions that permit people to fulfil their potential as free [human] beings. To the extent possible, city policies should avoid a situation where economic growth generates inequality and segregation. The PDBH considers that wealth can be transformed into a fundamental part of development if it ceases to be considered as an end in itself and [instead] constitutes the foundation of a situation in which all citizens can enjoy [the full extent of] their rights (11).²⁶⁹

²⁶⁸ I have broached the matter of continuity between the colonial and development discourses and alluded to capitalism’s still powerful forms of colonialism (i.e. its cultural hegemonies that relate to the standardization of cultural norms and the dominance of multinational corporate actors). As noted here, however, the remarkable aspect of these protests in Bogotá is their loud proclamation not (only) from academic communities but also from lay ones. Again, the lay usage is more or less informed and variably coherent – but its presence is notable and discursively influential.

²⁶⁹ This recalls our earlier discussions of ends and means (see Chapter 4) and makes clear that wealth is a means and not an end. Note well that opponents of the capitalist development perspective do not oppose *in toto* ideas related to economic advancement and material prosperity. Rather, they subjugate these to the service of a greater good: namely, to the creation and improvement of human wellbeing.

The administration is more explicit in distancing itself from (capitalist, growth-driven) *expansive* forms of spatial urban development, though it again neglects to specify a cause or agent as transgressor. It

rejects the [urban development] path taken by many Asian and Latin American megalopolises, which have gone on expanding, devastating the territory and destroying the environment, which in the case of Bogotá is [simply] unacceptable (ibid., 15).

Texts issued by departmental actors (still within the administration) generally tend toward greater explicitness than the mayor's office itself. For example, in a document examining the possibilities for food sovereignty, the SDDE (2012) advocates a mission of 'territorial justice' in which livelihood and rights are measures of success²⁷⁰; all the while, it exerts a sharp, explicit critique of the capitalist ethic (and specifically of its relentless pursuit of productivity and profit).

The CTPD (2012) is (as we have seen elsewhere) also much more explicit and elaborate in its criticism, 'naming' the capitalist development model and issuing a clear normative judgment upon it:

Colombia is a country that has been defined by a development model associated with capitalist production and productivity, and along with this, at capitalism's most "advanced" stage, neoliberalism. Bogotá is its principle exemplar, ... oriented by the logic of capital, whose principles of competitiveness, efficiency, effectiveness, productivity, security and mobility have determined recent development and territorial management plans ... and basing all of its growth and progress upon the "opportunities" afforded by market forces (4).

Such market-measured progress, it says, has been pursued 'independent of whether it benefits everyone or not' (ibid., 5). This has managed only to aggravate and worsen existing sociostructural problems in the city, including 'segregation in all of its forms (physical, economic, social, cultural, legal, environmental) (ibid.)²⁷¹, the enormous gap between rich and poor, and increasing numbers of displaced persons. Neoliberal 'existing rules...privilege the interests of a few and the logic of the market ... [and] weigh down all the dynamics of society,' it says, and what is needed instead is a new governance 'perspective that is [differently than capitalism] collectivist, inclusive, democratic, [and] that guarantees real alternatives for the residents of Bogotá. This means putting the common good ahead of private interest' (ibid., 7).

Though these examples of 'speaking in the negative' are important for the institutional associations they carry, the strongest opposition to the neoliberal development ethic is voiced by

²⁷⁰ Note, of course, the significance of the source: that such a discourse proceeds from the Department of Economic Development is remarkable.

²⁷¹ Even the attention to, concern for and holistic view of segregation, as adopted here, pertain to distinguish a human development perspective from standard capitalist development ones.

civil society actors. The significant involvement – and, to some extent, influence – of such actors, particularly in the way of bringing to centre stage the overwhelming popular opposition to capitalism’s frequent and dispiriting ascendancy, makes it imperative to recognize here their participation in the urban development and food security discourses. Indeed, the activities and influences of a host of local and international food-interested social movements comprise a topic of rising importance in the academic and popular media²⁷², and the contribution of such actors in Bogotá is important.

For example, Fajardo (2011) writes that the dominant [neoliberal] development path has effectively destroyed Colombia, leading to ‘immense shortcoming in quality of life for much of the population’, causing ‘major damage to [the country’s] environmental resources and their productive capacity’, and degrading the country’s ‘institutional capacity’ – particularly that relating to the agrarian sector – via policies ‘derived from a model of development that is *exclusive* (19)’.²⁷³ Similarly, Correa (2010), from the pro-peace organization Planeta Paz, frames ‘two possible paths’ for development and food security in what becomes apparent as an effectively Manichean moral differentiation between ‘good’ and ‘bad’. One – the ‘bad’, favoured by the still-dominant neoliberal-capitalist regime – relies on monoculture, mining, resource exploitation, agritechology, and food imports. The other – the ‘good’, supported by advocates of food sovereignty – relies on strengthened urban-rural linkages, a strong rural small producer economy, and agroecology. He identifies more than 100 ‘social processes’ (essentially social movements in miniature²⁷⁴) working toward the latter model – that is, the ‘good’ one – in Colombia.

One particular – and powerful – context in which ‘speaking in the negative’ regarding the (de)merits of capitalist development and food policy has found great ply and important engagement by both civil society and government actors is that surrounding Colombia’s free trade agreement (TLC)²⁷⁵ with the United States. The recent adoption of the TLC received

²⁷² See Ashe & Sonnino (2013b) for a concise summary of literature on the topic, as well as for a consideration of the potential for efficacy and power in such a ‘food movement’.

²⁷³ Fajardo here explicates a dialectic that appears commonly in the discourse of express opposition to neoliberal development, though one that is rarely put on such terms. In brief, he contrasts the *exclusivity* of neoliberal development with the *inclusivity* of the human development model; that is, the first benefits a chosen few – moneyed elites – while the second benefits ‘the many’. These themes of exclusion and inclusion might also be understood, in the dignitarian perspectives I consider in Chapter 14, as important markers of dignity.

²⁷⁴ Correa defines a ‘social process’ to be ‘consistent collective activity, situated in a specific location, that consists in the creation and execution of different collective and organizational projects whose vision is to transform the public perspective, in this case regarding food policy’ (17).

²⁷⁵ In Spanish, this is the *Tratado de Libre Comercio entre Colombia y Estados Unidos (TLC)*; in English, it is the *United States-Colombia Trade Promotion Agreement (CTPA)*; in any language, it is a bilateral free trade agreement entering into effect in 2012. According to the Colombian Ministry of Commerce (Ministerio de Comercio 2012), the TLC will benefit both ‘Colombian and American consumers, guaranteeing them a greater variety of products at better prices; businesses and exporters of both

almost universally negative remark from interview respondents. Those who held the most extreme views in favour of food *sovereignty* not only issued strong criticism of the TLC itself but also seized the opportunity to express indignation toward everything that it represented to them, including, i.a., the depravity and disadvantage of the capitalist development trajectory; the unfortunately ongoing dominance of that legacy; and the continuing project of the United States to amass wealth and promote its own economic interests at the expense of other (cash-poor, resource-rich) countries. They also sharply criticized the weakness of the Colombian national government in its refusal to confront the international neoliberal power regime – again, this was most often abridged to comprise a collusion between the United States and the multinational corporations – and the economic injustices it implied. Simultaneous to these – harsh – criticisms, they often extolled contrasting radical or progressive Latin American leaders, such as Chávez (in Venezuela) and Morales (in Bolivia), who have assumed more assertive policy stances against international political and commercial power actors to points even of seizing and nationalizing foreign-owned resources and industries.

Even the Petro administration itself (Alcaldía Mayor de Bogotá 2012c) has criticized the TLC, calling it ‘a threat to the region’s peasant economy’ (42) and naming it as one of three central challenges to the achievement of food security in Bogotá.²⁷⁶ Pasquini (2012) affirms the overwhelming disapproval in Colombia regarding the passage of the TLC, particularly with regard to its effect on food security and sovereignty. She writes that ‘the agreement has been deemed a negotiation failure as the country was unable to secure the envisaged special treatment of the agricultural sector, putting the food security of Bogotá and the central region at risk’, asserting further that the ‘agreement will deepen the crisis of the peasant economies already struggling’ (20-21).²⁷⁷

countries; ... and the Treasuries of both countries as a result of economic growth’. As I note in this chapter, the Colombian people are rather less convinced about these promised outcomes than the Minister of Commerce is.

²⁷⁶ The other two challenges identified are the pressures placed on the region’s arable land resources by the demand for agrifuels, and the decreasing capacity in supplier countries for exportation of the staple products that habitually sustain Bogotá (that problem due, of course, to the compendium of crises that comprise the New Food Equation) (42).

²⁷⁷ To be sure, opposition to the TLC is overwhelming but not total. Two informants expressed (qualified) positive views of the TLC. One was a stalwart businessman and staunch believer in *the market* as the ultimate measure of success. He rejected Bogotá’s rights-based concept of food security (not because he was opposed to people having food, he said, but because he questioned how a government could deliver policy on the basis of such a premise), generally lauded the practices and ‘progresses’ of capitalist countries such as the United States, and believed that the TLC would open to Colombia export and investment opportunities heretofore unrealized. The second expressed simply a less critical critique of the TLC, which he saw as flawed in construction but not a wholly misguided effort.

Ambiguity of the discursive co-existence

The very existence of the TLC, in turn, leads us to consider the ways in which Bogotá's development context is sometimes decidedly favourable to the capitalist discourse in its implicit, practiced forms. Indeed, the adoption of the TLC consisted not only of a practical embrace of 'free market' economics but of one made jointly with (or *subject to*, as many critics, particularly those appreciating poststructuralist and neocolonial perspectives, would insist) *the* quintessential icon of capitalist development (or, as it were, of capitalist domination, exploitation, colonialism, or hegemony, according to the same perspectives), the United States.²⁷⁸

Beyond the TLC, however, lie a considerable number of similar (if less consequential) illustrations of Bogotá's practiced adoption of capitalist development philosophy. One example lies in the governmentally and mediatically celebrated formation of an 'agro-industrial corridor' in the Bogotá (Central) Region. Its foci on 'providing innovation services', promoting 'technology development', and 'optimiz[ing] the productivity and sustainability of the region' (Agencia de Noticias UN 2012) sings green revolution tropes and betrays the major corporate influence entailed in its creation and envisioned operation. A similar example of real neoliberal 'development' lies in the continuing growth of national and international supermarkets (including, e.g., France-based Carrefour, the third largest hypermarket chain in the world (Deloitte 2015)), which now supply 21% of Bogotá's food sales (Consortio CPT-CIPEC 2004, 16) despite their considerably higher-than-market prices (Forero Álvarez 2006, 65).

Even the Mayor's Office (Alcaldía Mayor de Bogotá 2012c) is at time explicit in expressing appreciation for the capitalist development norm, affirming needs for 'science, technology and innovation to advance the development of the city', 'modernization projects to the urban infrastructure', 'industrial modernization', and the 'strengthen[ing of] a type of development that is attractive to investors' (53-54). Similarly, several documents issued by the SDDE discuss efforts to create a 'new logistics culture' and to construct 'collective [market] efficiencies' (e.g., Equipo de Trabajo Agrored Sumapaz 2005, 4). An online editorial (Eslava Cobos 2009) – which even recurred to rights language in its title, 'Food security, a fundamental right' – argued that food security 'not only is an obligation of the State, it is also good business'. Likewise, one informant extolled to me the 'economic wisdom' of assuring food security, saying that a fully nourished Bogotá population would double its capacity for exports from the city and make the

²⁷⁸ It is important to recognize, of course, that the agreement to the TLC was (necessarily) made by the Colombian national government and not by the local bogotano one. Nonetheless, it imposes important realities for both local government and local people with regard to food security, and it is insensible to exclude its consideration here.

region well poised – given its ecological and geographic advantages – to act as a (profit-earning) supplier to other nations in the face of globally changing climates and productive capabilities.

All of these examples suggest, then, that despite the great discursive importance given to themes such as sovereignty, small-scale rural production, and human rights in the context of a prevailing articulated discourse of human development, it remains certain that foreign governments, international corporations, and aggregate financial interests continue to hold considerable power in constructing Bogotá's food system and food security.

This, in turn, leads us to consider the nature of discursive concurrence in this case: is it harmonious and constructive, the two perspectives intercouring to create a virtuously synergic hybrid master perspective? Or is it conflictive and embattled, one discourse subjugating the other into superficiality and disregard? The textual permeation of human development terminology and profuse explication of related concepts – accompanied by a similarly permeative explicit rejection of neoliberal development – alongside the vast entitlement-based, equity-inspired programming efforts that we have reviewed suggest the clear ascendancy of the human development paradigm. In reality, however, what I have suggested to this point as *dominance* may be only *prominence*: we have also viewed a collection of shoehorned exemplars that speak to what might be an unshakable capitalist heritage. The matter, however, remains ambiguous, and we therefore examine it more closely here.

In the long view, the most generalizably correct characterization may be that the human development discourse dominates the expressed plane while the capitalist one is more frequently consummated in practice. When the two paradigms are subject to manifest opposition, human development language and framing are reliably – but neither unanimously nor unfailingly – chosen. Such a choice came to consideration during the creation and naming²⁷⁹ of the PMA, for example. Originally titled 'Nourishing at a *Minimum* Price', the title was changed in review prior to the final version to 'Nourishing at a *Fair* Price': the associations of *minimum* price with the capitalist values of profit and competition had handicapped its attractiveness, while the association of *fair* price with the more human values of dignity and justice²⁸⁰ had promoted its.

²⁷⁹ I recall again the importance of 'framing and naming' (as per, i.a., Friedmann 2005, 249).

²⁸⁰ The decision proved a conflictive one. One key informant who had played a central role in authoring the PMA regarded this change as a foolish concession made by wiser, more expert economists to leftist rights-based 'talkers'. The original title, he opined, was much more appropriate, since a food system is at its most fundamental an *economic* system, and as such it is (and must be) given to the regulation and rule of the market – a regulation and rule that operates based upon pursuit of the *lowest* price. Hence naming as the PMA's mission 'Nourishing at the lowest price' correctly identified the objective of a project that

At the same time, however, it is imperative to return again to Escobar's (1995) insistence that 'discourse is not just words' (216): the examples of capitalist *practice* in Bogotá are extremely important, and despite their less frequent and less prominent articulation as such, the real magnitude of their impact is enormous. From this perspective, the philosophical coup against the legacy of capitalist development – as seen play out in its discursive disarmament on the title page of the PMA, for example – may be misleading, in effect only masking the enduring real power of the legacy perspective.

Several factors make it plausible that this reading of affairs – that is, that the capitalist development trajectory remains practically, if opaquely, dominant, or at least very importantly impactful – is correct. First, the capitalist model has been *overwhelmingly* dominant until very recently – indeed, in many ways, *is still dominant* – particularly in the Western-led, authority-quarterbacked development project (i.e., as shepherded by the United States and the United Nations), and this is the project that has borne and bred the current development regime in Colombia. The creation of the agro-industrial corridor that we have just considered testifies, for example, to this abiding legacy: its affirming articulation of a rational, agro-technically expert model mimics closely the heritage of capitalist development practice, thematic emphasis and discursive framing that have long dominated the city and the nation. What's more, the project is co-sponsored by the UN; while its participation must not be taken as evidence that the legacy model, with its particular arrangement of powers and truths prevail, it does suggest at least the possibility for the sustention and expansion, quietly or not, of the conventional, imposed capitalist development practice.

Path dependency, particularly in the context of a political system wracked by corruption and a populace wracked by inequality, may simply be too strong to overcome, or at least to overcome rapidly and totally, no matter how philosophically agreeable the norms proposed by human development as an ideological intercessor. As one document from the SDDE (2012) states:

The policy of food sovereignty ... [does not] fit within the dominant development models of the city, as [its] respective components ... are antagonistic to the primary importance of the export orientation of the economy and rural development, as well as to [the primary importance of] urban expansion and [rural] destruction (1).

was at its most fundamental an economic one: to create the most effective, efficient, and competitive food system. What's more, he pointed out, pursuit of the lowest price is also the only way that a food system can achieve the fashionable sustainability criteria in a genuine sense: such a system offers the only basis for perpetual operationality. Changing the objective of the PMA to that of delivering a 'fair price', he said, begs too many impossible questions: What is fair? Who decides what is fair? Fair for whom? And, most to the point from his perspective, what could be *fairer* than the lowest price?

Second, despite some suggestion that the era of nation-state power is now past (i.a. Khanna 2013; Òmae 1995), such an idea seems implausible in light of the considerable political and economic power that the United States in particular continues to levy in world affairs, and especially in the Americas.²⁸¹ A view to policies in Colombia such as the TLC²⁸² and the military-led aerial eradication of coca cultivations²⁸³ offers good evidence that such influence is continuing and strong. The asymmetry of (political *and* economic) power between the USA and Colombia is extraordinary: the GNP of the United States is 122 times the size of the Colombia's (in 2001)(Garay Salamanca, Barberi Gómez, and Cardona Landínez 2010, 13), and the United States is the leading importer of Colombian products, importing 39% per cent of the country's exports (Villarreal 2006). Given this asymmetry (as well as a similar power asymmetry with regard to international political influence and to subsidized or otherwise politically supported multinational corporations), it may be implausible for Colombia generally, and all the more for Bogotá specifically, to overcome the capitalist trajectory that continues to be backed so strongly by the United States.

Third, there may be dynamics that resemble those often framed as a *greenwash* in the arena of sustainability or of *conventionalization* or *appropriation* in the context of the alternative food movement. In the same way that, for example, California's industrialized and corporatized organic cultivation may constitute an appropriation of the language of sustainability (see, e.g., Guthman 1998, 2004a, 2004b) – that is, chosen with motive not of becoming more environmentally cognizant or humanly just but rather to enhance image and profit –, so too, might Bogotá's adoption of human development and rights language constitute, at least to some extent, an appropriation of the similarly agreeable terms of human development. In this way,

²⁸¹ Though many have addressed the topic, I recommend *Overthrow's* (Kinzer 2007) narrative of a century-long American record of self-interested aggression and disruption in other nations, very often in Latin America, and mostly in pursuit of economic ends.

²⁸² Sociologist Hector Moncayo says of the TLC that it 'gives institutional protection to the current model of development', one 'based on the exploitation and exportation of natural resources' and one that imperils the rights of the common person to the profit of large multinational actors. He points out further that treaties involving the United States are always 'asymmetrical ... [pairing] a powerhouse [country] with a small country like Colombia' to the clear benefit of the former and its public and private interests. He foresees 'devastating impacts on the environment [and] on the people who will be forcibly displaced' as a result of the treaty and for its expected implications of violations to the economic, cultural and social rights of Colombia peasants (which, furthermore, will, in the name of the treaty, be ignored by the Colombian state) (Vargas 2012).

²⁸³ Opponents to the aerial eradication of coca have called its effects human rights violations. Thousands of *campesinos* – literally translated, peasants; or, better, rural workers – have been displaced, and, important in the context of this study, this bears major consequence (also) for food security in both rural and urban areas. The chemicals used to destroy coca are indiscriminate in their eradication efficacy, and large swathes of licit agricultural land have been destroyed. The resulting forced displacement and rural-to-urban migration of *campesinos* is an important factor in Bogotá's rapid growth, as the city – for the most parts, its *barrios informales* – has been the destination of many formerly self-sufficient small-scale agricultural producers whose livelihoods have been eliminated in the wake of aerial eradication campaigns (Paige 2014). In 2015, the government of Colombia ordered an end to aerial fumigation amid discontent from the program's U.S. supporters (Neuman 2015).

then, neoliberal development realities might continue to wield their great influence beneath a more popularly acceptable guise of human development.

These factors together support the credibility of a reading that understands the capitalist development discourse as enduringly influential in bogotano practice, despite its articulated slight. Regardless, though, it remains articulately slighted, overpowered – though not totally overwhelmed – in the discursive realm by the human development discourse. The resulting concurrence – and it is very much a *concurrence*, with a distinctly competitive, antagonistic bent – defines, the bogotano reality. Let us view closely how this confused discourse resolves in the context of one central food security example: the PMA.

An example of ambiguity: The PMA

The PMA stands as a prime exemplar the continuous co-presence and co-mingling of capitalist and human development discourses in Bogotá. On one hand, it suggests that an influential legacy of the capitalist development trajectory at least lingers and perhaps continues to dominate in the practice of Bogotá's food security programming. At the same time, the PMA and the documents related to it give important treatment to the human development mission with which the administration has endowed its food security program.²⁸⁴ It may be the case that the latter (discursive) treatment is little more than a flimsy, written concession to a domineering capitalist discourse that leaves the practical content of the work well entrenched in convention. But I argue instead that the mingling of discourses is to some extent dialogic and constructive – the *mingling* itself is virtuous – and that this allows for a constructed vision that fuses the tendentially capitalist and modernist practices of the conventional development project with innovative voices that advocate for a more dignified process and result.

A preponderance of examples testifies to the strength of the capitalist perspective in the PMA, and we view several here. To begin, the PMA expresses its *raison d'être* in its overall framing of the food security problematic, understanding food insecurity (mostly) as a market problem of insufficient and unstable food supply; in other words, it replicates an understanding similar to that travailed by productivist actors for decades.²⁸⁵ For example, while the Observatorio de Abastecimiento (2011) calls consumers the 'social base of the food system' (25) and writes that

²⁸⁴ Neither should it be left unsaid that many of those who have created, advocated, and worked in the deployment of the PMA and its resultant activities derive *their* primary interest in the service of the human person and work doggedly toward helping real people to realize better real lives. Some believe strongly in both human rights principles *and* the power of economic forces.

²⁸⁵ As we observed in Chapter 4, productivism is by no means defunct, and it continues to be applied in many countries under an updated frame of 'feeding the world'.

‘food security, for the lower classes of Bogotá, is a problem of acquisition power’ (33) – a concession, it seems, to the widened perspective of person-centred food security analysis that shifts emphasis toward the consumer-eater – its fuller elaboration and explanation suggest that this is indeed little more than a concession. The totality of the document recurs to heavy use of market terminology, hyper-quantification of information, generally capitalist lexicon, and highly sectorialized analysis, and this serves mostly to obscure rather than to elucidate the social aspects of the problem.

One central lexical choice is worthy of particular reflection: the *title* of the PMA. The full title of the PMA is *The Bogotá Master Plan for the Supply of Food and Food Security*²⁸⁶, a title that itself indicates the PMA’s underlying supply-focused, productivist ethic. First, the notion that one can simply ‘supply’ both ‘food’ and ‘food security’ beckons to interpretations of the food security problem that imply not integral, socially embedded and systemic food system improvements but rather *deliverable*²⁸⁷ solutions that entail an exclusive or largely exclusive focus on increasing food *supply*. Documents supporting the PMA place similar emphasis on supply-side interpretations of food security, often blanketing articulated human development superficialities onto more substantive but often obscured capitalist (and, of note here, especially productivist) content.

One study (Equipo de Trabajo Agrored Sumapaz 2005) that evaluates conditions surrounding the creation of an agrored in the Sumapaz locality scatters rights language throughout the text but often modifies its framing in ways that gently subvert it. For example, in writing that the function of the PMA is ‘to guarantee the fundamental right to food and the effective and sustainable supply of food to the entire population of Bogotá, with emphasis on the most vulnerable’ (4), it subtly equates the holistic right to food concept with a more restrictive right to the effective and sustainable *supply* of food, a significant shift of emphasis and a portent of the report’s ensuing and substantive capitalist content.

At the same time, the omission of ‘nutrition security’ from the title²⁸⁸ is extremely significant given the manifestation of gross qualitative dietary deficiencies and high incidence of under-, mal- and overnutrition in the city. The diet of bogotanos generally is extremely low in

²⁸⁶ While it is possible to read this title in a dissociative way – i.e., as the plan for the Supply of Food and also the Plan for Food Security – I consider the title as I have written it to be more faithful to the document’s content and framing.

²⁸⁷ It is *deliverable* in much the same way that development is conventionally delivered *from* the West to the South, *from* the aid agency to the poor nation, and *from* the authoritative expert to the ignorant peasant.

²⁸⁸ Recall that the city’s driving policy (which the PMA aims to service) regards food *and* nutrition security.

‘nutritious’ foods and extremely high in nutrient-sparse starches and processed foods²⁸⁹; not inconsequentially, rates both of micronutrient deficiencies such as anaemia and of obesity and lifestyle diseases are very high. The ‘food and nutrition security’ term has come to express and remind that supplying *adequate* food is quite different than supplying *sufficient* food or even supplying *sufficient biophysical nourishment*, and this fullness of the term is hence especially important in Bogotá. The failure to include the *nutrition security* term in the PMA’s title – even if some might argue that its content is meant to exist by implication – is at least suggestive of the PMA’s general orientation toward a narrow and tendentially conventional understanding of food security.

A further dialectic contained within the PMA – which one key informant characterized as the ‘problem of language’ – speaks to the tension between the capitalist and human development paradigms in Bogotá and constitutes an important impediment – in his perspective – to realizing the PMA’s vision for a much-improved peri-urban food system. The ‘problem’ he describes is that certain (promising) food security actions and practices must necessarily be described using language that has inherited a legacy of negative connotation as a result of its inheritance from and prominence within the capitalist lexicon. These actions and practices – and the PMA’s support of them – *therefore* assume these same negative connotations and face sharp resistance from small food chain actors, who almost categorically oppose the capitalist ideology and its development paradigm. When small food chain actors resist projects and approaches because they arrived saddled with the language of ‘increasing efficiency’ and ‘increasing value-added activity’ (and so on) that *in reality* are likely to benefit both them and the larger Bogotá food system, they effectively reinforce the dominion that conventional capitalism has claimed on such terms. Importantly, of course, this sort of unreflexive, unconsidered resistance ultimately proves not merely intellectually disadvantageous but also materially so.²⁹⁰

The same informant cited major food system ‘inefficiencies’ – this, of course, a term with heavy capitalist bearing – that relate to insufficiency in infrastructural, logistical and cultural organization (and that most would agree are, for the most part, *real*). For example, the differential cost that small producers pay to transport their goods to the city markets is high, with the small-load vehicles they use carrying more than twice the per-weight cost as larger ones, and – even though smaller – the vehicles are filled on average to only 48% of their

²⁸⁹ Again, I reiterate the problematic nature of trying to establish what, precisely, constitutes ‘healthy’. Nonetheless, throughout this dissertation I have been content to accept at least that dietary diversity, fruits, vegetables, and whole grains generally locate more favourably than dietary monotony, highly processed foods and foods high in saturated fats and added sugars.

²⁹⁰ A second informant identifies a problem similar and related to the ‘problem of language’. In the same way that small actors dislike neoliberal language, they also mistrust its offspring convictions of rationalization and professionalization of knowledge. Hence, he says, there is ‘no love of the data’, and this ultimately undermines the small actor who dismisses procedural innovation and informational analysis that may, upon trial and reflection, prove both useful and morally acceptable to him.

capacity. The typical product passes through three intermediaries who do not ‘add any value’ to the product but who do add to the product a price increase of 21% (which eventually reaches the consumer).²⁹¹ Meanwhile market facilities are used on average only six hours per day and generate significant quantities of waste of both product and packaging (SDDE 2011, 11).

These (and other) ‘inefficiencies’, as such, are *really* detrimental to the small producer’s ability to participate profitably in the food system (and hence to maintain both the integrity of his livelihood and the quality of his life). It is precisely these that the PMA’s activities are designed to resolve. The central activities of the PMA are essentially efforts to more closely join producers to consumers and to each other in order to achieve ‘efficiencies’, ‘economies of scale’, and ‘logistical coherency’. Yet all of these projects depend both lexically and practically on concepts that have become inseparable from the neoliberal discourse in which they play so fundamental a role, and as a result the small food chain actors who would most benefit from efforts such as these express considerable resistance to accepting or adopting them. In other words, the ‘problem of language’ that results from the ideological tension between capitalist and human development discourses yields very real consequences: it is a demonstration, once again, that ‘discourse is not just words’.

Another example of the development dialectic within the PMA regards its treatment of small producers, whose role has been reimagined in the final version of the PMA following criticism that they had been too neglected in early versions. The background study for the PMA was commissioned by the 2001-2003 Mockus administration (and later taken forward by the Garzón administration), and some commenters issued it strong critique *precisely* because they viewed it as informed excessively by a capitalist ethic and insufficiently by a human development one (Pasquini 2012). Forero (2006) was one of the main critics of the early plan, charging that it was a modernization project that would effectively disempower and imperil the livelihoods of small and informal actors in the food economy. He also criticised the idea of *agroredes*, saying that their construction improperly assumed a lack of organizational and business capacity on the part of small producers (see also, again, Pasquini 2012).

Critiques such as these stimulated a mobilization of small producers, coordinated by the NGOs ILSA²⁹² and Oxfam, to organize *mercados campesinos*, farmers’ markets, held in prominent city locations (so as to draw attention from policymakers and citizens) and later extended to more

²⁹¹ Forero (2006) argues that, to the contrary, these intermediaries are not valueless, and hence representing their activity as an ‘inefficiency’ in the system is incorrect (and dismissive).

²⁹² ILSA is the Instituto Latinoamericano para una Sociedad y un Derecho Alternativos (the Latin American Institute for an Alternative Society and an Alternative Law). It was formed in 1978 as the Instituto Latinoamericano de Servicios Legales Alternativos and many other texts refer to it by this name. I have used its current name in this text.

popular neighbourhoods (Garay Salamanca, Barberi Gómez, and Cardona Landínez 2010; ILSA 2011; Prensa Mercados Campesinos 2010). The extent to which the *mercados campesinos* represent a significant impact in the grand scope of Bogotá's food security, and even in the scope of the city's food security *efforts*, is contested (and in my view limited), but their presence does demonstrate that at least some aspects of 'alternative' and human-centric development ethics were able to enter the city's formal programming, and, importantly, that this occurred *by way of citizen participation and activism*.

A final view to the PMA regards its delivery of training to small grocers to instruct them in collaborative social values, a project intended to stimulate and potentiate their capability to develop and act effectively in *nutriredes*. This training devised 'economic games' that it used to 'instruct' the grocers in social skills, and it is notable for the way it included major elements of both capitalist and human development discourses. On the one hand, it replicated in its very design the modernist discourse of the development 'beneficiary' as a primitive, incapable man in need of intellectual instruction and moral remediation, and it was executed – that is, in a terminological framing that is more befitting than its imaginers intended, the didactic economic games were *played* – on terms that used real money and objectified the end of maximal profit. On the other hand, however, the skills it aimed to teach were socially oriented ones such as cooperation, collaboration, partnership, trust, and the common pursuit of mutual wellbeing: practices distinctively pertinent within the human development ethic and – *en grosse* – alien to the capitalist one.

In sum, then, the PMA stands as a prime example of the concurrence between development discourses in Bogotá. It is impossible to untangle, in its guts, the capitalist from the human development discourse: the two discourses are interwoven, one unwinding to reveal the other, and that ultimately revealing the first. And it is precisely from the messiness of this miscegenation that the actual bogotano food security discourse is created.

Summary: Negotiating *development*

In the last three chapters, I have illustrated the specific and particular ways that development discourses in New York City and Bogotá reveal themselves, in alternately subtle and grandstanding ways, in the food security discourses of each city. Specifically I have examined the capitalist and human development discourses, showing – through the fruits of these in the cities' food security discourses – New York City's food policy to be the product of an unmistakable capitalist ethic and Bogotá's to be ambiguous, explicitly insistent on a human rights framing but practically evidencing the legacy of a capitalist discourse that has long been – and in many ways *is* – internationally dominant.

With this, we close our discussion of *development* and move to examine a second factor that profoundly – but, like development, sometimes imperceptibly – shapes food security discourse with extraordinary contextual particularity: *culture*. In the next chapter, I suggest the general and generalized impact of culture upon food security and illustrate how Bogotá's foodways shape the material and discursive realities of food security there.

Chapter 11

Culture and food security: An introduction

The bogotano particularity

*Everything involves a cultural change, everything. The mother of all challenges is cultural, not bureaucratic. [In comparison] the bureaucratic part is easy. Super-easy.
- A Bogotá informant, speaking on the city's efforts to ensure food security*

Abstract

In the next three chapters, the research responds to Research Question 2 by exploring the intercourse between culture and food security and illuminating how the specific cultural landscapes that construe different contexts play a foundational, inescapable and omnipresent role in determining the material and constructed natures of food security within them. Here, I broach the extent of culture's importance for food security and explore several of the cultural particularities that manifest in – and help to create – Bogotá's discourse.

Introduction

Food-as-culture has received no shortage of attention²⁹³, though this has been largely restricted to the more humanistic disciplines – most notably, anthropology – receiving shorter shrift in other branches of the social sciences, and all the more so outside of them. This research, however, has made apparent the profound impact that cultural factors – and indeed a numerous and variegated collection of them – play upon both the material and discursive aspects of food security, determining how people experience food (in)security and how governments (and other society members) respond to it. These factors touch many spheres and include, among others, cultures of politics, business, sexual mores, socialization, violence, dependency, and (most patently) foodways.²⁹⁴ And while *some* of these cultural aspects have received *some* attention from *some* food security researchers, this has been importantly limited in scope, profundity and reflexivity (and, perhaps as a result, also in consequence). Hence the rationale for ‘attending’ to the matter here: if indeed the implications of culture for food security are real and great (as I argue they are), then acknowledging them as such is a crucial early step toward better understanding and responding to them in practice.

In the remainder of this chapter, we proceed as follows. I begin with an introductory presentation discussing the nature of culture itself; describe the manner of its pertinence to food security; and then examine at some length two of the most prominent cultural aspects with great impact upon food security: foodways and dominating food-health narratives. Throughout, I illustrate with specific examples from the NYC and Bogotá cases and integrate opportune insights from several disciplines. Finally I conclude by recognizing a host of further cultural aspects that, though we do not review them at length here, also bear important implications for food security and which I commend for further research.

Culture and food security

In proposing that culture is of fundamental importance to food security, I have to this point failed to address the obvious question: what, precisely, is culture? The reason for this is that

²⁹³ Indeed, this is the very title of Montanari’s (2004) well-known text on the theme.

²⁹⁴ *Foodways* is a term used to describe food, eating, and ‘everything’ that intersects with these. It comprehends the entirety of the social, cultural and economic practices related to food – particularly appreciating issues related to meaning and power – and assumes an intently holistic, transdisciplinary perspective.

there is no agreed, *precise* answer to this question; but there are many propositions, and even an imprecise understanding will suffice for our purposes.²⁹⁵

In his introductory text, Kottak (2009) writes that ‘cultures are traditions and customs, transmitted through learning, that form and guide the beliefs and behaviour of the people exposed to them’ (2); that is, at their most basic, they are ‘systems of human behaviour and thought’ (23). He refers to Tylor’s (1871) early definition of cultures as one still widely accepted and referred to within anthropology; in Tylor’s formulation, ‘culture . . . is that complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, arts, morals, law, custom, and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society’ (1). According to Kottak (2009), the traditions that constitute culture ‘answer such questions as: How should we do things? How do we make sense of the world? How do we tell right from wrong? What is right, and what is wrong?’ (2). Cultures ‘train their individual members to share certain personality traits’ and ‘produce a degree of consistency in behaviour and thought among the people who live in a particular society’ (ibid., 27). He observes several important traits about culture that will pertain here: it is learned; it is symbolic; it is shared; it is integrative; and it can be adaptive or mal-adaptive (ibid., 24-27).

Though such (historically contiguous) definitions of culture are attractive (and popular) for their immediacy, Geertz (1973) challenges them as overly simplistic and says that they ‘obscure more than [they] reveal’ (4). He prefers a *semiotic* construction, depicting cultures as ‘interworked systems of construable signs’ (ibid., 14) that are concerned roughly with ‘the informal logic of actual life’ (ibid., 18); they comprise the ‘context[s] ... within which [behaviours, institutions, and processes] can be intelligibly – that is, thickly – described’ (ibid., 15).²⁹⁶ Of course, he recognizes the importance of attending to *behaviour* as markers of such systems, ‘because it is through behaviour – or, more precisely, social action – that cultural forms find articulation’ (ibid., 18). But Geertz (1973) makes explicit the distinction between his view of culture and earlier and prevailing ones similar to Tylor’s:

I want to propose two ideas. The first of these is that culture is best seen not as complexes of concrete behaviour patterns – customs, usages, traditions, habit clusters – as has, by and large, been the case up to now, but as a set of control mechanisms—plans, recipes, rules, instructions, what computer engineers call programs for the

²⁹⁵ Geertz (1973) points out that even Kluckhohn (1949) arrived at (at least) 11 different definitions of culture in his own landmark introductory chapter on the subject (4)! Beldo (2010) writes an excellent summary regarding the history, evolution and contention of the concept in the discipline of anthropology, and readers interested in a fuller overview are referred to it.

²⁹⁶ On this point, Geertz is a major proponent of the anthropologist’s duty to use ‘thick description’, which values interpretation and meaning-making rather than the simpler, observational reporting of who did what, when, where, and so on (‘thin description’). Again, readers are referred to his works for explication and exemplification (see, i.a., Geertz 1973, 2001); likewise, the entire ‘writing culture’ movement (see, e.g., Clifford and Marcus 1986) advocates similarly and also offers interested readers excellent material for further consideration.

governing of behaviour. The second idea is that man is the animal most desperately dependent upon such extragenetic, outside-the-skin control mechanisms, such cultural programs, for ordering his behaviour (45).

I prefer Geertz's semiotic understanding of culture and – as is clear in the discursive approach I have adopted here – the types of interpretive analysis that it invites (and indeed requires). Regardless of which approach²⁹⁷ to culture one prefers, however, any rough conceptualization of it will suffice for our present study of culture's importance to food security, and indeed any will help us to appreciate the aspects of socially embedded thought, action and meaning-making that define – and help to create – contextual *realities*. In general, then, and with considerable (but, for our purposes, tolerable) vagueness, I refer by *culture* to 'all of this': the totality of social modulation in which people live.²⁹⁸

This *totality* of culture²⁹⁹ is precisely what creates its gross influence upon food systems – which are, after all, cultural systems as much as ecological ones – and makes it necessarily shape how people experience and address food security materially and discursively. Viewed from a perspective of critical realism that insists on addressing questions of material reality, culture helps to define the conditions in which people *really* do or not have access to food, what and how much they *really* (are able to and do) eat, and what kinds of health outcomes they *really* do or do not attain as a result of their food habits.

Viewed from an interpretive perspective that appreciates matters of – also *real* – discursive fact, culture helps to define how people characterized as suffering food insecurity experience it: in other words, it creates the emic understanding of what constitutes individual suffering and flourishing and how one might cope with or celebrate these. This is not as straightforward as it seems. Illich (2010) argues, for example, that, historically, most cultures did not experience hunger (or other hardships, for that matter) as 'needs' in the same sense that the 'developed'

²⁹⁷ And, of course, the several perspectives I have presented here do not represent nearly the totality of options (nor appreciate them with any depth)!

²⁹⁸ These norms, of course, do not simply stamp out human beings with widget-like uniformity. Each person must negotiate his own individuality – that is, employ his agentic nature to determine his particularly lived reality. As Kottak (2009) summarizes:

Cultural rules provide guidance about what to do and how to do it, but people don't always do what the rules say should be done. People use their culture actively and creatively, rather than blindly following its dictates. Humans aren't passive beings who are doomed to follow their cultural traditions like programmed robots (35).

Geertz (1973) agrees, writing that, 'as in any discourse, code does not determine conduct, and what was actually said need not have been' (18).

²⁹⁹ Geertz (1973) remarks upon this *totally* constructive character of culture upon man's existence, as well as the specificity and originality of it:

Without men, no culture, certainly; but equally, and more significantly, without culture, no men. We are, in sum, incomplete or unfinished animals who complete or finish ourselves through culture – and not through culture in general but through highly particular forms of it: Dobuan and Javanese, Hopi and Italian, upper-class and lower-class, academic and commercial (49).

Western vision does.³⁰⁰ Culture also helps to define how people – mostly, people *not* characterized as ‘food insecure’ – collectively construct the experience of the suffering *Other*, identifying the underlying causal *problems*, evaluating well or poorly the *outcomes* both of people’s circumstances and choices and of the society’s response to them, and ideating *solutions* and creating *interventions* for the problems identified. In short, culture defines both the phenomenon of experiencing food security and that of responding to it.

Viewed from the lens of a given culture – that is, *within* the culture – perceiving these discursive constructions and appreciating them *as consequences of an intra-cultural discourse* can seem absurd. Within a particular discourse, alternate constructions of reality *are* absurd (or at least can be so)³⁰¹, since the discourse implies a ‘colonization of reality’ in which ‘certain representations become dominant and shape indelibly the ways in which reality is imagined and acted upon’ (Escobar 1995, 5). But viewed etically, these intra-cultural constructions are salient – and enormously pertinent. Indeed, for example, if ‘hunger’ is not understood to be problematic, is there any reason at all to devise policies and conduct programmes to ‘address’ it? Likewise, if ‘obesity’ is normatively good rather than bad, is it conceivable that the state should act to discourage it?³⁰²

All of this is simply to point to the premise of this chapter: that *culture* is fundamental to food security in every context and in many ways. And while the complexity and totality of culture make it impossible to summarily consider with even proximate fullness here (or, indeed, anywhere else), I attempt to appreciate it at least *more* fully than it generally has been within this domain. To be sure, this research is not entirely isolated in its appreciation of culture in the context of food security, and the theme is being at least rudimentarily treated with greater and greater frequency. Recent attention from the academe and from the major international agencies (including, i.a., FAO) speaks to the theme’s emerging visibility (see, i.a., Damman, Eide, and Kuhnlein 2008; Global Forum on Food Security and Nutrition 2013; Kuhnlein, Erasmus, and

³⁰⁰ Illich (2010) writes that, historically, man did not suffer ‘needs’ but rather endured ‘necessities’ imposed by the phenomena of uncontrollable and sometimes unpredictable worldly reality. The difference between needs and necessities may appear trivial, but, for Illich, it is not at all, rather representing a fundamentally different worldview – one that has changed only recently, and radically, largely by way of the conventional development discourse. Illich writes that ‘in spite of all the forms of anguish and awe, terror and ecstasy, the unknown following death, nothing indicates that the ancestral half of humanity experienced anything like what we take for granted under the designation of need’ (96). Rather it was ‘the historical movement of the West, under the flag of evolution/ progress/growth/development, [that] discovered and then prescribed needs’, and ‘in just one generation, needy man – Homo miserabilis – has become the norm’ (97).

³⁰¹ To again recall the wisdom of Kluckhohn (1949): ‘it would hardly be fish who discovered the existence of water’ (16).

³⁰² Some Saharan cultures actively ‘fatten’ pubescent girls to prepare them for marriage (*gavage*) by secluding and force feeding them – a practice that reflects a totally different understanding of aesthetics and wellbeing than that appreciated by Western medical and social norms (Popenoe 2012).

Spigelski 2009).³⁰³ But these have only *begun* to capture the profundity, scope and holism of cultural influence, and it is necessary to engage the theme much more fully and widely. Indeed, I hope that future food security work will employ a cultural lens to treat these and related themes in important measure.

I continue here, then, with an effort to begin filling the lacuna, examining two cultural themes that are each magnificently salient and impactful. In this chapter and the next, I explore how the *foodways* prevalent in New York City and Bogotá impact the cities' food security schema; and, in Chapter 13, I explore how dominant *food-health narratives*, in particular, produce and enforce specific, culturally embedded modes of food security programming. I also point out, in passing, several of the many further ways that culture crucially intersects with – intervenes upon – food security. In all, it is a very minor treatment of a very major topic; but I hope it is one that might serve to rouse attention to its consequence and foment future study of its substance.

Food culture or *foodways*

We begin by considering a cultural dimension that is glaringly and patently relevant to food security: that of *foodways* or *food culture*: the set of cultural features related to food, cooking, and eating, as well as (according to the specific definition of culture itself that we favour) some combination of the norms, rules, beliefs and meanings associated with them.³⁰⁴

While it would be meaningless to attempt a universal characterization of 'Colombian' or 'bogotano' or 'North American' or 'New York' food cultures (and similarly senseless to claim univocal adherence to them) it is quite meaningful to paint these at least with the broad strokes that generalization permits. Indeed, this is what as the opening definitions of culture invite and encourage us to do, and how countless scholars of food culture have thus far construed nationally and subnationally dominant practices (e.g., Montanari 2010; Trubek 2008; Brittin 2011). Anthropologists continually emphasize the need to make sense of – and to draw connections between – particularities or specificities on one hand and generalities or

³⁰³ This newfound attention derives in large part, it appears, in the wake of recently heightened sensitivity to the rights and struggles of indigenous peoples, as seen in formalized fashion, e.g., in the UN Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous People (2007).

³⁰⁴ To be sure, some scholars (e.g., Anderson 2005) would include under the label of foodways also the peripheral and circumstantial factors that I have, for the moment, segregated as distinct cultural themes (such as, e.g., sexual and organizational mores), at least with regard to the points at which these intersect with more immediate food practices. While I agree in principle with a broader definition of foodways that appreciates the connections between food culture and other aspects of culture, for the immediate purpose of explicating the relationships between culture and food security, I (temporarily) assume a more constrained definition.

universalities on the other³⁰⁵, and that is my intent here in both identifying prevailing national and municipal food cultures and acknowledging the possibilities for deviation from them.

Let us consider the example of street food.³⁰⁶ Offered in abundance and with great diversity in both NYC and Bogotá, the distinct *cultural* dominions of the cities are substantially (though not totally) differentiated by the distinct offerings most prominently served, offerings that express the (different) generalized food culture of each city. Hence freshly pressed fruit juices and *arepas*³⁰⁷ are ubiquitously available street foods in Bogotá while pretzels and hot dogs are most easily located in NYC stands. Of course there are hot dogs to be found in Bogotá and *arepas* to be found in New York, but no one would endeavour to confuse these for prevailing *cultural norms*. In both places, there are also McDonald's and other mass fast food outlets to be easily found – and perhaps this *is* to be taken, at this date, as a(nother, relatively new) cultural norm.

At the same time, of course, it is important to acknowledge the extraordinary diversity of food cultures within each of these cities – particularly strong in light of the numerous migrants resident in each one – and the (*normalized*, in a sense) deviation from norm implied by it. This is a point that should not be overlooked in the context of food security, as in many cases it is precisely such diversity, and the dangers or possibilities of deviating from the broad cultural norm that it implies, which creates situations of particular peril and particular promise for individual wellbeing. Indeed, it is a point that is especially salient in light of perspectives on development and justice that value and prioritize the real experiences of *individuals* and attend in a special way to the sufferings (and thrivings) of the most vulnerable people – precisely those whose circumstance often *requires* departure from macro cultural norms. Regardless, recalling the maxim of attending to both particularity and generality, I attempt to illustrate here – again, with only broad strokes possible and pertinent disclaimers pending – how cultural norms impact the materiality and discourse of food (in)security and programming in the two case study cities.

In both cities, the impact of foodways is most visible in relation to the second modality of food insecurity (that related to over-consumption, mal-consumption, obesity, lifestyle disease, and so

³⁰⁵ See, e.g., the excellent discussion by Geertz (2001). As Geertz contends, neither 'enormous ideas nor the abandonment of synthesizing notions altogether' can properly address the complexities of modern identity. 'What we need', he says, 'are ways of thinking that are responsive to particularities, to individualities, oddities, discontinuities, contrasts, and singularities, responsive to a plurality of ways of belonging and being, and that yet can draw from them... a sense of connectedness' (224). In other words, 'the basic problem of anthropology ... is to make the particular available through the categories of the universal' (Jeganathan 2001, 65).

³⁰⁶ For a visual foray into the street food cultures of New York City and Bogotá, see Appendix B.

³⁰⁷ The *arepa* can take many different forms and varies especially by region; its origins are also the subject of fierce place-of-pride debate among several South American countries. Suffice it here, then, to say that it is, quite roughly, a plain or enriched flat cornmeal-based and griddle-cooked 'bread'; it is often served with accompaniments such as eggs, cheese, or meat.

on), and, to the extent that culture is acknowledged at all, it is most often treated in this regard. To draw the most general of pictures in this light, I appeal to the most egregiously elemental of the overworked but nonetheless pertinent tropes: that Bogotá's food culture is notable for its heavy reliance on (often refined) starches, fried foods, and sugar and its minimal inclusion of vegetables; and that New York's is notable for its intent praxis of eating outside the home and dependence on fast food and processed food. These mores – caricatures, to be sure, but ones that depict real correlates – are generally (but not necessarily) considered to be pejorative to dietary nutritional quality³⁰⁸ and often blamed for portending the new food insecurity's second modality in both cities.

This does not imply, however, that foodways are *irrelevant* in relation to the first modality of food insecurity. In fact, quite the opposite; though the immediacy of hunger often makes it easy to overlook the incising cultural factors that characterize it, *these exist* and merit treatment. Indeed many of the cultural matters that are readily visible (and pertinent) in the second modality have analogues – often less visible – in the first. For example, where poor dietary diversity often implies the overconsumption of poorly nourishing foods – e.g., large quantities of soda – with negative, visible, and well-attended consequences in the second modality, similarly poor dietary diversity often implies micronutrient deficiency and incomplete physical and cognitive development in the first modality. Hence, while public discussion emphasizes the impact of foodways upon the second modality of food insecurity, this reflects the greater *visibility* of the latter rather than the greater importance of it. As Shaw (2007) wrote, 'it would be grotesquely perverse if attention to world hunger ... were to be diverted by a focus on the obesity epidemic. Both crises must be overcome' (412).

This, then, give us an outline for viewing the particular intercourse between culture and food security in each city. We begin here with Bogotá.

The bogotano particularity

Prevailing bogotano dietary customs are evident in the confluence of data from national statistics, reports from informants, and observations I made in Bogotá during stays in homes and visits to markets, popular restaurants, stores and *comedores*. While Colombian foodways do vary considerably according to region, class, and ethnicity (and, of course, individual), there are many praxes that can be reasonably generalized as national, and it is fair to illustrate the bogotano case with national data as well as locally specific ones. At the same time, it is vital to

³⁰⁸ As we enter these cultural explorations, it is worth again insisting that the demarcation of nutritional quality is itself an interpretive, constructive exercise rather than a positive one. See Chapter 3.

recall that Bogotá is very much a city of migrants (from other regions of Colombia *and* from nearby rural areas), and hence diverse regional practices *are* often (now) bogotano ones, as well.

Several quantitative data from government-conducted studies³⁰⁹ (attempt to) measure current consumption levels and substantially support the testimony of informants and my own impressions. A report by the national health service (ICBF 2011) – likely the most reliable of the sources – finds, for example, that only 28.1% of Colombians consume vegetables daily³¹⁰; notably, this figure is lower than that pertaining to daily candy consumption (36.6%) (14). A local study undertaken in the Bogotá locality of Sumapaz (Equipo de Trabajo Agrored Sumapaz 2005) showed similar consumption patterns there. For example, 74% of households consumed vegetables once or twice per week and only 26% consumed vegetables daily (141).

Two further reports suggest what Colombian and bogotano families *do* habitually eat, or might reasonably expect to eat, by way of their (different) stipulations of the ‘food baskets’ that a family would require in order to practice a minimally acceptable diet. The first (PMASAB) describes the emergency food basket (for a family of four) envisioned and provided for by the DPAE³¹¹. In this basket, the foodstuff allocated the greatest monetary value is powdered whole milk (800 grams), and the second is frying oil (1 litre). The products given in greatest quantity are rice and *panela*³¹² (two kilograms each); other important high-quantity inclusions include salt (1 kg) and chocolate (500 grams), both notable in light of the ‘emergency’ character of the basket. There are no vegetables or fruits listed.³¹³

The second report was produced by the SDDE (2011) as a baseline study for the creation of the Bogotá Food Supply Observatory (the *Observatorio de Abastecimiento ‘Alimenta Bogotá’*).³¹⁴ It detailed a list of the ‘principle products consumed by low-income people’, showing what people with few economic resources to ration actually eat (17). Here, there is a slightly but not altogether different picture. The top twenty items of consumption are, in order: rice, oil, eggs,

³⁰⁹ These studies exist for several reasons, including for the straightforward one of securing health-related baseline and trend-indicative data; more immediately, they support efforts to intervene in supply chain economics and to stipulate emergency rations.

³¹⁰ Compare this figure, for example, with the finding in NYC that 20-25% of residents who live in certain of *its* underserved neighbourhoods do *not* consume vegetables daily (Brannen 2010, 52) – a finding that was there met with great distress.

³¹¹ The *Dirección de Prevención y Atención de Emergencias*, the Office of Emergency Prevention and Attention

³¹² *Panela* is boiled, evaporated and solidified whole *cane sugar*. Colombia is the largest producer and consumer of *panela* in the world, and the product plays an important role in Colombian foodways.

³¹³ Of course, the logistical complexities involved in providing fresh foods in emergency contexts may be considerably greater than those of providing powdered milk. Still, the prioritization of needs and resources here is notable.

³¹⁴ The study relied on data from the national statistical service (the *Departamento Administrativa Nacional de Estadística*, DANE), but the SDDE conducted its own calculations to produce the pertinent information.

tomatoes, sugar, pasta, chicken, onions, *panela*, bread, plantains, chocolate, milk, carrots, meat, coffee, beans, bananas, and blackberries. Again, then, relatively nutrient-poor foods dominate, but there *is* some notable dietary diversity and the inclusion of several fruits and vegetables. That these fall late in the list, however, and are accompanied by high-ranking inclusions of sugar, *panela*, and chocolate, suggests a diet that is vulnerable to nutritional and gastronomic poverty.

To more concretely illustrate some of the foodways that these data – and, even more so, the informants’ insights that we consider momentarily – are meant to describe, we might turn to several prominent examples of the Colombian gastronomy. The *bandeja paisa*³¹⁵ – the *paisa*³¹⁶ *platter* – for example, is the semi-official national dish³¹⁷ and recognizably characteristic of Medellín. It composes, on a (very) large platter – hence its name – beans (cooked with pork), rice, ground beef, *chicharrones*³¹⁸, a fried egg, fried plantains, chorizo, black sausage, *hogao* sauce³¹⁹, an *arepa*, tomato slices, and avocado, and is usually served accompanied by *mazamorra*³²⁰ with milk and *panela*.³²¹ On a similarly characteristic but much more common plan is the practice of consuming the daily *menú*, a ‘complete’ lunch that accords clearly codified cultural norms and can be taken at any of countless restaurants or market stalls; it can range in price from expensive to downright cheap, and some bogotanos consume a *menú* daily. It typically consists of soup³²²; meat; rice; beans, fried plantains; dessert; and sugared fruit juice, all served in abundance.

Another foodway of note in Colombia is that of street food – notably, a practice often considered by the development community to be favourable to food security, particularly in low- and middle-income countries (see, e.g., Simon 2007). In Bogotá, street food is very readily available and often very affordable. However, the health-promoting potential of the practice seems, in the bogotano case, suspect: while such things as tropical fruits are available, these are overwhelmed by ‘traditional’ offerings that offer little improvement upon either industrialized

³¹⁵ See an example of the *bandeja paisa* in Appendix B.

³¹⁶ *Paisa* refers to a region in the northwest of Colombia – its largest city is Medellín – and the people who live in it.

³¹⁷ The Colombian tourism industry has adopted it de facto as such.

³¹⁸ Fried pork rinds

³¹⁹ *Hogao* sauce is made of onions, peppers, tomatoes, garlic, salt and pepper. It is commonly used in Colombian cuisine and, while often made in home kitchens, it can also be bought commercially.

³²⁰ A fermented corn drink

³²¹ A variant of the *bandeja paisa* known as the Seven Meats Platter adds to this grilled beef, grilled pork, and fried pig’s liver.

³²² In understanding the dimension of the *menú*, it is important to note here that Colombian soups are typically hearty affairs, and many would be considered complete or near-complete meals in other cultures. Examples are innumerable and can include all varieties of legumes, grains, tubers and vegetables. *Sancocho*, for example, is a hearty soup typical of Bogotá that contains, in general, chicken, plantains, potatoes, yucca, corn on the cob, and perhaps other vegetables (according to taste and availability); it is often served with the addition of cream and accompanied by rice.

alternatives³²³ or fast food competitors' practices at promoting good food-related nutrition. What's more, the industrial and fast food counterparts are now as common in Bogotá and in other Colombian cities as – and perhaps even more imaginarily popular – than traditional vendors, so much so that 'street food' and 'fast food' approach synonymity.

From a perspective of food security that appreciates two modalities rather than one – that is, recognizing the health-promoting and -imperilling potentials of food culture – the monotonous, narrowly scoped character of prevailing bogotano foodways coupled with a thriving but infrequently nutritive street food culture poses important barriers. And while bettering dietary diversity (and whatever 'wellbeing' it might imply) is challenging enough in the context of native bogotano food culture, it is further exacerbated by the prevailing – even less diverse – foodways practiced among many of the city's migrants. As one informant, from the north of Colombia but resident in Bogotá for many years, proclaimed during an interview: 'we from the [Caribbean] Coast aren't accustomed to eating vegetables!'. Indeed, while native bogotanos do not, on average, consume *many* vegetables, migrants from the north – who are many in the city – habitually consume even fewer.³²⁴

Numerous informants confirmed the problematic nature of conventional Colombian foodways (for achieving good health, in any case) and the challenges this imposed upon the food security effort. In particular, informants spoke about the difficulty of *changing* these deeply ingrained practices, a task that, notably, *is* an objective of Bogotá's food security programming. Though projects such as the *comedores comunitarios* and school canteens create opportunities to introduce greater dietary diversity and 'educate' people toward more 'healthful' practices, practitioners find this proposal challenging from many perspectives: people are not inclined to deviate from their learned practices; strict regulations make it impossible (or at least formally unadvisable) for *comedor* workers to deviate from carefully specified meal formulations; and – importantly – some practitioners identify a real violation of rights, dignity and personality in forcing (other) people to conform to unpreferred foodways.

³²³ This also poses an interesting dialectical and practical challenge to theorists and activists who predominantly associate 'traditional' with 'healthy' (or health-promoting) and promote traditional practices specifically as health-promoting food security measures.

³²⁴ Several other informants made similar remarks – often offhand, stating a *fact* so obvious to them that it really did not need stating at all – and my own experience on the northern coast confirmed the generally sparse consumption of vegetables there. During my two weeks in the region, I scoured dozens of food shops and found little more in the way of vegetables than tomatoes (which I am considering as 'cultural' vegetables even if they are in botanical fact fruits), onions, and cucumbers, from which it was possible to compose a manner of salad. At meals prepared by others and at restaurants and food stalls, I saw that it was entirely possible – and indeed more probable than not – to compose entire meals without any vegetables at all, or with, for example, only a slice of tomato used as a plate-edge garnish.

A master's student who conducted the monitoring and evaluation project at one *comedor* reported:

It's a really slow and definitely cultural [process to persuade people to eat more 'healthfully'] because most people are used to eating, for example, potatoes, plantains, fried plantains ... [For example,] during one tasting class, I asked [the people attending], "Water or juice?" "No. [Neither.]", they said. 'Soda'.

Another master's student, who executed the monitoring and evaluation project at another canteen, said similarly:

The people just won't eat vegetables. [You think it is because they are expensive] so you say, "Fine. Buy those that are in season, they're cheap". [And the people reply] "No, it's that they don't fill me up ... I prefer to eat a nice plate of rice with potatoes, that fills me up better".

Two *comedor* workers described precisely this same difficulty, and the dilemma it created for them from perspectives of humanity, ethics and even efficacy:

[*Comedor Supervisor 1*] One thing we see is kids who just are not accustomed to eating vegetables. Here we try to "teach" them, and we would start by serving them a little bit, one spoonful, and then the next day maybe two spoonfuls ... until you arrive at the full portion, you see? And playing these games and everything else ... [And finally] they get accustomed.

[*Comedor Supervisor 2*] It's difficult ... But really you have to say to these people [that they must take and eat the full portion of vegetables], and it hurts you on the inside, but ... there are the regulations. And then there's the kid who throws away food. And one time the *comedor* was dangling by a thread because [the assessors] would come and see the quantity of food [thrown away]...

[*Comedor Supervisor 1*] The waste of food! Everybody was throwing it [the vegetables that were served] away!

[*Comedor Supervisor 2*] Everybody was throwing it away! Especially when a new kid would start up. For example, the soups. Spinach soup, *uyama* soup. People who come from the coast have a very low consumption of vegetables and soups Or from the Pacific Coast ... Or other places where they don't get a lot of vegetables. And it's really difficult... to ... get them accustomed [to eating vegetables]. But anyway, we understood it was a "process" [of getting them accustomed]. But then they [the assessors] do the assessment and they say, "You have to serve them 250 grams of vegetables!" [And we would say] "No, we can't, because the child just won't do it, he's going to throw it away". Why don't we just give him less while he gets accustomed to it? And that is one of the big challenges we are managing, eating habits.

The same two workers later discussed the same problem in terms of the tension it posed for them between encouraging people to be more healthful and respecting the values of individual dignity, freedom, and personality inherent in the notion of a right to food that their *comedor* meant to satisfy:

[Comedor Supervisor 1] That's the Achilles heel of the [comedores] project, that it's a project standardized for a "normal" population. Standardized very specifically for a person who can [and wants to] "eat everything".

[Comedor Supervisor 2] Everything.

[Comedor Supervisor 1] And who *likes* to eat everything. And, well, you know: the question of [personal] taste is pretty complicated!³²⁵ Working with food and diet is pretty complicated! Because everything is so subjective and so personal, so individual, what I like and what I don't like, what I learned to eat, what I didn't learn to eat. And this project [the comedores] doesn't think about all that. It doesn't think about a lot of things ... Because it's massive, massive. Here we have 280 people. In the other comedor [in the neighbourhood], 300. In the other one, 250. You see? So it's very difficult to be able to prepare things and say things like, "What do you like? What do you want eat?" You see? And that has everything to do with dignity, right? Individual dignity. You see?

[Comedor Supervisor 2] Above all it's vegetables that gives us the most difficulty. Because, say, most people will eat the soups. 100% of them will eat the rice, the potatoes. Same for the proteins [meats]. But with vegetables – no – that's complicated. We've proposed a salad bar ... A salad bar, like when you go to a restaurant and you choose what you want, say [a salad] with tuna, which you like and which appeals to you and you're going to eat it all up. So let's say there are 250 people who come for lunch. We could put out 250 salads, [we could offer] say 100 of Olivier salad, for example, another 50 with cold beets or something. And the individual [would have] the possibility to choose, so we [could] accommodate a little better his tastes and also reclaim a little bit his right to choose freely. It's that ... that *freedom* ... For example, for me personally, I just cannot do innards. I just cannot do liver. And here [one day] there was a plate [with liver ...]! And I had to eat it. And I was saying, "I can't do it. I can't do it". I don't know. It's something that I just can't get over, I just cannot eat it. So how can I force a kid to eat it, or any person, you know? [But] I can't choose what to give them. I don't – I don't have the authority for that, you see? It's complicated. But I have to do it, because I don't have a choice. I don't have choice. Because whoever comes here, he comes here to eat and he has to eat it all.³²⁶ We don't get to choose what we want to eat. So if you don't like it, [too bad,] you have to eat it all [anyways]. That's one of the challenges, isn't it? It's one of the biggest challenges we have, when we talk about rights. And you have the right to food and you are in need, and you come here to eat, but [even] if you don't like it, you have to eat it. You're obligated to eat stuff you don't like.

[Comedor Supervisor 1] In other words, we are [formally] satisfying your right to food, ... but is it really the "right" that corresponds to you [as an individual with individually defined specificities]?

[Comedor Supervisor 2] Or that answers to your habits, your customs, your tastes ...?

[Comedor Supervisor 1] Exactly, that's what I'm talking about.

³²⁵ To recall the Latin maxim, *De gustibus non est disputandum!*

³²⁶ This is indeed a formal rule: those who attend the comedores are required to take – and eat – the full portions as served. Comedor workers make considerable efforts to 'enforce the rule', but – 'at the end of the day' – it is a standard that could be truly enforced only with great difficulty (and, in the eyes of these comedor workers, great inhumanity).

The richness of this exchange illustrates many aspects of the Bogotá food security context – including, of course, the omnipresence of a holistic right to food notion – and underlines how all of these, at the end of the day, intersect with – *difficult* – questions of *culture*.

Other informants likewise testified to the challenges posed to food security imposed by prevailing foodways by expanding in a gastronomic vein. One informant described the nation's alimentary tradition by proclaiming that 'we Colombians are barbarians!' Upon elaboration, it became clear that in this characterization he referred en grosse to the typical exaggeration of starches and fried foods, the absence of vegetables, the generalized lack of dietary diversity – despite, he pointed out, the near-ideal agronomic possibilities offered by the country's spectacularly diverse geography – the tendency to eat in extremely large quantity (when *possible*, of course) and very quickly, and the general lack of culinary-gastronomic 'sophistication'.³²⁷

Expanding upon the theme, he chose a curiously symbolic comparison to continue: 'we need to become like the Italians, like Italian grandmothers', he said. Asked again to elaborate, he explained that Italian grandmothers know how to make use of everything available– herbs in the garden, wild greens they find by the roadside, day-old bread, and so on – and transform it into nutritious, healthful, beautiful and exquisite meals (the last of these as important, in his view, as the first). Colombians, on the other hand, he explained, had no such skills, *nor even volition*, and were generally quite satisfied to eat large quantities of unadorned rice, beans, and plantains. He spoke about this as a question of gastronomic deficiency:

We have to start thinking about *gastronomy* [as it relates to solving the food security problem]. A gastronomy that knows how to combine things and balance things, and that knows a fact that's so true, it's worth all the redundancy [of how often it gets repeated], and that is that a good diet and good nutrition depend simply on a *balanced* way of eating that doesn't put the emphasis on carbohydrates or on proteins [or on anything else] but [rather] knows how to combine all of these things well. So it seems to me like we have to bring in gastronomy so that people 'know' about these things, because if they don't 'know' them well, well then [of course] people aren't going to eat [well].

Several more informants spoke about the preponderance of large quantities - and indeed, the large quantities that I saw served and eaten both in and outside of homes left an impression upon me as well.³²⁸ Some people framed the tendency to eat in large quantities as exacerbated by the meals provided in *comedores* – meals designed to rectify what was until very recently a food security problem that manifested mostly as undernutrition. One exchange addressing this point

³²⁷ Sophistication of cuisine is a thorny discussion; at present I leave the theme unpursued and include this comment only as an observation pronounced by the informant.

³²⁸ To use the *bandeja paisa* as an example in this matter is not fair; it is excessive and exceptional not only in the eyes of outsiders but also in the eyes of Colombians. However, the *degree* of its excess is, perhaps, at least *suggestive* of the large-whenever-possible norm that characterizes the portions served in *regular* meals.

took place between a university professor of nutrition who led the monitoring and evaluation project at several *comedores*, and one of her master's students, who had executed the project at one *comedor*:

[*Master's Student*] Another thing that was obvious in the *comedor* was that the amounts provided are pretty huge. There's the soup, then there's the *seco*³²⁹, and in the *seco* there are the 'two starches'³³⁰, there's the vegetable, there's the meat. Then there's the fruit. And there's the juice. And then, at the *comedor* where I was, they also served a *salpicón*³³¹. So it's a pretty big lunch. And that also promotes the overweight and obesity [that we are seeing].

[*Professor*] That's an interesting point. When Bogotá Sin Hambre started up, already a good few years ago now, it was targeted to an underweight population, at risk of undernutrition because they just didn't have ... Let's say, they just didn't have the economic possibility to buy food, right? What happened? Well, ... the resulting program was designed to provide a high-calorie lunch, just like [the student] was describing. A lunch to "fatten people up". Yes, basically, [that's it]: it's an *almuerzo para engordar*. But now five years have passed and what we see is that the menus have remained exactly the same. And it's the same menu that everyone has to eat. And people have started to get fat ...

[*Master's Student*] And then you also have to consider that the child population above all is the centre of attention [of the food security effort]. So they don't have access *only* to the community *comedor* but also to the school meals, right? So sometimes it happens that they are eating at the *comedor comunitario* a meal that provides about 30/35/40% [of their daily caloric needs], and then on top of this, they have the school meal also providing another certain percentage, right?³³²

³²⁹ The *seco* is the 'dry' main dish that follows the soup.

³³⁰ Much like the British tradition of 'meat and two veg' anchors the construction of a proper meal, the Colombian one requires the presence of 'the two starches', rice and beans (generally; and served separately and in abundance).

³³¹ A typical fruit cocktail

³³² Master's students, working under a professor of nutrition expert in the matter, are involved through the Universidad Javeriana in a multi-year project that conducts the monitoring and evaluation of the *comedores* in one Bogotá locality. I attended a forum at which students presented findings from each of the *comedor* evaluations. The importance of such student-conducted work is more than one might recognize at face value: as there are limited government-executed evaluation mechanisms applied to the *comedor* system, partnerships like this one provide some of the most complete, current and pertinent data regarding the food security status, alimentary habits, and 'outcomes' attained among *comedor* attendees. For example, one very pertinent finding that the students presented, and which pertained in *each* of the *comedores* monitored, was that, among the *comedor* participants, the incidence of obesity and overweight considerably outpaced the incidence of underweight (with very few people falling into the 'normal weight' range). This was especially relevant in light of the contemporaneity and changing nature of the food security challenge: it confirmed, in at least some subset of population, the importance of the new food insecurity's second modality. This poses an interesting challenge related to *comedor* meal design, which (as we see in this exchange) remains one based on providing high energy content – correctly so, if it is destined for *undernourished* people – and it provides at least some substantiation for the claim of a Colombian foodway that values high-quantity consumption whenever this is possible. At the end of their presentations, I had the chance to ask the students, professors and evaluators several questions, and the content matter of this exchange resulted from my questions related to food culture. Other members of the evaluation project, including two government representatives, largely reiterated the sentiments expressed here by the students.

Another informant, a government worker who oversaw the *comedor* efforts in her district, similarly corroborated the preference for large quantities and attributed this to a more fundamental question of *culture*:

They still say they are hungry, [even with] the [full] portion of food [that we serve them], and with "the nutritiousness" [of that food]. It's that, at the end of the day, Latin Americans in general – Colombia and Latin America – we are cultures of the carbohydrate. Of eating lots and lots of starches – *arepa*, anything in that vein, rice, soup³³³, *sancochos*. The bogotano and the Colombian like to eat a lot! Right? [Colleague confirms with conviction.] The more we serve them, the more they want. And they almost won't talk to you during the meal [because they are so intent upon eating, eating a lot, and eating it fast]. That's something really strong, and really cultural.

Collectively and tendentially, then, 'traditional' foodways pose challenges both for the food security of bogotanos – both native and migrant – and for the *comedores comunitarios* and other programming efforts that attempt to mould these practices into more health-promoting shape. At the same time, however, while very many people spoke to me about traditional foodways in this negative light, several also spoke to me about more virtuous aspects of Colombian food tradition – a tradition that, in their view, had by and large been *lost*, and whose recovery, they suggested, would be helpful in the quest to assure food security.³³⁴ The precise character of this 'lost tradition', the conditions and timing that governed its loss, and the possibilities and means that people envisioned for 'recovering' it generally remained, however, an imprecise and variable story.

In general and most characteristically, these more virtuous traditional foodways were associated with (often vague and generally romantic) notions of pre-Colombian indigenous culture prior to its 'contamination' by the forces of 'Westernization'. For example, one informant spoke about how contemporary Western culture was 'against' Mother Nature; she associated her urban garden specifically with an attempt to 'recover' not only virtuous, traditional foodways *per se* but also the greater cosmology to which they pertained and which they represented. The protagonists of her urban garden had designed the to observe indigenous cosmology and had intentionally inserted many 'native' plants, even if in representational numbers.

This informant pointed to the grand philosophical significance carried in the garden:

I think we have a problem in our society, that we have constructed a culture "against" nature ... and we really have to return to our roots, to unite ourselves to our common origins and, well, to understand that we are a part of "everything". You know? To think about the existence and the value of a little animal, of the plants. In other words, to join ourselves to our common origins, our common foundations. That's crucial, isn't it? Consciously or unconsciously. Human beings, plants, animals. The indigenous: they

³³³ Again, Colombian soups are generally hearty, starch-based affairs.

³³⁴ This positive light is also the perspective affirmed by the numerous international campaigns and movements to 'recover tradition' in the name of food security (Global Forum on Food Security and Nutrition 2013).

have a deep knowledge of the Plant Kingdom, the Animal Kingdom, the ecosystems. You see? It's what's called *ethnobotany*. It's about plants united to a culture.

For this informant, then, the plants and food in her garden weighed far more in a symbolically nourishing capacity than a materially productive one.

Informants who spoke in a similar light often did so specifically in terms of 'colonialism', by which they referred inclusively to the different foreign powers that have imposed specific terms of governance, economic structure, and culture³³⁵ – *hegemonically* – upon the Colombian reality. Identified colonists range from Spanish settlers in the Age of Discovery³³⁶ to the more recent North American and European states and corporations that have so dramatically shaped Colombia's current economic and cultural landscape.

In particular, informants counted the pejoration of Colombia's agricultural and gastronomic heritage as colonial legacies – again, traceable to numerous and diverse imposing powers – naming as particular ruins the widespread adoption of starch monocultures and the introduction of heavily refined, processed and fast foods. Several quintessential exemplars of these legacies are illustrated in Appendix B: supermarket-sold, industrially processed white bread is now a 'norm'; sugar is used in very high quantity; commercial alcohol is widely consumed and easily available; and international and local fast food purveyors are ubiquitous. A walk down any of Bogotá's streets – including those in *barrios informales* – will verify the pervasiveness of the processed, snack, fast, and 'junk' foods that their critics position specifically as manifestations of the original and latter-day colonizations.³³⁷

While the most common target of anticolonial antipathy is the United States (for the continuing and strong economic and cultural powers that it exercises and is seen to exercise in Colombia) – and, in a related antagonism, the larger Western neoliberal order that the United States is seen to represent – some informants are inclined to locate the decline of traditional Colombian

³³⁵ In this last sense, informants who described the progressive Westernization of Colombian culture as 'cultural colonialism' adhered closely to the similar conceptualization and language of *cultural imperialism* used in postcolonial scholarship (see, e.g., Said 1993).

³³⁶ In concert with the perspective of this work, we would better call this the Age of *European* Discovery.

³³⁷ The Colombian informants are not isolated either in their charge of an incurred economic-cultural 'colonialism' that has changed Colombian foodways or the negative effects of it; Hellin and Higman (2003), for example, use similar terms in characterizing a 'culinary colonialism that continues to a large extent today' (7). There has been considerable attention in recent years to the 'colonising' nature of the 'Western Diet' in the context of globalization: with its conveyance from rich, Western countries to developing and emerging ones, the health consequences for its (very many) adopters have been severe (Popkin 2001; Popkin, Adair, and Ng 2012). Precisely where the incursions of the 'Western Diet' have been greatest, so too have been the negative health consequences associated with it; in the ranking of countries by obesity prevalence, the top ten list is composed entirely of nations in the Pacific and Middle East (Martinez 2015) (which have recently and radically transitioned from traditional to Western diets). Likewise, Mexico has become (by a very large margin) the world leader in per capita Coca Cola consumption (Coca Cola 2012); it has also – not incidentally, according to critics – surpassed the United States in obesity prevalence (FAO 2013).

foodways in origins that well pre-date the contemporary hegemony of the villainized ‘Western diet’, charging this instead to the very arrival of the Spanish half a *millennium* ago. Her telling expresses also the romantic and imprecise notions of indigeneity that traditionalists sometimes invoke:

When did we start to lose the habit of eating these native foods [such as quinoa]? ... Well, we’re talking about 500 years ago already. When Spain came in search of El Dorado ... Do you know why? Do you know what quinoa means? It’s a *muiscas* word. The *muiscas* were an indigenous group. So what does quinoa mean? “Tears of the sun”. These “tears of the sun” were the famous “El Dorado” of our indigenous people. But for the Spanish, El Dorado was gold, riches. For many of our cultures, the greatest treasure of all was food. For other cultures it is money. We could say it like that... If you go to the Museum of Gold [here in Bogotá], you’ll see that when a *cacique*³³⁸ would die, the first thing they buried at his side was food. And when the Spanish arrived and they found that what they had hoped were treasures weren’t treasures [as *they* conceived of treasures] but rather food, then they began to restrict those foods³³⁹ ... In countries where there is still a large indigenous population – Peru, Bolivia – you [still] find [people eating] quinoa, amaranth. But here you just don’t find those things anymore.

In an important way, then, the discussion of traditional Colombian foodways and the food security potential they suggest transcends the immediate and gives rise to more timeless, and more equivocal, questions. What is it to speak of *tradition*? Among other problematic questions: whose ‘tradition’ ought we consider, precisely? Moreover, is there necessarily merit in ‘recovering’ a ‘tradition’ that has been ‘lost’? Why? And under which circumstances? Does ‘traditional’ necessarily imply ‘virtuous’ (as is so often presupposed)? Here I do little more than raise the existence of these questions and note their ultimate pertinence to matters of food security. While this study is not positioned to address them further, it is worth (at least) observing the liveliness of these questions in Bogotá and the dynamics, constraints and opportunities that they lend to the contemporary food security project.

In brief summary and wide strokes, it seems valid to suggest that the (grossly generalized) bogotano food culture carries a certain, specifically shaped vulnerability in which prevailing foodways tend to encourage food security in both of its actual modalities. On the one hand, the model’s generalized lack of dietary diversity can, in the extreme, create micronutrient deficiencies (and its sequelae). On the other hand, the prevalence of refined, processed and fast foods; the gastronomic importance of particular high-energy foods (such as, i.a., *panela*); and the volitional tendency toward high-quantity consumption all create ample possibilities for an excessive, low-quality diet and the health problems to which this can lead.

³³⁸ An indigenous chief

³³⁹ It is correct that the Spanish colonists suppressed quinoa production (and imposed wheat production); generally this is attributed to the association of quinoa with indigenous ceremony and identity, though the specific nature of the suppression is contested.

Moreover, the firm foothold of the prevailing foodways poses challenges to food security programming – as one *comedor* worker reported, ‘you give them an apple, and they throw it across the room’ – and efforts to advance health-promoting foodways often fall on deaf ears. Furthermore, since food security efforts are devised and deployed mostly by local actors – that is, people for whom many of these same foodways are endemic – the extant cultural norms also shape, to an important degree, the discourse space – *what is ‘possible to think’* – as they work to ideate interventions and identify and define solutions to problems. At the same time, vaguely defined but extant enthusiasm for traditional foodways suggests that opportunities exist for the fortuitous celebration of culturally embedded gastronomic customs – which might be constructed in such a way as to be health-promoting as well as culturally affirming – in the context of the food security effort.

Summary: Culturally particular food securities, Part I

This chapter has proposed that contextually particular food cultures create – or contribute to creating – the construction of likewise contextually particular food security discourses. For example, in Bogotá, features of normal meal construction – including, as presented here, the habitually minimal inclusion of vegetables – gives specific shape to the food insecurity phenomena and problematizes programming efforts that propose discordant models. At the same time, a perceptibly complicated – and again culturally specific – relationship between so-labelled ‘traditional’ and ‘colonial’ foodways also imposes particular challenges for the creation of contemporarily pertinent food security efforts.

With this sketch depicting several aspects of ‘the bogotano particularity’ – how elements of Bogotá’s food culture shape its food security discourse – in mind, we turn now to examine the same phenomenon in New York City, where it is possible to view both curious analogues to and striking differences from the bogotano case.

Chapter 12

A culture of anomies

The New York particularity

There is a solitude that resembles no other. That of the man who publicly prepares his meal, on a little wall, on the hood of a car, balanced on a railing, alone. It's a sight you see everywhere, here, and it's the saddest thing in the world, sadder than the poverty; sadder than the beggar is the man who eats alone in public. Nothing is more contradictory to the laws of Man and Animal, because the beasts at least always have the dignity to share or to compete for their food. He who eats alone is already dead.

- Baudrillard (1986, 34-35)

Abstract

In this chapter, the research continues to address Research Question 2 by examining a selection of the particularities that characterize New York City's food culture – which, contrary to the claims of some critics, is not only extant but verily definitive, at least in terms of food security. In a much more pronounced way than Bogotá's, New York's dominant foodways are recognized formally in the government's food policies, and the express treatments given to cultural features in the city's food security programming are ones that reinforce also the tight connections between culture and the development discourse.

New York City and the obstinacy of anomie

In NYC, as in Bogotá, it is clear that culture plays a fundamental role in determining the food security context, materially and discursively. NYC shares with Bogotá a similar and similarly central cultural challenge: a prevailing food culture that largely discourages healthful outcomes. Even many of the illustrations offered by bogotano informants have stunningly direct analogues in New York: for example, the difficulty of getting children in *comedores* to eat foods – such as vegetables – that have been included in meals precisely because they are understood (*by planners*) to be health-promoting.

Some critics charge that food culture in NYC is notable more for its absence than for anything else: the city exposes high rates (and quantities) of fast food consumption, low levels of cooking skills (however this might be measured), and (observers say) little appreciation of or attention to food preparation *en grosse*.³⁴⁰ Such a characterization is of course inaccurate in its very postulation: inasmuch as people eat, there *is* a food culture; perhaps it is, for example, a (literally) ‘McDonaldized’ eating culture (see Ritzer 2011), or a culture of *not* cooking in homes, but it *is* a food culture nonetheless.³⁴¹ What critics intend by *absence* is better construed as a normative assessment of what is present: the absence of a *virtuous* food culture, or, conversely, the preponderance of an *unvirtuous* one. Regardless of the framing, the content of these critiques remains substantive and pertinent: indeed, similar charges are widely articulated in NYC by activists and scholars who observe in the city a dreadful dilution of virtuous eating culture (again, however this might be understood) as embedded within a vicious cycle of food insecurity in which it is both cause and effect.³⁴²

European writers have been especially keen to remark upon the impoverishment and destructurement – the non-eating, non-cooking, and gastro-anomie – that generally characterize contemporary food culture (Fischler 1979; Poulain 2002)³⁴³ and is epitomized in American food culture. New York City is, in many ways, archetypal of the ‘America’ that they describe. Teti

³⁴⁰ I distinguish here a food culture in which the common person is the protagonist from an elite one. That is to say, the gastronomic prestige of New York’s classy restaurants is extraordinary, and to accuse the city of having little appreciation of food would, in this light, be a cretin’s claim. Regardless, my focus here is on the vast swathe of people excluded from the world of haute gastronomy, and – though that world and its participants have their own great stuff of interest to study – I contain the view of this study closer to the ground.

³⁴¹ This is precisely what I refer to when I make the claim that New York has a firmly rooted food culture. Indeed, this is perhaps intuitively contradictory, but it is not incorrect: just as a culture might correctly be said to have an entrenched anarchical trajectory, so too can it be said that New York’s alimentarily *anomic* character is well implanted.

³⁴² The cultural treatment of food security in NYC policy and activism occurs mostly in the scope of the second modality, with little similar treatment in the first.

³⁴³ See especially Fischler’s concept of *gastro-anomy* and Poulain’s of *destructurement*: both are interesting and pertinent here, and both are ignored in the food security literature.

(1999) credits Baudrillard with ‘one of the most incisive descriptions of [the] “alimentary solitude”’ which depicts the ‘existential solitude that characterizes the people of New York, capital of modernity’ (111); Baudrillard (1986) writes of the city’s social and cultural indigence:

There is a solitude that resembles no other. That of the man who publicly prepares his meal, on a little wall, on the hood of a car, balanced on a railing, alone. It’s a sight you see everywhere, here, and it’s the saddest thing in the world, sadder than the poverty; sadder than the beggar is the man who eats alone in public. Nothing is more contradictory to the laws of Man and Animal, because the beasts at least always have the dignity to share or to compete for their food. He who eats alone is already dead (34-35).³⁴⁴

Teti continues, affirming the basic value of conviviality and observing the stark absence of it in American food culture: America, he writes, ‘is becoming the only “modern primitive society”, because here you find the “savage” who thinks and lives alone, and alone he devours his prey’ (111).

American writers also similarly describe a problematically anomic food culture. Trubek (2008) confirms a general trivialization of food in the contemporary American psyche, attributing the problem in part to the effects of a historically pervasive capitalist endowment (and, in this last sense as in many others, NYC is hyperbolically American):

Our contemporary thinking about the physiology of taste is increasingly mediated by modern capitalism, an economic system that values food like it values any other commodity [and thus puts] tremendous pressure on any other cultural sensibilities and distinctions (13).

Trubek also identifies another historical root with lingering effects on the generalized American food culture: the austere sensibilities that characterized the nation’s religious foundation.³⁴⁵ In considering why ‘caring about food, drink, and taste [is] so suspect in the United States’, Trubek muses that ‘perhaps it is our Puritan heritage ...’ (15). She writes:

Much of our present debate on the state of the contemporary food system (not just locally but globally)—and as a result the fate of farming, cooking, and eating—is grounded in two powerful American cultural values: first, that talking and caring about food above and beyond its mere sustenance value are improper (a legacy of our Puritan ancestors), and second, that every American deserves a chicken in his or her pot.³⁴⁶ Any effort to influence our food culture must therefore embrace these values or be labelled as elitist. (6)

Kwan, Mancinelli and Freudenberg (2010) similarly observe a customary trivialization of the alimentary domain in their analysis of NYC school food, calling food an ‘afterthought in the

³⁴⁴ We return to consider the issue of dignity, in rather a different light, in Chapter 14. Baudrillard’s use of dignity here reveals the high valuation that he awards conviviality – a praxis extolled also by Illich (1975) – and it is one worth recalling as we advance in a dignitarian approach.

³⁴⁵ Note the enduring and far-reaching consequences of this heritage: here I charge religion’s legacy with contributing to a disabled food culture, and, in Chapter 7, I broached its possible association with the capitalist development paradigm and its often excessive individualism and reluctance to act in solidarity.

³⁴⁶ I contest Trubek’s second premise: see the discussion of earned versus innately entitled desert in Chapter 8. Regardless, I agree that her first premise is an accurate general characterization of American food culture, and it is the pertinent matter here.

school environment' (31). Taken conjointly with the insights of the other scholars considered here, it would seem that, indeed, it is little more than an 'afterthought' in the American mind generally.

Numerous popular authors – many practicing more as scholar-activists than as either one of these alone – have also observed and criticized a generalized, dysfunctional and generally wanting 'American food culture'. Consider, for example, the title of Mark Bittman's (2009) popular book, *Food Matters: A guide to conscious eating*. That Americans should require persuading that 'food matters' and convincing that eating involves intentioned choices rather than conditionally eventuated ones suggests that such positions are not, in the dominant food culture, *normal*. Likewise, the title of Michael Pollan's (2008) book, *In Defense of Food: An eater's manifesto*, suggests a hostile food culture that demands militant combatting (and, perhaps, counterattack).

Policy actors and activists in NYC have similarly implicated dominant American food culture in the food security problem by framing this in terms of 'food *environment*' and attempting to comprehend its magnitude largely by way of data that demonstrates the predominance of eating outside the home, particularly in fast food venues. The Mayor's Task Force on Obesity (2012) frames 'the obesity problem' as a result of the 'facts' that food is now 'ubiquitous, cheap, calorie-dense, served in large portions, [and] aggressively promoted' (3), citing specifically pejorative aspects of the food environment that include 'exploding beverage sizes', 'bargain-priced' large sugary drinks, and supersized portions.

Meanwhile *FoodWorks* details (disapprovingly) the 'staggering rise in the prevalence of fast food establishments' (56):

Over the past two generations, Americans have experienced dramatic changes in our food environment. These changes have affected our relationship with food and our health outcomes. Compounding the price disparity between healthy and unhealthy foods is the fact that we are now cooking fewer meals at home, relying on food service establishments for more of our meals. Both our caloric intake away from home and the amount of money we spend on food away from home have dramatically increased over the past 30 years. In the 1970s, New Yorkers spent 27.8 per cent of their food budget away from home and consumed 18 per cent of their calories outside the home. By 2003, 45.6 per cent of our food budget purchased meals away from home and in 2008, 35 per cent of our calories were consumed eating out (52) ... In 1970, Americans spent about \$6 billion on fast food. In 2000 they spent more than \$110 billion (56).

It goes on to elaborate the 'cost' this has precipitated. Though it describes conditions of poor human wellbeing, the tone is medicalized and distanced – perhaps we can read dollar signs between the lines – rather than compassionate:

While [fast food outlets] offer consumers convenient and relatively inexpensive meals, there is also a high long-term cost. As New Yorkers eat more meals outside of the home, our overall caloric intake has increased. The pervasiveness of fast food establishments and the consumption of fast food, in particular, have been associated with higher incidence of obesity, weight gain, and increased waist circumference (56).

FoodWorks also describes what it considers to be less than honest marketing tactics practiced by the food industry and the heightened negative impact that this (in combination with the omnipresence of such food) has borne, especially for children:

Large chain fast food establishments have particularly troubling effects. They market their foods directly to children through the use of toys, mascots, and advertising during youth television programming, and cluster their establishments near schools. The effects of these business practices are now seen in the high rates of children who are overweight and obese. Specifically, children who attend schools within walking distance of fast food establishments have significantly higher weight and body mass index. The combination of targeted marketing, proximity and low price have proven attractive to the youth market, which now has an obesity rate of 40 per cent (57).³⁴⁷

Kwan, Mancinelli and Freudenberg (2010) likewise refer to the now firmly established food norms that have issued from such environments and practices and indicate the challenge that these pose to efforts that aim to develop health-promoting food habits via school food programming:

There is still a long-standing and deeply ingrained mistrust of school food. One ... student remarked, “We don’t see where it’s coming from, what they do to it”. Some students are more apt to trust “brand name” foods like McDonald’s. This trust is enhanced by the almost \$2.5 million a day McDonald’s spends on advertising in the US, most of which is targeted at children. These ads put the healthier SchoolFood system at a distinct disadvantage. Changing the social norms and culture around school food will require significant new action. As the quality of school food improves, the image of school food needs to improve too (24).

Indeed, changing the ‘social norms and culture’ has proven a difficult project for many of the recent efforts to transform school food programming into better health-promoting praxis. NYC has been a leader in the diffuse school food reform effort (Morgan and Sonnino 2008), but its efforts have not come without much labour and resistance. One informant described the challenge (and sometime futility) of changing school food norms while the wider food norms – particularly those in the home – remain strongly rooted and tendentially unchanging.³⁴⁸

People need to get off this idea that ... school food is battleground number one in the fight against childhood obesity. You know, [do we believe that] this student comes [home] and says “Mommy, I had a salad bar today, I love salad”. [Mother:] “Great.

³⁴⁷ *FoodWorks* has carefully substantiated each of its statistics and causal claims with reputable studies. I do not list the individual sources here; interested readers are referred to the *FoodWorks* text and its list of references.

³⁴⁸ Recall the very similar issue faced in bogotano *comedores*.

That's nice, kid". [Student:] "I had roasted broccoli!"? Are they going home telling their [parents this]??? I mean, I'm not trying to be jaded here, but ...

The intense debate over and extraordinary resistance to new federally imposed school meals standards – which reform advocates contrastingly claim do not progress nearly far *enough* – also testifies to the difficulty of changing the related cultural norms. One of the most vociferous oppositional contentions made against the new regulations recapitulates what has been, second only to cost, the driving logic in menu programming decisions: the question of social acceptance. In a few words, it is the ‘but kids won’t eat it’ argument levied against proposals to include healthy food in school meals: the notion that children *will* eat French fries and hamburgers (which accord the prevailing food culture) but will be wan to embrace broccoli, bulgur and lentils (which do not).

The New York State Office of General Services, in a presentation titled *Utilizing USDA foods in New York State* (Garceau 2011), demonstrates the well-embedded foothold of this logic in the school food management hierarchy: one of the ways in which ‘USDA food benefit[s] recipients’, it reports, is that it ‘allows us [school food providers] to divert product to create a center of the plate menu item kids will eat (i.e. chicken to chicken nuggets)’ (21).³⁴⁹ The rationalization and operationalization of *eating* that is also boldly manifest here: chicken – which, we understood, is inconceivably eaten by children in form recognizable as such – is not cooked, baked, prepared, plated or even transformed but rather ‘*diverted*’ into chicken nuggets; and the nuggets themselves are not a gastronomic delight but rather ‘*a center of the plate menu item*’.

To be sure, the worries about children’s acceptance of healthy foods are not unfounded. The New York Times (Yee 2012) reported that, following implementation of new federal guidelines (which imposed ‘healthier food’ regulations where there had been none or few), students across the United States registered their discontent robustly, using generationally particular socially creative formats such as YouTube parodies – one of which received over 1.5 million views – and Twitter conversations – hashtag #brownbagginit – as well as more timeless ways, such as throwing much of the new, healthier food in the trash.³⁵⁰

All of this frames a NYC context in which the cultural roots of food security are widely recognized. Importantly, though these roots are recognized, they are often *named* in the terms of

³⁴⁹ Perhaps even more importantly, and conversant with the domineering capitalist ethic in the United States (see in Chapter 7), in the view of the OGS, the USDA ‘gives recipients products that kids will eat at little expense to [the local authority]’ and ‘stretches dollars so [that the local authority] can purchase other products’ (Garceau 2011, 21).

³⁵⁰ Recall the Bogotá *comedor* worker’s description of the difficulty involved in cajoling Colombian children to eat their fruits and vegetables: ‘give them an apple, and they throw it across the room’.

‘food environment’.³⁵¹ Accordingly, the city’s food security programming makes some effort to intervene upon cultural norms, mostly – and sensibly, according both to its identification of the problem’s terms and to the city’s predominant capitalist ethic – by intervening upon the city’s broadly unfavourable ‘food environment’. To be sure, NYC’s strong economic framing of the food security problem and ‘solution’ to some extent limit its attention to cultural matters. Nearly (though not quite) the totality of food-related discussion in *PlaNYC*, for example, occurs at a technical, and decidedly a-cultural, level. Likewise, the structuration of *FoodWorks* into a five-phase understanding of the food system frames it in the first and last place as a production – rather than a cultural - system. And where the city does act to intervene upon cultural norms, it frequently does so with explicitly economic rationale and programming that corresponds to it. Nonetheless, as I have begun to illustrate, there *has* been considerable recognition of culture’s importance, and this *has* led to relevant programming that targets food security’s cultural roots.

NYC’s culture-based programming efforts emphasize two dominant themes: first, the (abstract but sincerely pursued) notion of ‘reconnecting’ people with, and ‘reeducating’ them about, their food; and, second, the use of behavioural economic reforms to ‘nudge’ the dominant food culture toward more health-promoting norms. The first of these is articulated (often in as many words) mostly in relation to urban and school gardening initiatives and under the label of ‘educating’ people about ‘healthy food choices’. The second is often non-expressly but obviously practiced in the city’s numerous attempts to introduce progressive public health regulations, such as, e.g., calorie labelling on menus and the attempted banning of super-sized sugary drinks.³⁵²

Reconnecting and reeducating

NYC’s formal urban agriculture discourse largely assumes the trope that Americans (everywhere) have become ‘disconnected’ from their food (literally as well as figuratively) as a result of the modern (and *dis*-connecting) food system: where food comes from, how one prepares it, and indeed even how it appears in its unmanipulated ‘original state’ remain, for many people, mysterious matters (if, that is, they are thought of at all). Numerous efforts across the country have accordingly aimed to ‘reconnect’ people with food by way of direct,

³⁵¹ And, though ‘food environment’ – employed generally to frame a criticism of its poverty – names an important issue in its own right, indeed one that generates a pulsing throng of discontent and activism, it fails to arouse the gravity that the term ‘food security’ does. Hence, while I consider here the subject matter that this label points to *as* food security subject matter – it is – that it is *not named as such* lets much of its practical importance sidle by in distracting elision.

³⁵² Again, to explicitly draw the connection between culture and development, note that both of these strategies remain highly consistent with the free choice consumerism affirmed within the city’s pervasive capitalist ethic.

intentioned, and sometimes pointedly tutored experiences with it; NYC efforts do likewise, and schoolchildren-in-aprons have become de facto poster children for the city's projects in this light.

FoodWorks explicitly embraces the reconnective and educational potentials in framing urban agriculture projects, which, in addition to 'green[ing] our urban landscape' and serving a productive function, also 'foster nutrition and food education and help reconnect New Yorkers to their food' (16). It frames its efforts specifically as a response to an enfeebled alimentary context of 'lost knowledge':

With increasing urbanization and industrialization, much of this knowledge about food production has become specialized and unavailable to residents of the city today. Programs like Garden to Café, Added Value, and botanical garden workshops are trying to recapture this knowledge.³⁵³ Research has demonstrated that these programs reconnect people to their food and encourage healthier eating habits.

The plan is particularly enthusiastic about garden projects in school environments, citing a figure of over 300 current school gardens and lauding the 'educational opportunities' they promise, and it refers to the numerous collaborations that these gardens undertake with partner organizations (including 'botanical gardens, the New York Horticulture Society, the New York City Department of Parks and Recreation's Green Thumb Program, and countless others') to provide authoritative educational components. Likewise, *PlaNYC* boasts about Grow to Learn NYC, the formal citywide school gardens initiative, which is 'actively educating students about healthy food choices' (37).

Likewise, extracurricular education is another strategy envisioned for re-forming the food culture. Goal 10 of *FoodWorks*'s Consumption package is dedicated specifically to 'educating' New Yorkers in various ways and by various methods about food, and it specifies the need to 'increase the quantity and quality of opportunities for food, nutrition and cooking knowledge' (62). It describes the numerous efforts undertaken in this vein and elaborates at some length about both the generalized lack of knowledge and the need for formal educational efforts to revitalize it:

Along with a healthier food environment and meal options, consumers must also be equipped with knowledge to make choices about what to eat. Currently, education about food, nutrition, and cooking is delivered in a variety of settings. New and expecting mothers receive nutrition education through the Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC). Young children receive education about

³⁵³ Note the similarity between this discourse and that voiced by several bogotano actors. Note also, however, several important distinctions. First, the discourse of a lost, virtuous knowledge cache is, in Bogotá, levied primarily by civil society activists, while in NYC it is taken up in important measure by government actors – that is, formalized – as well. Second, while in Bogotá this 'lost knowledge' is framed largely under the auspices of 'colonialism' (with multiple culpable colonizers), in NYC it seems to be understood as the pitiable but more or less unavoidable consequence of modernization.

where food comes from and what to eat from countless innovative programs. Additionally, thousands of Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) recipients receive nutrition education through the Food Bank for New York City's Cookshop program and the Cornell Cooperative Extension, both programs funded by the federal SNAP Education program. While these programs have grown in recent years and offer valuable services, they are not enough to confront the loss of food knowledge over the past several decades. Better coordination among these programs and expanding other innovative, successful models of education will help restore some of this knowledge to New Yorkers (63).

Meanwhile, the DOHMH has made major public education campaigns through multiple media channels (including television spots, subway posters, and YouTube videos so entertaining that they went viral) aimed at stimulating healthier food consumption norms. Its massive advertising campaigns have included, among others, efforts to promote water drinking and to decrease the consumption of sugar.³⁵⁴

Rewarding 'good behaviour'

Beyond these efforts to 'reconnect' people with their food via gardening and educational programming, the city also makes a strong investment in a second strategy to reformulate cultural norms: behavioural economic interventions; these, of course, also well accord the prevailing capitalist framing of the food system. For the most part, policymakers indicate that they consider the foodways of New Yorkers to be *primarily* the result of the economic structuration of the food system and the consumption incentivization scheme it creates. For example, *FoodWorks* explains:

In general, the cost per calorie for healthier foods is higher than for unhealthy foods. For example, the price per calorie of zucchini and lettuce is 100 times greater than the price per calorie of sugar or butter. This price disparity in our food system encourages consumption of foods that are high in calories and low in nutrients, contributing to the prevalence of diet-related disease. Consequently, families with smaller budgets will use their food dollars to buy lower quality foods because they seem, at least in the short run, more cost effective. Compounding this issue of price disparity is the relatively unhealthy balance of food outlets in neighbourhoods across the five boroughs (50).

Consequent to this understanding, the city has focused much of its efforts on restructuring the extant, unfavourable food environment by way of progressive public health legislation and incentivization schemes that *force* New York toward the creation of more virtuous food environments and *nudge* New Yorkers toward more virtuous individual food purchasing choices. For example, *FoodWorks* reports that 'city agencies and organizations have been working diligently to increase consumption of fresh produce' by way of programmes such as *Health Bucks*, the *Food Retail Expansion to Support Health (FRESH)* initiative, and the *Green*

³⁵⁴ See Appendix B.

Carts program (44). All of these efforts effectively manipulate the current incentivization structure toward one that planners hope will prove more health-promoting.

Simultaneously, the city has undertaken important publicity efforts to promote both awareness of new incentive schemes such as these *and* substantive knowledge about the behaviours that these programmes aim to advance. It has made particularly strong efforts to remodel the current fast food and take-away eating culture largely by way of making more information available to the consumer. For example, the city frames its requirement for calorie labelling on menus in these terms:

Although eating out does not necessarily mean healthy choices are not available, restaurant and take-out meals tend to be higher in calories than meals we prepare at home. While many New Yorkers may not be able to transition entirely to home-cooked meals, having the knowledge to make healthier choices is an important step toward combating obesity and diet-related disease (Brannen 2010, 52).

However, the city also proposes more imposing interventions to mitigate the pejorative consequences of fast food culture, noting that ‘other cities have attempted to limit fast food establishments with various policies’ (57) and calling on the City Council to study the best practices and good approaches of those cities:

Los Angeles placed a moratorium on all new fast food establishments in part of the city. San Francisco recently voted to prevent toys from being given out with unhealthy menu items. London is pursuing land use policies to limit fast food establishments near schools. The City Council will review best practices nationally and internationally to discourage the consumption of fast food, and create more opportunities for healthy food service in neighbourhoods around the city. By identifying effective strategies to restore a healthier food environment in all neighbourhoods, we hope to reverse some of the trend toward obesity and higher rates of diet-related disease (57).

Bloomberg’s now famously failed ‘soda ban’ constitutes one such attempt toward bolder, more forceful reformative measures in New York. Critics, of course, opined that interventions like these overstepped important boundaries of liberty: this was less a friendly nudge toward more healthful behaviour than a hip check to personal autonomy. The courts agreed, overturning the ban on restaurant sales of sugar-sweetened soft drinks larger than 16 ounces.

As in Bogotá, then, New York’s complex and well-embedded food culture – far from absent as per the lamentations of some commentators – reaches to the very roots of the also complex food security dynamic. But to a greater extent than in Bogotá, themes related to food culture receive important doses of acknowledgement and programming within the city’s formal food security efforts. At the same time, however, the emically blind design of those efforts is notable, and food security programming often ultimately fails to reach the roots of the cultural features it aims to reform.

Summary: Culturally particular food securities, Part II

In the last two chapters, we have explored the intercourse between culture and food security by viewing a selection of contextually particular and culturally embedded *foodways* that bear important consequences for the food security discourses in the two case studies. This chapter has shown how the destructure and disconnectedness that characterize New York City's food culture influence the city's food security construction. For example, residents' large-scale outsourcing of food preparation activities – their high recurrence to restaurants and frequent consumption of ready-made products – provokes regulatory food security efforts that increase the information food purveyors must make available to consumers and nudge the industry toward offering 'healthier' products. In a related way, another arm of the city's food security work presumes that people lack sufficiently enabling skills related to food and nutrition and has centred on better 'educating' people about these topics.

In the next chapter, I extend the cultural effort by probing the consequence of one particular sort of foodway upon food security: the culturally specific construction of *food-health narratives*.

Chapter 13

The cultural construction of food policy

Rue:

Nature: Warm and dry in the third degree.

Usefulness: It sharpens the eyesight and dissipates flatulence.

Dangers: It augments the sperm and dampens the desire for coitus.

- Tacuinum Sanitatis of Paris (late 14th Century)

Abstract

In this chapter, the research closes its address of Research Question 2 by exploring one particular component of foodways, food-health narratives, that well illustrates the cultural specificity to which food security discourse is subject. Indeed, the question What is healthy? interests not only dieters but also – critically – planners, and it interests also scholars for the commentary that its response offers upon the culturally embedded particularity of food security discourse. I close the chapter with a brief observation on some of the other – myriad – ways that culture and food security likewise intersect.

Food-health narratives: Culture's glaring incursion into policy

Another cultural artefact³⁵⁵ with important influence upon food security is the contextually pertaining *food-health narrative* – the shared beliefs and norms regarding which foods and foodways promote and oppose wellbeing, and in what ways.³⁵⁶ While the varied and evolving interpretations regarding what is opportune for people to eat have been confronted widely in the academic literature (ranging from, e.g., Harris's (1998) classic survey to more contemporary and specific critiques such as that by Guthman (2011)) and (even more so) in the popular literatures (including, e.g., the iconic efforts of Pollan (2009) and Bittman (2013)), there has been relatively little framing of the same theme in relation to its consequences upon public food policies (and food security policies specifically). I suggest, however, that it is a valid and helpful exercise to consider these constructions precisely as *constructed and specific*, embedded within particular cultures, informing and giving meaning to particular practices, and explaining how man ought to relate to this aspect – *food* – of his physical world.

Anthropology has lent several salient points of conceptual utility here. First, it has underlined the importance that people give to imposing 'rules' upon society in the service of lending order, logic, and meaning to events and relationships that might otherwise suffer from chaos and inscrutability. Lévi-Strauss (2013) writes about the importance of this process: 'to speak of rules and to speak of meaning is to speak of the same thing; and if we look at all the intellectual undertakings of mankind . . . the common denominator is always to introduce some kind of order' (9). Second, and important especially in our context, uncontested narratives are 'considered to be truths' by their subscribers, 'deeply rooted in a culture's belief system and tied to their spiritual and personal understanding of the world around them' (Anderson 2010, 281). And third, common food *practices* – our oft-repeated and societally embedded food *rituals*, as it were – may either originate *in* or give origin *to* these narratives (Svoboda 2010, 778).³⁵⁷

All of these features are evident in the *food-health narratives* that dominate in New York City and Bogotá: they constrain the mysterious complexities of health, disease, and wellbeing into a set of known, controllable, causal relationships; they are *truths* rather than lesser *beliefs*; and they are used both to justify conventional food practice and to stimulate specific behavioural reforms to that practice. As works such as Harris (1998) and Albala (2002) illustrate, such constructions are common, if not universal, cultural features, and different levels of contextual

³⁵⁵ Food-health narratives obviously pertain to the larger category of foodways or food culture.

Nonetheless, I treat the theme separately here so as to better focus on its particular, characteristic aspects.

³⁵⁶ I have broached the topic in my Master's thesis (Ashe 2010a), and it is a theme ripe, I believe, for much greater exploration.

³⁵⁷ We return to Svoboda's point shortly. For the moment, however, note that *eating* – this codified act of embodying nature that people repeat at regular intervals and following carefully prescribed norms – is quintessentially ritual.

ascription create narratives of different strength and reach. For example, a large majority of people in North America share the belief that vegetables, in their collective generality, are health-promoting (even if fewer agree on their palatability); in a similar way but at a different adhesive scale, a small subset of North American people, strict followers of – and believers in – specific schema such as, e.g., that proposed by the Atkins Diet, consider nearly all carbohydrate-rich foods to be pejorative to health. Both of these constitute specific food-health narratives, the first a case of established and sanctioned national orthodoxy, and the second one of specific subcultural particularity. Both narratives also *function* effectively in several regards: they serve to order the mysterious connection between food consumption and health attainment; to their adherents, they are *true*; and they are used to justify specific practices (in this case, ones that privilege the consumption of specific types of foods and not others).

Of course, to note the social constructionism, societal specificity, and cultural variability inherent to food-health narratives, we need only cast glances historically – for example, to the *Tacuinum Sanitatus* manuscripts (Matterer 1997) that governed wellbeing in medieval Europe, and their stipulations that, for example, sugar is good for the chest but moves bilious humours³⁵⁸, and that rue dissipates flatulence but dampens the desire for coitus³⁵⁹ – or geographically (for example, to the contrary hot and cold attributions issued by traditional Indian-Ayurvedic, Chinese, and Latin American humoral food beliefs (Bogumil 2002)).³⁶⁰

Reigning food-health narratives bear importantly upon food security both materiality (helping to determine what people really do eat) and discursively (helping to determine how and in which circumstances interventions are designed). At global and national levels, many authoritative bodies help to capture and replicate specific food-health narratives by – *authoritatively*, according their prestige – issuing recommendations regarding nutrition.³⁶¹ Circulators include, among others, major intergovernmental agencies such as WHO and FAO that function at an international scale; national health agencies such as the USDA (in the United States) and the ICBF³⁶² (in Colombia); and medical, scientific and pseudo-scientific associations that operate at national and subnational levels (such as the American Heart Association and the Oldways Association). ‘Healthy eating’ guides emanant from such authorities define and capture the reigning contextual narratives, and – importantly here – ensure that these enter into the

³⁵⁸ The latter a danger that can, however, be neutralized by the simultaneous consumption of sour pomegranates (Matterer 1997).

³⁵⁹ A pairing of effects that one hopes is only correlational.

³⁶⁰ For example, most fruits and vegetables are considered to be cold foods in traditional Latin American understanding but hot foods in the Chinese understanding (Bogumil 2002).

³⁶¹ Indeed, their great fondness for doing so, and people’s likewise fervent ascription to their varying stipulations – at times ideologically zealous and undiscerningly adherent – has been critiqued by some voices as ‘nutritionism’ (Pollan 2007).

³⁶² The ICBF is the *Instituto Colombiano de Bienestar Familiar*, the *Colombian Institute for Family Wellbeing*.

recommendations and programmatic content of food security and nutritional support efforts (by way of the stipulations and regulations that govern them, as well as in their embodied deployment by acculturated actors). In the most straightforward example, for instance, the design of meals served in school and community canteens is based precisely upon this type of guidance, contriving meals that comprise foods of the type, quantity, and proportionality constructed as *healthy* within the authoritative – *and then standardized and codified* – narrative.

One prominent example of how food-health narratives permeate the robust cultural reality lies in the recent attention given to school meals by government actors, activists and parents across the United States and especially in NYC. A major concern that school meals were not ‘healthful’, and as such were only encouraging the rising tide of obesity and lifestyle disease, led the national government to overhaul the federally issued nutritional requirements for school meals. Among other reforms, for example, sugared beverages and the daily repetition of fried foods were banned, while yogurts and cereals became promoted breakfast items; they also placed maximum limits on amounts of calories, fat, and sugar that could be included in the city’s school lunches. (NYC’s vanguard school lunchroom efforts to combat obesity had led it to adopt similar nutritional regulations several years earlier.) In the same way, Colombian beliefs about proper meal constitution support meals in bogotano *comedores* that typically comprise rice, meat, fried plantains, (sugared) fruit juice – and, more recently, also vegetables – in its lunches.³⁶³

Viewed etically, however, the social constructionism – and the depth and creativity of it – of such formulations is readily evident. For example, while chocolate milk, as a sugary beverage, was banned in NYC, chocolate *skim* milk was exempted from this restriction; this fact speaks volumes about embedded expectations in the American narrative that dairy products constitute a healthful daily imperative, that flavouring them encourages children to accommodate this imperative, and that non-fat milk is preferable to full-fat milk. Like chocolate skim milk, the yogurts (again, of the low-fat variety) promoted as healthful parts of the new school breakfasts are highly sugared – according to the estimation I could best perform based on the available data, more so than McDonald’s ice cream cones – and this indicates, again, the firm positioning of low-fat dairy as a health-promoting icon in the American food-health narrative. Meanwhile, the fact that sugared juices are banned in NYC but promoted as healthful in Bogotá only hints at the vast geocultural specificity inherent in practices of this sort.

³⁶³ At present, these meals are structured only by cultural norm. However, as the number of overweight children served now surpasses the number of underweight children served, the city has begun to recognize the need for what is termed ‘improved menu quality’. According to informants, the development of nutrient guidelines and possible requirements are underway.

Another prominent example of how reigning food-health narratives enter formal programming lies in NYC's progressive public health regulation. Mayor Bloomberg's recent efforts to restrict the size of takeaway-sold sugary drinks to a maximum of 16 ounces – the so-called 'soda ban' – was effectively an effort to institutionalize and enforce the reigning narrative that large amounts of sugar lead to poor health outcomes. And where some might protest that this is not a constructed narrative but a positive, incontrovertible *truth*, others might counter that such insistence might be testimony only to the firm rooting of the narrative. Again we might turn historically to consider an analogous *truth* of the Middle Ages: that sugar 'purifies the body, is good for the chest, the kidneys, and the bladder ... and it is good for all temperaments, at all ages, in every season and region' (Matterer 1997). Or we can turn geographically and contemporarily to Bogotá, where sugar and *panela* are served, in large quantities, in emergency food baskets, and sugared juices are served in the *comedores*.

In these examples, reigning food-health narrative is applied to food security programming in such a way as to justify the modification of existing practices and norms; that is, in NYC, it aims to *reduce* currently high sugar consumption with the expectation that this will help to reduce obesity and disease and generally produce better food-related health outcomes. In other words, this typifies a case of narrative informing practice. The converse case, of practice informing narrative, is also evident³⁶⁴, and indeed quite interesting to observe, in particular as it facilitates the transmutation of 'traditional' practices into 'healthful' ones (see also Ashe 2010b).

I suggest that the consumption and promotion of *panela* in Bogotá is one such practice.³⁶⁵ *Panela* is a product with deep cultural attachment for consumers and considerable economic importance for small producers, and it enjoys both high current consumption levels and the inclusion in food security schemes. The substantiality of *panela* in the Colombia diet and agronomy is remarkable. Sugar cane cultivation occupies approximately a tenth of all permanent cropland in Colombia, and Colombians are the largest consumers per capita of sugar cane products in the world with an average annual consumption of 34.2 kg per capita and an average dedication of household food expenditure ranging from 2% (overall) to 9% (in the lowest income strata) (Gualanday Trapiche Panelero 2012, 2). Its sociocultural integration in Colombia is similarly extensive: there are, for example, numerous *panela* fairs and festivals and even a yearly 'Miss *Panela*' pageant.³⁶⁶

³⁶⁴ Recall Svoboda's (2010) point: that 'some rituals stem from myths and some myths are offshoots of ritual' (778).

³⁶⁵ The unshakable, carte blanche confidence in yogurt's healthfulness in NYC might stand as another – and similar – good example in this vein.

³⁶⁶ See Appendix B for photos.

Most interestingly, from our perspective, is that *panela* has also entered the food-health narrative as a health-promoting product (at least in the eyes of many). While sugar is recognized as generally pejorative to health outcomes (though this does not, by all indications, lead people to consume less of it), *panela* is seen in the contrary light; when one is stricken with a cold, for example, among the most effective curative measures is the consumption of *aguapanela*, *panela* water.³⁶⁷ Accordingly, food security efforts go to some length to assure its dietary access – as we have seen, for example, by including it in large quantity in emergency food baskets. Of course this type of construction is not restricted to Colombia but rather – and this is the point – a pervasive (but overlooked) aspect of the food security problematic. On North American turf, we have already acknowledged a ready analogue: yogurt’s practiced devotional following and culturally ‘untouchable’ status as a ‘healthy’ food in the United States is likely what led to its endorsement in the post-reform school menus.

Viewing food-health narratives (generally and specifically) with the lens of critical realism helps us to recognize narratives *as narratives* (rather than necessary realities) – and to recognize that, as such, their practice may or may not *really* promote good health. Indeed, it seems quite possible that the practice of some – for example, those that originated not in eras of generalized abundance but rather of perpetual scarcity – might rather induce real effects that are different from their hoped for ones. In this vein, it is worth recalling postmodern critiques that position Western science itself as an ostentatious *construction*.³⁶⁸ If it turns out *really* to be the case, for example, that consuming large amounts of sugar, salt, and fat are beneficial to health, then NYC’s current programming efforts will tend off the mark; likewise, if large amounts of *panela* turn out *really* to be pejorative to health, then Bogotá’s may produce poor results. In other words, while the culturally reigning food-health narratives inform – and veritably define – food

³⁶⁷ *Aguapanela* is typically served hot, much like an herbal tea. In the case of illness remediation, lemon is added, though the curative potency seems still to reside in the *panela* itself.

³⁶⁸ Alvares (2010) graphically portrays the – still – absurdly colonial belief of the Modern West that *its* science is something more than this:

[Like toothpaste,] now modern science is a universal commodity too...approved by many whose devotion to its tenets and its propagation is more often than not related to its ability to provide a high living wage and, often, in addition, power, prestige and a chauffeur-driven car. Like the early morning toothbrush, science is considered a precondition for a freshly minted world-view uncontaminated by unlearned or unemancipated perceptions. For its part, it offers to flush out the many disabling superstitions from all those hidden crevices of a society’s soul, to eliminate any and every offending bacterium, to produce a clean and ordered world. Most important, it promises a materialist paradise for the world’s unprivileged through its awesome, magical powers ... But for us, it always was another culture’s product, a recognizably foreign entity. We eventually came to see it as an epoch-specific, ethnic (Western) and culture-specific (culturally entombed) project, one that is a politically directed, artificially induced stream of consciousness invading and distorting, and often attempting to take over, the larger, more stable canvas of human perceptions and experience. In a world consisting of dominating and dominated societies, some cultures are bound to be considered more equal than others. This heritage of inequality, inaugurated and cemented during colonialism, has remained still largely intact today. So the culture products of the West, including its science, are able to claim compelling primacy and universal validity only because of their ... congenital relationship with the political throne of global power (243-244).

security efforts, the ‘really real’ effects of applying such narratives via policy may or may not be those intentioned.

Beyond food itself: Culture that ‘goes all the way down’

Beyond foodways and food-health narratives, numerous cultural aspects and circumstances more distantly related to food *itself* also bear great impact upon food security in both New York City and Bogotá. The imperative for (reasonable) brevity precludes addressing them at length here, but it is worth at least acknowledging their presence and pertinence before remanding them to future consideration. In *both* Bogotá and NYC, several such factors emerged with important weight.

One of these is a strongly ‘individualist’ culture in both contexts that helps to determine (in general, pejoratively) how people experience food-related hardships, how they cope with problematic situations, and – particularly important from our perspective – the possibilities for successful programming approaches to address such problems. In particular, such cultures of individualism handicap the ‘good governance’ of multi-sectorial projects and often preclude the possibilities for collaborative intervention altogether.

A second factor prominent in both places is the presence and particularity of what might be termed ‘cultures of migration’. NYC is famous for its status as a melting pot of (national, ethnic, religious, and ideological) non-dominant cultures; Bogotá likewise constitutes the amalgamation of very many migrants from Colombia’s diverse regions, rural areas, and – in particular – *campesinos* displaced by the violence of the country’s ongoing ‘conflict’. The particularity of originary cultures as well as the particularity of migrants’ living contexts – for example, the informal infrastructural and political stature that predominates in Bogotá’s *barrios de invasión* and the legal invisibility of New York City’s undocumented immigrants – as well as the capacities for creativity and adaptation on the parts of both individual migrants and interventionists all lend specific and important character to the food security context and programming of this group.

Third, ‘organizational’ or ‘business’ cultures in both places are determinant: these help to define the character of remediative efforts that depend on private sector collaboration and participatory involvement. For example, the extent to which an appreciation for entrepreneurship, cooperative venture, and citizen participation thrive shapes the possibilities for program design and outcome in both places.

Fourth, ‘sexual cultures’ play important roles in both contexts. In Colombia, 19.5% of Colombian girls aged 15 to 19 have either given birth or are currently expecting (OBN 2013), and in the United States the figure is only slightly lower at 16% (The National Campaign 2010).³⁶⁹ If (as is popularly claimed) young mothers are generally less skilled *as mothers*, less knowledgeable about good prenatal and infant nutrition³⁷⁰, less able to continue their own education, less able to secure profitable and upwardly mobile work, and so on (all factors amplified in cases of *unmarried* young motherhood, which is in both countries almost entirely the case), such conditions can both create vicious cycles of food insecurity and dictate the nature and weight of government programming (and resourcing) destined to address these specific needs.

This is no more than brief insight into four specific cultural aspects that appear with salience in both contexts. And though we cannot do so here, exploring each of these in depth – and considering the numerous further cultural artefacts that impact food security realities and the programming in response to it – remains an important project.

If anything is clear at this point, it is this: that culture *matters*, and matters profoundly, for food security. We have here considered two cultural aspects related to food itself – foodways and food-health narratives – and witnessed the manifestation of their impact upon food security in its materiality and discourse. We have also suggestively sampled from among the many further cultural aspects that likewise bear important impact upon food security and merit more extensive treatment in this regard. This exercise pushes us to understand the scope of food security in a way that moves well beyond that of mechanical exercise; conventional frames that reduce food security to readily catalogued criteria of ‘availability, access, and utilization’, or any other similarly schematic criteria, are simply too *simple*. If researchers and programmers are to better understand the *real, lived* food security problem, it will be necessary the robustness and complexity of these cultural factors, and more. It will be necessary to *appreciate culture*.

³⁶⁹ In the United States, 16% of all girls will give birth by age 20. There are considerable racial disparities, with the figure reaching 33% for Latina girls and 25% for African American girls. The rates of girls who become pregnant prior to age 20 are, of course, higher: 19% among white girls, and rising to 50% in the case of African American girls and 52% in the case of Latina girls (The National Campaign 2010).

³⁷⁰ Furthermore, the consequences of these limitations are intensified by the *criticality* of maternal and early childhood nutrition – the ‘first one-thousand days’, as it is sometimes referred to – which bears the greatest (and in many aspects irreversible) impacts upon the physical, cognitive, and psychological development of the child (Strategic Impact Evaluation Fund 2012).

Summary: Framing the cultural dimension of food security

In the last three chapters, I have attempted to penetrate – in an inchoate way, at least – the *cultural* dimension of food security by examining the foodways and food-health narratives that preponderate in New York City and Bogotá. With this, I close the empirical portion of this work – leaving much material of interest on the table, to be sure, but intent to indulge still in a chapter of reflexive prospecting. The real world of food security that I have explored in the last chapters is one far messier than analysts usually appreciate, but it is precisely in that messiness that people find its importance. In some way or other, people experience their very humanity by way of food security, or the violation of it. In response to the empirical work of this study, and, importantly, to the visions of the theorists who have informed it, I motion in the next chapter for a new framing altogether of the food security exercise, one that responds precisely to the *humanity* implicated here: that of *dignified food security*.

Chapter 14

Towards dignified food security?

Conclusions and reflections³⁷¹

Human persons have dignity. They are sacred and precious. In this sense, dignity is not granted to persons by the ethical activity of others. Dignity is not bestowed on persons by other persons, by the family or society or the state. Rather the reality of human dignity makes claims on others that it be recognized and respected.

- Hollenbach (1979, 90)

Abstract

This research has revealed many glimpses of how actors in New York City and Bogotá construct food security, and I have concentrated the analysis on the ways that these build on and intercourse with social and political discourses that derive from development ideology and culture. This chapter builds upon the findings of the previous seven chapters to address Research Question 3, engaging an intently reflexive lens to enrich the empirical analyses undertaken thus far and proposing a new construct with which we might understand food security. I first argue that the integration of philosophy and normativity with the study of food security (and matters of policy generally) proves not simply to be instrumentally advantageous but rather essential to the social relevance of such matters; and I discuss the philosophical questions underlying the concepts of human rights and dignity. Finally I propose a new concept that might help communities to achieve – that is, to construct – more relevant and ultimately more ‘successful’ food security discourses: dignified food security.

³⁷¹ Convention suggests that I label this chapter *Conclusions*, but the contents here – in the spirit of this dissertation – are much better conceived as *reflections*. If the history of science has demonstrated anything at all, it is that most conclusions have proven far from conclusive, and it seems well too audacious to suggest that this work will finally prove to be different.

Introduction

This project's explorations have, I hope, made somewhat less tenebrous the murky airs of a discourse-saturated – and therefore analytically problematic – concept of food security. It is discourse-saturated, to be sure; but, and I cannot insist upon this point sufficiently, *it is real*. Real people really live, really flourish, and really suffer in this food-world in many ways and degrees, and this flourishing and suffering, I argue, is the frame in which we ought to understand food security.

In this chapter, I respond to Research Question 3, attempting to focus the collection of insights that I have been able to capture during this joint reflection on the New York City and Bogotá case studies – both those inscribed in the last seven chapters of empirical work and those left unregistered – so as to propose here a fuller and more authentic³⁷² construct for understanding what food security *is* (indeed, the definitional challenge I raised as germinal to this project). After proposing the concept of *dignified food security*, I consider the extent to which New York City and Bogotá have managed to meet the much heightened requirements imposed by such an understanding, and finally I argue for a less technical, more perceptive and more fundamentally *human* optic with which we ought generally to think about food security and other such issues that touch the depths of the human experience.

Before continuing with these efforts, however, it is worth first reiterating, with the helpful retrospect of the finished project at hand, several points about this research. First, it is unequivocal that one of its central concepts is at this point as much an empirically substantiated conclusion as it was at the outset a tentatively adopted premise. Drawing from other thinkers and inspired in particular by the Langhian reading, I have rejected in 'food insecurity' its too common cast of narrow restriction, this undermined by tests of intellectual and moral rigor; instead, I have understood the new food insecurity as bimodal and holistic, comprising, as Lang (2010) describes it, 'all diet-related ill health' (95). The two cases studies have illustrated the appropriateness of such an understanding, depicting food security discourses in New York City and Bogotá that depart radically from historic ones that counted calories-available-in-country.

At the same time, I have understood food security as something *both real and constructed*: real both in the sense that it is (largely) determined by material fact and (in a phenomenological sense) *really* experienced by *real* people in their particular ways; and constructed both in the sense that many of the material facts in question are themselves the outcome of socially

³⁷² Recall here Guba's (1990) criterion for successful interpretive research, upon which I have insisted from the outset of the project: it ought not be aimed at *reliability* (or *replicability*) but rather at *authenticity*. See Chapter 2.

determined design, and in the sense that people's individual phenomenological experiences are determined precisely by the socially constructed *public* understandings of food security and of what it means to *be well*.

Second, it bears also to make explicit the terrific advance in priority that normative questions have achieved in the course of this study. Consequent to my response – at once empathic and intellectual – to the realities I witnessed and the literatures with which I engaged in the course of this research, I arrived at the conclusion – and I believe it to be one that, given due moral inquiry, is unavoidable – that our social interest in the guarantee of food security would result a petty matter if we were to overlook (or even to underemphasize) the fundamental *finality* of food: in short, its function *in the service of people's wellbeing*. To understand food security in any *food-centric* (rather than *person-centric*) way emerges thus as grossly reductionist. Moreover, even to understand it as important *to the person* in a narrow, technical way – for example, in a wholly biological sense – is similarly so. As I have begun to suggest in the course of this research, and as I proceed to argue more fully in this chapter, what the matter of food security is – or *ought* to be – ultimately concerned with is the *dignification of people's food-worlds*.

I continue shortly to a fuller discussion of what such a dignity-based understanding of food security might comprise, but it is worth acknowledging at the outset that dignity, essentially a moral concept, might ordinarily be sequestered in the disciplinary confines of philosophy. But, in his challenge to the investigative status quo, Sayer (2011) argues convincingly against the partitioning of positive and normative thought³⁷³ – and indeed against disciplinary segregation altogether – and this research has underlined the substantiality of limitation invoked by their too common separation (and affirmed the validity of Sayer's argument).

In a more popular and equally convincing way, Kristof (2015) argues similarly in a recent New York Times article titled – in terms that this research suggests is far more meaningful than he intended – 'Starving for Wisdom'. In it, he laments that the (often scientific and economic) 21st-Century quest for *knowledge* is often vacant, too frequently rambling absent its indispensable chaperon of *wisdom*.³⁷⁴ In order to 'shape judgments about ethics, limits and values' and 'to help reach wise public policy decisions, even about the sciences', he writes that political actors (which, at the end of the day, includes most of us) require the tools of wisdom as much as those of technology.³⁷⁵ Gearty (2011) employs a notion of 'ethical resources'³⁷⁶ to

³⁷³ See Chapter 2 for fuller discussion.

³⁷⁴ Here I use the word *wisdom*, but, were our language to permit it more gracefully, I would aspire to Plato's better lexeme *σοφός καὶ ἀγαθός*, *wise and good*.

³⁷⁵ Indeed, have we not evolved as a species from the handy but comparatively less sophisticated *homo habilis* to *homo sapiens sapiens*, as it were?

characterize such tools, and, with the current research in sight, it seems that in order to more competently address the present challenges that surround food security, we too require a sufficient and capable set of precisely such *ethical resources*.

In that light, then, I entrust the rest of this chapter – the conclusions, as it were – to the labour of several particularly fit-for-purpose ethical resources. I turn first to a reflection upon the imperative³⁷⁷ of entering one, the tradition of philosophy (particularly, its normative moral and ethical branches), more comprehensively and more competently into social science research and its application, and especially into that regarding food security.

A renewed invitation to philosophy and normativity

Sayer (2010) makes the critique that philosophy and science (including social science) – and positive and normative inquiry generally – have achieved a chasmic and inimical estrangement.³⁷⁸ Other scholars, though too few, have also launched similar criticisms and proposed alternative, more integrative visions. Pigliucci (2012) proposes and defends a movement he calls ‘sci-phi’, which intently rejects such segregation and instead conjointly contemplates the world ‘using the two most powerful approaches to knowledge that human beings have devised so far: philosophy and science’:

The basic idea is that there are some things that ought to matter, whatever problem we experience in life: the facts that are pertinent to said problem; the values that guide us as we evaluate those facts; the nature of the problem itself; any possible solutions to it; and the meaningfulness to us of those facts and values and their relevance to the quality of our life. Since science is uniquely well suited to deal with factual knowledge and philosophy deals with (among other things) values, sci-phi seems like a promising way to approach the perennial questions concerning how we construct the meaning of our existence (2).

At the conclusion of this research, I also insist upon the engaged integration of these two separated but justifiably *inseparable* pursuits of knowledge.

³⁷⁶ In his introduction to the innovative, collaborative, online-based book project *The Rights Future*, Gearty (2011) expresses human rights as a dignity-based *ethical resource* essential for the contemporary world:

The concept of human rights is best understood today as a fundamentally progressive ideal in a world which has precious few ethical resources to hand. Building on earlier scholarly work, I propose that the term is now best seen as standing for three central ideas: respect for the dignity of each and every one of us; belief in accountability to an independent rule of law; and commitment to community self-government. Underpinning all of these is a strong sense of the equality of all. Human rights redeliver ethics to a Global North that is fast losing its sense of purpose in a post-socialist, post-religious haze of market supremacy, while also effectively connecting the North to the energetic radicalism of the Global South (itself often articulated in rights terms) and to the better parts of the world’s religious faiths.

³⁷⁷ And I insist that it is not merely recommendable but rather essential.

³⁷⁸ The title of his well-argued monograph, *Why We Care*, is itself suggestive of this critique.

This prefaced, and with the empirical content of this study in mind, I hope the reader will at this point agree to the following points:

- First, normativity in the analysis of food policy is not only permissible but required.
- Second, food security discourse reveals underlying ideological and cultural values.
- Third, some of the values expressed through the practiced food security discourse are concordant both with the pronounced social discourses on progress – that is, with specific and culturally embedded development discourses – and with virtuous principle; others are contrary to either or both.
- Fourth – and returning to a more practicable realm – where practiced food security policy reveals unvirtuous foundation or incoherency with pronounced discourse, these points of discord should be publicly named, discussed, and reconciled.

To advance such a project of reconciliation – in this case, that with virtue – I suggest that two meta-concepts be queried with special priority: human dignity and human rights. These are important both in their philosophical foundationality and in their possibilities for practiced food security work, and it is possible to see each of them variously upraised and denigrated in NYC's and in Bogotá's practices. I therefore dedicate to each a discussion of philosophical character before continuing to show how these values variously appear and fail to appear in the two cities' food security discourses, and finally muse upon their promise as orienting principles for future food security work.³⁷⁹ This focus on human rights and dignity effectively penetrates the two broad bases for food security construction examined in this research – that is, development ideology and culture – in such a way as to capture not only their *function* but also their *significance*. In doing so, such an approach adds a new – and vitally important – dimension of *meaning* to the construction of food security discourse.

Human rights and dignity: Sublime substance, controversial arguments

The concepts of human rights and human dignity are each far more controversial than one might expect. We began to regard the notion of human rights, vis-à-vis the emergent right to food movement, in Chapter 4. The general discourse – at its most basic, in the words of the Rome Declaration on World Food Security (FAO 1996), 'the right of everyone to be free from

³⁷⁹ It is not an unterminating detour! We return shortly to food policy, but the philosophical foray that must precede this is, it seems to me, essential.

hunger³⁸⁰ – seems at face value extraordinarily and obviously agreeable; few reasonable people would dare to pursue a wholly contrary argument that, for example, people *ought* to starve.

But, upon interrogation of the right to food concept – indeed, of the right-to-anything concept – essentially unempirical questions arise that can find response only in moral argument. Yet such argument finds questionable acceptance in the regnant modernist scientific paradigm, and it is all too often avoided, overlooked, or even outright rejected. This is clear in the right to food movement, where, while some actors do offer carefully reasoned explanation for their positions, most do not. In Bogotá, for example, where rights language abounds in formal and informal discussion, I pressed people who insisted upon the theme to elaborate their positions. Most ultimately revealed no explanation beyond what boiled down to an adamant security that, while they could not explain *why* people had (certain) human rights, they were certain that they *did have them*.³⁸¹

This assailable certainty remained unsettling in particular because of the near total *absence* of a similar human rights discourse in NYC. Indeed, perhaps the most remarkable moment in my NYC fieldwork occurred when a high-ranking food policy official and I shared the exchange that I described in Chapter 9, and she declared the concept of a right to food to be totally foreign to her.³⁸² That a concept so dominant in Bogotá (and in other places) – and so congenial, as well – could be so completely absent in NYC (and, indeed, largely absent also in the United States more widely) surprised me.

The USA's ongoing refusal to ratify even the ICESCR, *ratified by 164 other nations*, is representative of the country's often contrary stance with regard to international human rights. The American outlier status is captured well in this graphic depiction of the ratification status of the ICESCR; the United States is very nearly unique in its *unratified* status (Figure 20):

³⁸⁰ This definition, of course, is indeed basic, accommodating the more robust vision of food security that we have adopted here only if we accept a broad and expansively figurative meaning associated with hunger. At the same time, of course, this not necessarily an unimaginable task.

³⁸¹ To be fair, though, we must recognize that this is not a facile question: indeed, this is precisely one of the main difficulties that has plagued the contemporary human rights movement from its beginnings in the post-WWII era; we see it shortly in the Maritain excerpt, demonstrating its force even at the highest levels of policy formulation. Still, the popular lack of reflexivity upon the question remains notable.

³⁸² It must be repeated, however, that she was eager to learn more about the idea.

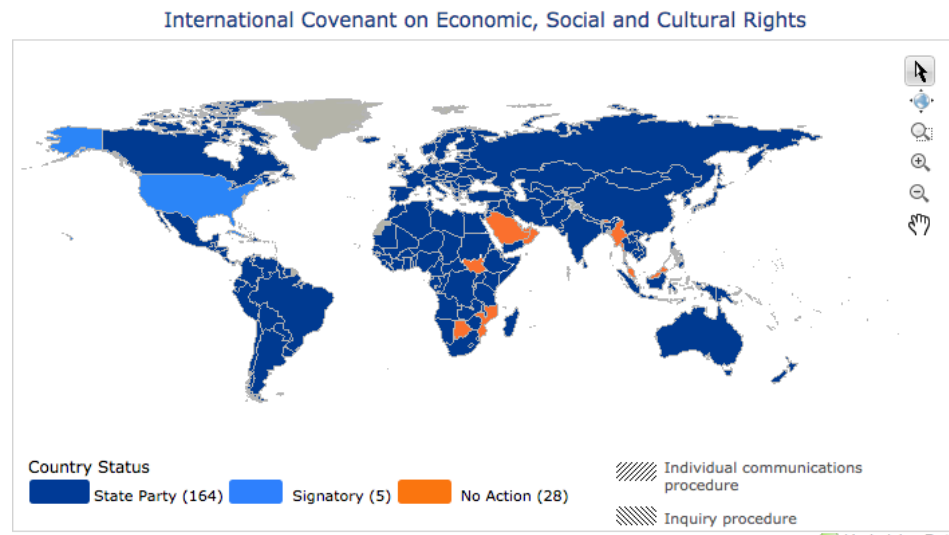


Figure 19: Ratification status of the ICESCR (Source: OHCHR 2015)

The colouration of this map shows the United States to be an ‘ethical outlier’ in its refusal to ratify the International Convention on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR), a foundational human rights convention ratified by 164 other nations (OHCHR 2015). The darkly coloured countries comprise the overwhelming global communion of nations that have signed and ratified the ICESCR; the USA has signed, but not ratified, the convention.

Beyond such representative measures, human rights advocates frequently cite the United States for internal and external human rights violations (including notably its use of the death penalty and its use of torture). In general, the American legal-political discourse is strong with regard to civil and political rights, which find tenacious defence in the U.S. Constitution, but weak with regard to economic, social and cultural ones, which enjoy little such Constitutional protection. Some economic, social, and cultural rights are guaranteed in state laws, and policy and programming work often addresses problems in these domains – sometimes assertively, as we have seen with regard to several innovative food policies in NYC – but citizens (and much less non-citizens) are not viewed as having *entitlements* to the non-political dues such as food and shelter that the international human rights covenants endorse precisely as such.

The failure of the United States to embrace the human rights discourse, combined with the country’s unquestionable political, economic and social power, casts at least some doubt on the concept itself. The USA, of course, is not the only party to question the validity and practicability of international human rights law, and recent scholarship has dedicated considerable inquiry to a robust consideration of related matters. I briefly addressed the problem of practicability in Chapter 4, and this challenge is certainly characteristic of the right to food campaigns seen in rights-enthusiastic Bogotá. Despite a strong civic commitment to the right to food – and to human rights more broadly – the magnitude and spectrum of suffering in light of the failure to *achieve* such a state of universal entitlement, notwithstanding virtuous intent, is

large. This problem, at least in aggregate, theoretical form, is unavoidable, but it is addressed – if not eliminated – in both its logical and practical dimensions by appeal to the principle of progressive realization.

More challenging to address, it seems, are theoretical problems regarding the validity of human rights themselves. Indeed, so challenging are these that a flurry of recent works have attempted to tackle the collection of philosophical questions at the heart of human rights, and a selection more, the closely related philosophical questions on human dignity (where we arrive shortly). The rigor and rancour of these debates might surprise the unassuming reader (or, indeed, even the confident one): surely, such sympathetic ideas could not possibly be so troubling?

Most problematic are questions of origin and universality. In the first place, if human rights and dignity exist, from whence do they arise? Indeed, if this cannot be explained, does that not imperil the concepts at their very beginnings? Second, particularly relevant in an increasingly global world, some actors who represent or simply respect a plurality of diverse cultures charge that the human rights concept is ethnocentrically serviceable to the European and North American world order (but alien to diverse cultures). Is it only the latest in a long line of Western impositions that did not end with the Age of Imperialism but rather has run continuously in various guises through its conceptual scions: colonialism, development, globalization, and (now) human rights?

Indeed, in the short introduction to human rights that I tendered in the earlier chapters, all of the intellectual founts are Western³⁸³, and, at the very outset of the contemporary human rights project (during work toward the passage of the UDHR in 1948), even the American Anthropological Association (Executive Board 1947) expressed its discontent, charging the effort, essentially and fundamentally, with ethnocentrism.³⁸⁴ More recently, the tendentially radical economist Latouche (2009) has charged the cultural West with a ‘universalist fanaticism’, a ‘new totalitarianism that denounces as “relativist” any form of life and thought that differs from [its] own and claims to have a monopoly on the question for the good of the earth’ (101, quoting Cardini). Contemporary academia has embraced these and related debates,

³⁸³ Indeed, Hunt (2007), author of one of the most authoritative books on the construction of the human rights concept, situates their philosophical origins not in ancient and diffuse traditions – the reading I prefer – but rather more modernly and narrowly in the 18th Century *Western* Enlightenment. Meanwhile the very title of Headley’s (2008) work betrays his ultimate assignation of similar origins (which he claims to lie in the Reformation and Renaissance): *The Europeanization of the World: On the Origins of Human Rights and Democracy*. Such perspectives would suggest that human rights are not universal and timeless truths-as-realities, but instead – to put it into Foucauldian terms – truths-as-products, the manufacture of a specific (European Enlightenment) ‘episteme’ (see Foucault 2002).

³⁸⁴ ‘The rights of Man in the Twentieth Century cannot be circumscribed by the standards of any single culture, or be dictated by the aspirations of any single people. Such a document will lead to frustration, not realization of the personalities of vast numbers of human beings’ (Executive Board 1947, 543).

and there exists a strong line of current work considering the central matters of provenance, justification, and universality that, depending on one's analysis, either disrupt or substantiate the validity of human rights (Pogge 2002; Donnelly 2007; Asad 2009).³⁸⁵

A focus on human dignity

It is in this meritable but equivocal context of human rights that – I claim – the concept of human dignity proves not simply normatively orienting but indeed vital to intelligibility. Though the concept of dignity has existed for millennia – Andorno (2014) traces it to conceptual origins in Greco-Roman Antiquity, locating the etymological source of the present term with the Roman Stoics, for whom *dignitas* carried a meaning contiguous with dignity's contemporary sense: 'the intrinsic and universal worthiness of human beings' (46) – it did not enter the vernacular in its living use until very recently.

McCrudden (2014) locates a contemporary 'dignitarian turn', in this sense, as delayed until the 1970s or 1980s; notably, this lags its earlier textual appearance (for example, in the UDHR³⁸⁶), by at least several decades. Accordingly, there is a small but strong collection of recent work on dignity, and the scholarship in general follows two differentiated approaches. The first, coming mostly from law (and, to some extent, policy), treats dignity widely but amorphously with a view to its serviceability, allowing dignity to act as a placeholder for the various indeterminable *some things* that verily define the human person but whose identifications themselves are murky and mercurial. The second, largely but not solely from the fields of moral philosophy and theology, treats substantive questions such as the provenance and justification of dignity. It is this latter direction that offers something of the substantive intellectual rigor that critics charge to be lacking in an ultimately utopian human rights activism.³⁸⁷

³⁸⁵ I have here given only very cursory treatment to the theme of human rights and addressed it from limited perspective. Several other recommendable and critically *postmodern* optics that may interest the reader, in the context of this dissertation, are Asad (2000) and Douzinas (2000, 2007).

³⁸⁶ What conveyed the (earlier) resurgence of the dignity and human rights concepts was the veritable derogation of them, en masse, during the horrific period of Nazi power and WWII atrocity (i.e., McCrudden et al. 2014; Asad 2009). The 1948 UDHR was borne largely in response to that derogation, and there dignity is posited as the foundational premise of the human rights that the declaration upholds, supposing that 'all human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights' (UN General Assembly 1948, Art. 1).

³⁸⁷ Here we note the two primary senses, legal and moral, in which *dignity* is contemporarily deployed. Douzinas (2009) observes an identical duality with regard to the concept of *human rights*, calling this a 'hybrid category ... [that] bring[s] together law and morality'. While elsewhere he gives an excellent and recommended postmodern critique of human rights (see Douzinas 2000), in this commentary he explains both the attractiveness of the human rights idea and their conceptual abuse (in the politicized arena) via precisely this aspect of hybridity or duality:

The ideological power of human rights lies precisely in their rhetorical ambiguity. Despite being part of the law, human rights are the latest expression of the urge to resist domination and oppression. They are part of a long and honourable tradition, which started with Antigone's

In the first, legal, sense, Rao (2011) insists that the term *dignity* is both slippery and important. On one hand, it is advantageously ambiguous: she writes that ‘the world community chose dignity in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights precisely because the term was open enough to hedge controversial judgments between different cultural values’ (185). West (in McCrudden et al. 2014) likewise maintains that ‘dignity was hardly a developed concept’ (in its contemporary use) in 1948, and it was used in the UDHR preface more as a consensus-permitting placeholder than as anything more substantively definitive. Maritain’s (1949) famous remark at the conclusion of the UDHR drafting debates encapsulates the sense of makeshift accord afforded in the use of dignity as legitimator: “‘Yes, we agree about the rights, but on condition no one asks us why’” (1).³⁸⁸

Within the context of U.S. Constitutional law, Rao (2011) observes several very distinct meanings given to dignity, each with particular legal and political implications; here two are most important – ones she labels as ‘intrinsic human worth’ (196) and ‘dignity as recognition’ (243) – and I return to these momentarily. But Rao’s variations of dignity are not the only ones that exist. McCrudden and West (in McCrudden et al. 2014) observe another, larger, divergence in the concept’s contemporary use, one that emphasizes the concept’s *functional* deployment; this, between dignity’s capacious vernacularization and its restrictive judicialization.

West criticises the latter, lamenting both the prescriptive moral authority it implies and the potential – often realized, she argues – for the term to be conscripted in the service of powerful elites rather than of vulnerable people who most need legal defense. She locates in the American legal system an inherent and perhaps ultimately insuperable difficulty with the dignitarian principle. Founded upon and obligated to the nation’s Constitution, which includes mention of neither dignity nor human rights, U.S. law cannot, by its very character, find basis in either. That is, it *cannot* sustain principled rulings regarding what *all people* might share by virtue of their humanity; rather, American law ‘is by its nature all about what *Americans* share’. Therein, then, lies an insoluble American human rights problem deriving from the nation’s foundational *citizen-centric* judicialization of dignity.

Yet at the same time that dignity acts rather as a surrogate or a hedge, there is widespread affirmation of its utmost import. Rao (2011) writes that ‘judges [in legal courts] invoke dignity

defiance of unjust law and surfaces in the struggles of the despised, enslaved and exploited. Those who defend [a refugee] redeem the value of human rights, while those who use human rights rhetoric to defend the pension rights of Fred Goodwin contribute to the banalization and eventual atrophy of rights.

³⁸⁸ And, as he continued the story, and where we pick up here, ‘That “why” is where the argument begins’ (Maritain 1949, 1).

to add *something*, even if that something is not always clear ... Around the world ... [they] regularly use the term dignity ... *as if it matters*' (186). But it is an 'interpretive principle', she says, and understanding why and how it matters – 'figuring out the "something" denoted by dignity' is not necessarily a straightforward endeavour (ibid.).

At first reading, then, this is troublesome: it seems that dignity is yet another concept like the one we confronted on the very first page of this research, food security: as a society, we seem to be certain that it *matters*, and gravely, but we are not at all certain what it *is*. And, likewise, while the nebulousness of dignity in many ways creates a wide umbrella of meaning under which consensus on ulterior matters (such as human rights) is possible, it also creates the potential for confusion about and criticism to its internal signifiatory possibilities. The humanist Steven Pinker (2008), for example, authored an article in *The New Republic* verily titled 'The Stupidity of Dignity' (and the responses generated by the article ranged from harsh criticism to hearty praise). It is clear, then, that even *this* so amenable an idea is – and I must admit, it is to my surprise – questioned.

Much of the criticism to dignity can be attributed to – but also resolved within – the concept's amorphousness. The 'dignity' that Pinker attacks in his article, for example, is essentially a psychological definition of it. Recalling Rao's division of denotive labour, but simplifying further, it can be useful to view dignity in two primary modalities. Pinker (2008) essentially describes these two modalities in his criticism of the concept's treatment in a White House report³⁸⁹; he writes of the concept's internalized contradictions:

We read that slavery and degradation are morally wrong because they take someone's dignity away. But we also read that nothing you can do to a person, including enslaving or degrading him, can take his dignity away. We read that dignity reflects excellence, striving, and conscience, so that only some people achieve it by dint of effort and character. We also read that everyone, no matter how lazy, evil, or mentally impaired, has dignity in full measure (4).

Indeed, this is a good summary – and one that anyone can immediately understand – of the two very different meanings given to dignity that I wish to here draw out. Andorno (2014) describes the difference with more formality, distinctly characterizing *inherent* human dignity – which 'as it is inseparable from the human condition, is the same for all, cannot be gained or lost, and does

³⁸⁹ Pinker authored his article in response to the publication by the U.S. President's Council on Bioethics of its attempt to disentangle the concept of dignity (particularly as it has seen rising import in contemporary medicine) in a 28-piece compilation by authors invited to address the concept in various aspects and from various perspectives. Pinker's criticism is, in brief, that the assembly is mostly a collection of intellectual bunk, the ideas of a 'theocon' (theo-conservative) oligarchy smuggling largely Catholic dogma into the White House.

not allow for any degree' (45, referencing also Spiegelberg 1970)³⁹⁰ – and moral dignity – which 'does not relate to the existence itself of persons but to their behaviour; it is the result of a virtuous life, that is, of a life lived in accordance with moral principles' (Andorno 2014, 45).³⁹¹ While the first of these is universal and equal among all people, the second 'is not possessed by all individuals to the same degree' (ibid.).

Langan (in McCrudden et al. 2014) recognizes the same 'internal tension' of dignity's broad-stroke dualistic deployment but much further expatiates on the term's distinct meanings; he stresses, however, that the term's vastness can be viewed as serviceable rather than as obscuring, suggesting even 'that attention to these [appended] uses of dignity can provide an important supplement to the understandings of dignity that are drawn almost exclusively from the lexicon of moral and political philosophy and from the crises of the 20th century'. In particular, he observes the concept as 'doing work that is more emotive than moral', including, i.e., performing functionalities that act as commendatory of people or of actions; as hortatory in the pursuit of positive values and activities; as mobilizing (either in favour of political movements or in resistance to them); as recognizant of and challenging to practices that perpetuate injustices; and as celebratory of the successes – and, indeed, efforts – of those who work for the relief of human suffering (of whatever form).³⁹²

Langan moreover observes in dignity's amplitude an implicit call to 'two values that are particularly fostered in Catholic Social Teaching (CST)³⁹³: solidarity and subsidiarity'. These

³⁹⁰ He continues, according to the logic given in this meaning: 'Even the worst criminal cannot be stripped of his or her inherent dignity and has therefore the right not be subjected to inhuman or degrading treatments or punishments' (Andorno 2014, 45).

³⁹¹ A similar but somewhat different characterization likewise names *inherent* dignity as the first of the term's two primary meanings but adjusts the latter meaning such that dignity is not earned but rather given; it relates not to behaviour, as such, but to status or stature. In this reading, a wealthy man able to sit idly on his throne sits there *dignified*, as such, by virtue of his kingly rank.

³⁹² Langan's long list of dignity's functions in the social *practice* of morality suggests more than anything else its practical utility. Indeed, it is in the practiced realm of social movements where the concept of dignity is today perhaps most visibly employed. As a straightforward and recent example, consider the 2015 World Social Forum, held in Tunis. It urged participants to join 'together to pursue the revolution of rights and dignity' (Forum Social Mondial 2015, 1) verily titling the 2015 edition of the forum 'The Road to Dignity' and using the term itself, in graphic design, as the event's logo:



The logo of the World Social Forum 2015 is a graphic design using the words Rights and Dignity (Forum Social Mondial 2015 10), central themes of the Forum and of social movements worldwide.

For more on social movements and the pursuit of justice in the context of food security, see also Ashe & Sonnino (2013b).

³⁹³ Also referred to as Catholic Social Thought, and still abbreviated by the initials CST.

two values are ones fostered and encouraged in the ambit of social justice advocacy and intervention worldwide and outside of religion altogether; and yet they are ones indeed particularly well treated, especially in their theoretical dimensions, from the CST tradition to which Langan referred. CST is worth reviewing briefly here, and not only for this coincidence. Indeed, it proves valuable in the unmistakable priority it gives to the originary role of dignity; in the present case, of course, I take most interest in this function as it pertains to the justification of human rights in general and of a right to food in particular.

Dignity and the Catholic intellectual tradition

Hollenbach (in McCrudden et al. 2014) emphasizes the lengthy, contiguous attention to dignity in Catholic intellectual thought as substantiation of its philosophical maturity. While the concept of dignity only barely entered the lingua franca of politics following WWII and did not enter the ‘vernacular’, as it were, until several decades later, it has been an *extremely* salient theme in the Catholic intellectual tradition since the beginning of the 20th Century, and, less spectacularly, for millennia before. Indeed, then, it is worth giving important space (in the broad intellectual sense as well as in the immediate textual sense) to the important contributions of the Catholic tradition in this regard.³⁹⁴

Catholic Social Teaching (CST) is a body of social doctrine³⁹⁵ that treats issues related to social justice and relates closely to the Church’s social advocacy on behalf of human rights. It emerges (in its contemporary lineage, at least) from Pope Leo XIII’s (1891) encyclical *Rerum Novarum* and is widely considered to stand on cardinal principals of dignity, solidarity, rights, and subsidiarity.³⁹⁶ It was in *Rerum Novarum* that human dignity and rights entered en force into the contemporary Catholic tradition; the assertion that ‘Man precedes the State’ (7) could, perhaps, summarize in several words the thrust of *dignity*, religiously connoted or otherwise.

³⁹⁴ I insist here on its character as an intellectual tradition as much as a faith tradition. It has special wealth to contribute ‘in its moral dimension’, which is particularly ‘rich and robust’ (Kennedy 2005, 2).

³⁹⁵ I give here a very rough, partial introduction to CST. One of the reasons that better summary is difficult is that there is no conclusive enchainment of Church documents that formally circumscribes the theory. Rather, CST refers to the cumulative tradition of Catholic teachings – and their several interpretations – on matters related to political, economic, and social issues, and different protagonists name different foundational documents and even principles. This presentation of CST is much abbreviated; in particular, several important documents in this tradition that I have not addressed here include the Second Vatican Council’s (1965) *Gaudium et Spes* and Pope Francis’s (2015) very recent *Laudato Si*. Interested readers are recommended to the excellent online library on CST maintained by the Diocese of St. Paul and Minneapolis (2015), and, more formally, to the Vatican’s own aptly titled *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church* (Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace 2015).

³⁹⁶ Other commentators have added (or not) further cardinal principles to this essential list, including several themes particularly relevant in the context of this food security exploration: a ‘preferential option for the poor’, the dignity of work, and an obligation of stewardship of the world’s natural wealth.

Pacem in Terris (John XXIII 1963) reiterates and accentuates the Church's commitments to the rights of man as consequent to and requisite for the full expression of his inherent dignity, including, i.a., rights related to physical life and to an adequate standard of living (including, notably, to adequate food and medical care); those related to moral and cultural life (including, i.a., the rights to education and to truthful information); to family life; to economic participation (including, i.a., the rights to work and to earn a decent wage); to assembly, association, and freedom of movement; and to political rights including, notably, to the *juridical* protection of one's *human* rights.

The more radical thread of *liberation theology* movements within the Catholic tradition have likewise and fundamentally prioritized issues of social justice and human rights (particularly as these relate to poverty) and made central the place of human dignity. Its emphasis on asserting a 'preferential option for the poor' underlines the imperative of a particular social duty to the most marginalized people and converses with lay conceptualizations of the ethics that lend validation to social welfare projects (including those of food security that we most directly treat here). The current pope, Francis, has underlined, however, that such an ethic – which should not be seen as limited to the radical confines of liberation theology but rather readily embraced as a common tenet upheld by the Church generally and demanded of the world at large – must be endowed with '*dignity, not charity*' (Francis 2014c, 1).³⁹⁷

Furthermore, the influence of the Catholic Church on the world's broader social interpretations of dignity and human rights should not be understated: even World Bank President Jim Yong Kim has widely articulated an imperative of human dignity. Perhaps all the more surprisingly, he has sometimes done so using the language of CST, calling for a preferential option for the poor; for example, the opening line in the mission statement of the Partners in Health initiative that he founded (with Paul Farmer) reads, with great directness, 'Our mission is to provide a preferential option for the poor in health care' (Partners in Health 2015).³⁹⁸

³⁹⁷ In the same speech, an address to the FAO during the 2nd International Conference on Nutrition, Francis (2014c) also spoke more directly about food policy in a way that underlines the pertinence and liveliness of the debates I have engaged in this text regarding the very conceptualization of food security: The right to food can only be ensured if we care about the actual subject, that is, the person who suffers (1) ... Interest in the production, availability and accessibility of foodstuffs, climate change and agricultural trade should certainly inspire rules and technical measures, but the first concern must be the individual as a whole (3).

³⁹⁸ Even more remarkably, Kim co-authored with Gustavo Gutierrez (2013), one of liberation theology's patriarchs, a collaborative article in the Spanish newspaper *El País* addressing the 'moral challenge of poverty'. That these two figures from organizations at such tendentially oppositional ends of the political spectrum united speaks to the possibilities for pursuing social justice in moral rather than functional terms.

Perhaps Hollenbach (1979) summarizes in a few lines the sum of import that the Catholic intellectual tradition can lend to our purpose here in his emphasis that, in the Catholic rights tradition, human dignity is an indicative rather than an objective:

Human persons *have* dignity. They *are* sacred and precious. In this sense, dignity is not granted to persons by the ethical activity of others. Dignity is not bestowed on persons by other persons, by the family or society or the state. Rather the reality of human dignity makes claims on others that it be recognized and respected. The moral imperatives set forth as human rights express the more specific content of these claims. Human dignity, however, is more fundamental than any specific human right (90).

Dignity thus is ‘the foundation of human rights’ (ibid.): human dignity *exists* (in the ontic natural order), and therefore so too must human rights (in the constructed judicial-legislative one).³⁹⁹ The human rights motif is by now – at least in many respectable circles, and at least outside the United States – catchy and fashionable; but the accompanying *argument* for it, at least in its most commonly registered form, is not nearly as intellectually satisfying as inquiring minds might like. Dignity thus stands as a vitally important self-contained concept because (among other reasons, of course) it affirms and insists up a *reason* for human rights: it is the concept I summon now in the service of food security.

Dignified food security

How, then, might this philosophical foray into matters of human dignity and rights prove helpful in our very practical matter of food security? In short, its utility lies in this admission: it is a *lack of dignity* in people’s food-worlds – and not a lack of food (or even of money) *per se*⁴⁰⁰ – that defines the *fundamental* problem faced by people in both NYC and in Bogotá as food security.

³⁹⁹ I have commented on the unfortunate separation between science and philosophy. Perhaps there is an even greater one between science and religion, and I am sensitive to the inherent distrust that many scientists will have for perspectives sustained, even well, by religious actors. Lest this eventualize here, I must reiterate that I appeal to the Catholic tradition here not because it offers the notion of human rights its *only* justification but rather because, in its presentation of human dignity, it offers it a particularly *good* one. If it proves more convincing, however, consider that similar arguments are made by areligious philosophers. Andorno (2014), for example, neatly summarizes on terms nearly identical to Hollenbach’s the strict causal relationship between human dignity and human rights:

Human dignity is the foundation of human rights; rights derive from human dignity. Human dignity is not a kind of super-right, or a collective term to refer to rights, but rather the ultimate source of all rights. The notion of human dignity attempts to respond to the question, “why do human beings have rights?” And the answer is that they are entitled to rights precisely because they possess intrinsic worth (49)

Like the Catholic thinkers, Andorno inserts this foundationality, into the context of the legal-moral duality (to which I referred earlier) and the different validity status inherent to each; he writes that, while ‘the practical efficacy of promoting human rights is aided by their legal recognition in states ... the ultimate validity of basic rights is *not* conditional upon such recognition’ (ibid.).

⁴⁰⁰ Sometimes, of course, *one* of the indignities that people endure is a lack of food; but it is not the only one, not the most prevalent one, and, according to one’s individual experience, it may or may not be the most important one. Of course the notion of dignified food security necessarily implies sufficient food; the point, however, is that it implies and captures much more, as well.

Given that food security requires food, we must naturally address – on both discursive and real planes – matters related to food itself; but this is not the *essence* of either the problems that people experience or the solutions that they find. That essence lies in the *finality of man himself* – an accentuation central to the philosophies of thinkers including Sen⁴⁰¹ (with which we began), Illich (which reshaped my – and, perhaps *our* – appreciations of development), and Francis⁴⁰² (at which we have arrived only now).

I suggest here a concept of man as *homo dignitatus* and, corresponding to him, a project of achieving universal *dignified food security*. This is the core prospect proposed in this research, a reflexively produced fruit borne in the analyses of the two case studies' particular food security constructions rooted in development ideologies and cultures.

If *homo economicus*⁴⁰³ is the rational, self-interested theoretical actor of modern society in its dominant framing⁴⁰⁴, *homo dignitatus* is the dignified actor – the native bearer of *inherent* dignity and also the recipient of *bestowed* dignity – in a morally justified framing of it.⁴⁰⁵ *Homo dignitatus* – the enabling and ennobling of him – is the rightful end of all social and political organization in such an ideal, and it is this end that gives moral direction to all actors in the society. Dignified food security, then, naturally corresponds to the finalization of man's dignity in the context of his food-world.

There exists already a wealth of criticism regarding the way in which modern society has been constructed largely on the basis (and on the back) of *homo economicus* (see, e.g., Illich 1980; Latouche 2009). Many such criticisms – those highlighting, for example, the perpetual dissatisfaction of the person and the progressive ecological exploitation inherent to this construction of society – indeed apply equally well in the context of food security. Nonetheless, I do not pursue them here – these are already well exploited themes – but rather I urge that we refocus our collective food security efforts, and our critical appraisal of them, upon something

⁴⁰¹ For example, Sen (1981) writes that 'we have a problem of poverty to the extent that low incomes create problems for those who are not poor... It isn't easy to push much further the reduction of human beings into "means"' (9). He criticizes the often primary identification of people as fuel for the engines of economic progress, writing further that 'human beings are not merely means of production but also the end of the exercise ... to see human beings only in their productive use is to slight the nature of humanity' (296).

⁴⁰² For example, Francis (2014a) complains that

men and women risk being reduced to mere cogs in a machine that treats them as items of consumption to be exploited, with the result that – as is so tragically apparent – whenever a human life no longer proves useful for that machine, it is discarded with few qualms.

⁴⁰³ John Stuart Mill is often credited as the originator of the economic man construction, though the term itself arose only in the reaction to his work. See Persky (1995) for a brief history of *homo economicus*.

⁴⁰⁴ Indeed, he is the man whose discovery, as it were, led to the *economization* of society lamented by many of the scholars I have relied upon here.

⁴⁰⁵ That is, of course, to oppose it to the possibility for moral vacancy that threatens the former characterization.

that should have held its attention all the while: on the fullest expression of man's personhood, or, as I have tried to capture this here, on his *dignity*.⁴⁰⁶

Articulating and prioritizing *homo dignitatus* as the social end of society also makes him necessarily the political focus of it, and satisfying *this* person requires, of course, also satisfying his need for *dignified food security*. Practically, this way of conceptualizing food policy might lend to thinkers – that is, in the conceptual sense, *us*, and in the practical sense, practitioner governments – several advantages. First, dignified food security introduces, defines, and underlines an incontestable *moral* mandate for political and social action⁴⁰⁷; second, it offers a natural evaluation criteria for taken or prospective policy; and third, it suggests a more or less justiciable criteria according to which food security work might be embedded into policy and law. It should be said, too, that these matters are not only academic: they are unmistakably the stuff of social movements and progressive policy, the moral imperative made formal.

Making dignity real

To concretize the matter somewhat, consider several examples from the case studies. In NYC, we noted several of the ways in which the city's policies embrace an understanding of food security that is more robust than orthodox, wholly conventional appreciations might restrict it to be. In particular, these policies demonstrated their propensity toward progressivity in their relatively strong prioritization of an 'access' dimension of food security (still operating, to be sure, well within a more or less conventional analytical framework for it), via programmes such as *Healthy Bodegas*, *Green Carts*, and *Health Bucks* to expand the possibilities for healthy food purchasing in underserved neighbourhoods. Such efforts mark important progressive motion toward expansiveness of vision and have helped to move policy beyond origins in conventional food security analyses that remain rooted firmly in a 'supply' dimension.

From a perspective that is primarily pragmatic (i.e., of enabling more people to have more access to more fresh foods), these efforts (and their achievements) cannot but be considered as advances from the earlier status quo. From a perspective of *dignified food security* – the new frame I propose here – their achievements remain noteworthy but become less appreciably

⁴⁰⁶ Of course, existing scholarship and practice do not altogether *ignore* the theme and importance of dignity; it is simply that they do not sufficiently or successfully italicize it. The capabilities approach is one perspective that, though it does not do so in altogether approachable terms, ultimately accentuates precisely the kinds of things that reinforce human dignity – for example, by pursuing as its aspiration that men might 'lead the kind of lives [they] have reason to value' (Sen 1999, 285).

⁴⁰⁷ This is to opposite it to – as may too frequently be the case in practice – a hotchpotch collection of activities that are firstly opportune and politically pragmatic and only secondly formulated as matters of justice and social ethics.

spectacular. While increasing the physical and economic access of poor people in poorly resourced areas to fresh food, for example, is incontrovertibly a positive development for both physical wellbeing and personal dignity, the symbolic limitations to dignity that naturally follow from such efforts' programmatically embedded constraints – for example, the possibility to use one's SNAP benefits at only a very small proportion of *Green Carts* – is less so.⁴⁰⁸ Likewise, the city's strong efforts to reform school meals remain plagued by, among other things, a terrible lack of funding, particularly relative to *other* federal and local allocations; this, too, expresses a real undervaluation of the worth of people (and, particularly, of poor people) compared to the worth of things (and to the worth of richer people).

Similarly, in the analytical and verbalized domains, that people's shortcomings in health – like many other examples of social inequity – are first economized and only secondarily understood in terms of human suffering⁴⁰⁹ degrades the worth of the human person: that is, it degrades his dignity. Likewise, the social depreciation implied in the verbalized – and indeed also the practiced – discourses regarding food-related welfare benefits betrays an overwhelming anti-dignitarian discursive burden that must be borne by poor people.⁴¹⁰

In Bogotá, on the other hand, there is a deliberate, explicit discourse of dignity, articulated in precisely such language and delivered as an accompaniment to the preeminent discourse of human rights, and this suggests some prospects of optimism for the philosophical framing of dignified food security that I have proposed here. The official deployment of the dignitarian discourse is notable and important, both for its own symbolic weight and for its practiced – where it *is* practiced – implications. However, the victories achieved in the deployment of this dignitarian discourse remain beleaguered not only by practical shortcomings – a limitation explained largely by the immensity of challenge relative to the scarceness of financial and organizational resources – but also by a certain lack of intellectual profundity, of genuine conceptual penetration, as it were, of the ideas themselves.

This important shortcoming to the robustness of Bogotá's dignitarian discourse is manifest in this research in the difficulty that people demonstrated in explaining or offering a rationale for either dignity or human rights; their fumbling responses suggest the lack of profound anchoring

⁴⁰⁸ The number of Green Carts that can be accessed using SNAP benefits remains minimal, with about 90 of the nearly 500 Green Carts in the city accepting electronic benefit card (EBT) payment (NYC Food 2015). Note, however, that the City has been attentive to the stigma-producing and dignity-reducing segregation that such a circumstance entails and has worked to address it in related contexts. For example, it has helped to increase the number of farmers markets accepting SNAP-benefit payments from fewer than 20 in 2006 (NYC Food 2013, 15) to more than 120, the overwhelming majority, in 2015 (NYC Food 2015).

⁴⁰⁹ Recall the discussion in Chapter 7.

⁴¹⁰ The reckless imposition of this burden might be considered even as a form of discursive violence.

that more generally characterizes these discourses. To be sure, such a position is not *necessarily* incriminating: many of the philosophers I have reviewed here have struggled mightily to address these same questions. But such positions of uncertainty ought at least be considered ones, and it seems to me clear that such a vital reflexive exercise has been most often bypassed by bogotano politicians and laypeople alike.

Among the most convincing practical exemplars of this ‘profundity’ limitation came during a visit I made to a thickly walled and heavily secured urban garden in Bogotá: it seemed physically to be more a fortified barracks than a space for communal welcome and social flourishing. It was closed-off, delimited, and confined – protectively so, as per its intent, but also, in its effect, exclusionarily so – in a palpable metaphor for the limits to Bogotá’s well-pronounced solidial rights-based discourse.

While communal solidarity and participation are nice ideas, their conversion into realities that chafe with well-established social and political norms – and the real concerns that precede them, such as, in this case, physical security – is no simple task. Lacking widespread reflection upon Bogotá’s noble profession of values, a purposed effort to penetrate the implications of the dignitarian discourse, it is a task likely to find only partial satisfaction.⁴¹¹

At the same time, in both NYC and in Bogotá, I also encountered many impactful *stories* – and it is worth reiterating here the value of the narrative not only as a way of *telling* but also as a way of *coming to know* or of *knowing* itself⁴¹² – that divulged people’s essentially *undignified* food-worlds, the ways in which people’s lived experiences often were qualitatively poor on an individual, *human* plane. That is, while many people were sufficiently well fed in a minimalistic quantitative sense – and, sometimes, even in a food-centric qualitative one – their bounded, delimited participation in the food system relegated them to perpetual or recurring experiences of shame, stigma, exclusion, desperation, and moral difficulty.⁴¹³

The picture is not entirely gloomy, though, and the case studies suggest that both New York and Bogotá might offer also ‘spaces of hope’ (to use the term of Harvey 2000, 2012) by way of which *dignified food security* could gain entrée. For one, in both cases, there are (many) government protagonists who act to affirm dignity in people’s food-worlds – articulated as such or (more frequently) not – by whatever means they are able. Even where their individually

⁴¹¹ Still, it may be worth underlining: even a very partial satisfaction of the ideal would, in most contexts, represent an important improvement upon the actual circumstances.

⁴¹² See Chapter 2 for a short discussion of epistemology.

⁴¹³ Of course, this short form of analysis fails to consider *also* the various types of quantitative shortcoming (in total calories or in diversity and sufficiency of particular nutrients) that often manifest concurrently to or separately from these devalorizing phenomenological experiences.

affirming interventions are insufficiently muscular as to transform the technical machinations of food security programming en masse, their collective *individual* contributions do, if incompletely, leave important – and tendentially dignitarian – marks on the bureaucratic operations within which they work.

Even more so, actors outside the government prove tremendously important in both cities for the direct and immediate contributions they make to food security work – for example, the food bank champions in NYC – but most importantly for the force and the framing with which they help to elevate those problems in the public agenda. In an analogous way, thematically interested and socially invested proponents in sovereign fields – for example, the filmmakers Jacobson and Silverbush in the United States – give strong narrative voices to the *indignities* suffered by many participants in the food system. Likewise, the increasingly successful food movement in the United States, and that strongest part of it that locates an epicentre in NYC, is not only aspiring to reform the food system, but frequently doing so in ways that emphasize precisely the *indignity* of constraints imposed by the current model. In short, there are *many* threads of effectively dignitarian work; but – and it is an important shortcoming – it fails to be contrived of and *named* as such.

The agentic priority

To this point, in attempting to demonstrate what dignified food security might consist of, I have stressed the (negative, in the examples) *affective* dimensions of people's lives that result from their often impotent participation in a frequently unvirtuous food-world: shame, stigma, exclusion and so forth. There is a second and perhaps more immediately appreciable way that we might appreciate dignified food security, one that links closely with existing (albeit marginal) scholarship on food security and development: it a through a focus on the *agency*, in the fullest sense, that people can effectively exercise upon and within their food-worlds.⁴¹⁴

Sen's insistence on agency – particularly as it is expressed in and through *freedom*⁴¹⁵ – is fundamental to his scholarship. Illich (1975), a key figure in the postdevelopment line that I have featured in this work, frames in terms similar to *agency* his central concept of *conviviality*; and his description is helpful for its readily graspable vividness:

People need not only to obtain things, they need above all the freedom to make things among which they can live, to give shape to them according to their own tastes, and to

⁴¹⁴ This, of course, is not unrelated to the affective dimension of people's lives; nonetheless, it is distinct enough to characterize it separately here.

⁴¹⁵ Indeed, this word carries such importance for Sen that it appears no fewer than 870 times in *Development as Freedom* (Sen 1999).

put them to use in caring for and about others. Prisoners in rich countries often have access to more things and services than members of their families, but they have no say in how things are to be made and cannot decide what to do with them. Their punishment consists in being deprived of what I shall call “conviviality”. They are degraded to the status of mere consumers (24).⁴¹⁶

Indeed, people need to have a ‘say’ – indeed, more than this, they need the authority and possibility to act upon their preferences – and this is true also in the context of their food-worlds. This notion, whether we are to name it agency, freedom, conviviality, or some other such term, emphasizes people’s abilities to direct the events and trajectories of their own lives and experiences. This, then, is another crucial sense in which the concept of dignified food security can be understood: who might deny the important difference that lies between *being able to eat* (and, furthermore, to eat that which one needs and desires) and *being fed* (that which another determines and delivers)?⁴¹⁷

Articulating a new vision of food security

The matter of working toward *dignified food security* ultimately involves reframing the food security problem. It must shift beyond questions of food quantity and even of food *quality* – this itself a necessary first advance that we have observed as important and underappreciated – to transfer focus away from *food itself* and toward the objective *and* subjective *qualities*⁴¹⁸ of *people’s lives and experiences* that result from their interaction with the food-world. The approach of *dignified food security* transcends the initial research objective – *to understand how narratives of ‘food security’ are constructed in the midst of a new and changing global food-and-health context* – to suggest a wholly new approach to framing the food security discourse.

⁴¹⁶ Compare this with Rahnema’s (2010) use of similar language to characterize a sort of poverty that is *voluntary*, sufficient and relational: ‘convivial poverty’ (190).

⁴¹⁷ See Sen (2000, 75-76) for a good discussion of precisely this difference.

⁴¹⁸ Attention to the subjective dimension of people’s experiences should not suppress our accompanying attention to the objectively discoverable features of people’s food-worlds. As Sen (1999) insists, the attenuation of expectation – what he refers to as ‘adaptation’ or ‘mental conditioning’ – that occurs in contexts of deprivation is often considerable, and this can mask real problems:

Our desires and pleasure-taking abilities adjust to circumstances, especially to make life bearable in adverse situations. The utility calculus can be deeply unfair to those who are persistently deprived: for example, the usual underdogs in stratified societies, perennially oppressed minorities in intolerant communities, traditionally precarious sharecroppers living in a world of uncertainty, routinely overworked sweatshop employees in exploitative economic arrangements, hopelessly subdued housewives in severely sexist cultures. The deprived people tend to come to terms with their deprivation because of the sheer necessity of survival, and they may, as a result, lack the courage to demand any radical change, and may even adjust their desires and expectations to what they unambitiously see as feasible (62-63).

The two cities examined here illuminate, through their quantifiable achievements and their recognizable shortcomings, surely, but *mostly* through the particular narratives that arose within them – discourses derived, in important measure, from the contextually specific constructs of development ideology and culture – the particular ways in which extant food policies are both affirming and negating to the *humanity* of participant *people*. In both cases, the discourses levied by policymakers and by and through policy itself variably serve to dignify and to undignify people (and likewise the discourses engaged by activists and citizens in popular and academic fora).

As this project has progressed from its practice-focused analytical beginnings into this philosophical enquiry of closure, the importance of the food security discourse in its philosophical dimension has surpassed that of its planning functionality. Easterly (2013) insists on recognizing the significance of this transcendence, affirming the argument I make here: that, perhaps above all else, *discourse matters*, and it matters foremost for the tenor of principle that it defends. Easterly writes that ‘you cannot talk only about actions and not about principles’ (579), contextualizing his argument – regarding development – by way of reference to the U.S. civil rights movement: ‘King’s dream was that blacks would be able to say they were “free at last.” He did not first require an expert plan to make blacks “middle class at last”’ (579). In short, King’s rallying cry, known to the entire world, was ‘*I have a dream!*’; it was not ‘*I have a plan!*’

It was – and it remains – the *idea* and the *ideal* of a right to live with dignity that drove *that* emancipatory movement, and it must also be what drives the pursuit of dignified food security.

Given their opportunistic scale – in a few words, a Goldilocksesque size that is big enough to matter and small enough to work – cities like NYC and Bogotá have a great opportunity to create affirming food-worlds for their millions of citizens, and, by extension, for the wider worlds that consume them as icons of discursive leadership and policy example. By reframing – and *naming* – their public and administrative food policy discourses in terms of dignified food security – rather than simply of food security, or of any of the alternative and popular but spent labels – these cities can achieve and promote a truer vision of ‘what really matters’. *After* they affirm the principle, they can turn their sights on the following challenge: the achievement of it in practice.

Summary: A new construct for food security

In this chapter, I have responded to Research Question 3 by drawing upon the products of this research in broad strokes – its clear demonstration of the constructedness inherent to food security, and the different possibilities created for food security discourses by *particular* development perspectives and *particular* cultural factors – to propose the new concept of *dignified food security*. This concept builds upon Sayer’s theoretical endorsement of normativity, and upon the recent slew of dignitarian scholarship, and applies these in light of the empirical work’s illustration of robustly varied possibilities for food security discourse. In short, *dignified food security* fundamentally reframes the food security challenge from one of toiling pragmatism into one that robustly esteems and regards the human person.

In the next chapter, I close this dissertation by turning my gaze – briefly – to the dissertation itself, reflecting upon its particularities, limitations and promise.

Chapter 15

Final thoughts

Homo homini lupus est.
- Attributed to Plautus, (c. 195 BC)

Homo homini sacra res.
- Attributed to Seneca the Younger (c. 65 AD)

Abstract

At the close of this research project, I reflect upon the course and worth of its evolution, its limitations, and its particular contributions. In doing so, I invite future researchers to assume the effort to think more expansively and critically about food security work and to pursue the means to make it ever more dignified.

Introduction

I began this research, framed by ‘a global portrait of crisis, cities, and food’, with an overall objective of ‘understand[ing] how narratives of “food security” are constructed in two contemporary cities in the midst of a new and changing global food-and-health context.’⁴¹⁹ This is achieved, but – or, better, *and* – the original imagination of this objective did not begin to appreciate the depth or character of sociocultural insight that might be excavated from beneath the food security exercise.⁴²⁰ In the first chapter, I set out with three specific research questions:

1. How do the development ideologies that predominate in New York City and Bogotá affect each context’s particular food security discourse?
2. How do the cultures that predominate in New York City and Bogotá affect each context’s particular food security discourse?
3. In what ways can comparison and contrast between – and joint reflection on – the two case studies of New York City and Bogotá illuminate new opportunities for the construction of food security discourse in bases of development ideology and culture?

Chapters 7 through 10 have examined closely the social values that derive from the two cities’ development ideologies, including important ones on progress, economy, and solidarity, and depict how these are very clearly reflected in the cities’ food security discourses. Chapters 11 through 13 have examined how cultural features, including foodways and food-health narratives, help to create both food policy and people’s experiences of its products.

The entirety of the work has relied upon the simultaneous consideration of New York City and Bogotá and the analytical relief that each has given to the other. Indeed, it is this relief that has facilitated the theoretical motion toward dignified food security that I have pursued in Chapter 14. My belief is that I have been able to ‘sort winks from twitches’ (Geertz 1973, 16) and to ‘inscribe’ *thickly* (ibid., 19) and *authentically* (Guba 1990, 71-74) some of the food security realities and constructions that characterize New York City and Bogotá – and, in doing this, to present this finished project as a work of validity and quality.

I must acknowledge one very important metamorphosis that transformed this project as it evolved: as the project advanced, matters of philosophical, theoretical and methodological character assumed ever greater importance, and these ultimately earned prioritization over practicable ones. This is not in any way to devalue the food security efforts of practitioners or to suggest that academics in general should quarantine themselves within the walls of the academe. On the contrary, at the conclusion of this project, I am all the more convinced of the essentiality – to both parties – of an earnest partnership between scholars and practitioners and of an

⁴¹⁹ See Chapter 1.

⁴²⁰ Or, if one’s perspective upon the matter is different, the depths of socially imposed burden *from which* the food security exercise would need to be excavated.

intentioned integration between theory and practice. It just so happens – that is, *it turns out to be the case* – that the focused value of this particular project lies in the conceptual rather than in the practical realm. But, as I have argued here, the concepts that it regards – *food security, development, dignity* – are ones that, assumed by politics and individuals, determine the real quality of real people's real lives. In a word, then, these are concepts upon which we *must* reflect, as societies, as people and as scholars, and I hope that this project has in the end helped us (all) to do precisely that.⁴²¹

Limitations of this project

There are, of course, many limitations to this research, and many ways in which it could have been completed differently. Indeed, important characteristics of interpretive research include the activity of the researcher herself – me – in generating much of the content and the particular 'particularities' chosen for analytical focus.⁴²² Hence simple changes at the starting point of this research – a different researcher, a different pair (or triplet, or quadruplet ...) of case study cities, a different selection of informants or a focus on different programmes within the two cases – would have changed the product dramatically.

Likewise, even having maintained identical all of those incipient aspects, I could have 'curated' the 'data' very differently – indeed, there were at least a dozen further themes that I would have liked to seriously pursue – and settled upon focus areas that led me to alternate conceptual developments. In short, this has been a very *particular* project. But authentic insight has been all along the methodological objective rather than generalizability, and, while particularity *is* a limitation to this research, it is also the characteristic that has enabled its success⁴²³. Perhaps it also acts as an invitation to the next researcher to advance this project's efforts.

There are two further limitations beyond this necessary condition of particularity that I must name. The first is that I have not been able to offer much in the way of practical advice to the municipalities I studied. The transition of this work away from practical and toward theoretical

⁴²¹ This study has underlined that 'food security', as it were, is at least as much a problem of philosophy as it is a technical challenge. Given this constitution, the discursive treatment we have given the matter here is not simply nicely ancillary but *essential*, for, as Wittgenstein (1986) reminds:

[Philosophical problems] are, of course, not empirical problems; but they are solved through an insight into the workings of our language, and that in such a way that these workings are recognized – *despite* an urge to misunderstand them. The problems are solved, not through the contribution of new knowledge, rather through the arrangement of things long familiar. Philosophy is a struggle against the bewitchment (*Verhexung*) of our understanding by the resources of our language (109).

⁴²² See Chapter 2 for a review of this project's methodological foundations.

⁴²³ Recall Geertz's (1973) memorandum that 'it is not necessary to know *everything* in order to understand *something*' (20).

and ethically (rather than functionally) normative emphases has made unfeasible my early intent to generate a concise, usable set of policy recommendations. It is not that the practical implications of this research are negligible, but rather – to the contrary – that they are so substantial as to prove unwieldy.

To say that cities' food security policies ought to prioritize the dignification of people's food-worlds is, surely, justified and correct (according to the reading of things that I propose here) but of limited *directly* practicable utility. If policymakers might agree to the idea – and I hope that they would, though I am not convinced that this would proceed without some encouragement – the question would become, of course, just *how* policymakers might do so. That, I am afraid, must be the project of future researchers and the pioneering policymakers they accompany.

Despite this important limitation, however, I must insist that, to again use the words of Freidmann (2005), there is great value to be located in 'framing and naming' things correctly; and policymakers 'frame and name' matters – including food security – with greater power than most. With that in mind, then, I might at the present juncture issue a single, facile recommendation to policymakers, but one whose straightforwardness belies the difficulty of its execution: to embrace an extraordinary stance of reflexivity and to conduct a systematic review of food security policies and exercises, asking how each one affects the dignitarian possibilities of the people it touches. At this juncture, that is the most practical of recommendations that I can offer; it is as simple – and as complex – as that.

Value of this project and recommendations for ulterior research

Despite this project's limitations, it has managed to advance, in its particular way, the state of inquiry – *knowledge*, as it were – regarding food security. In recognizing several points as strengths, I invite and encourage future researchers to assume them, as fruitful strategies and ideas, where I leave them at the conclusion of this work.

First, this project's use of interpretive methodologies and theoretical frameworks that obliged a very heightened reflexivity positions it already on the margins of conventional food security research. The vast majority of work on food security is quantitative in nature;⁴²⁴ this project

⁴²⁴ This final appeal to reflexivity recalls the position of Žižek (2010), advocating a politic that is less intuitive and more studied:

My advice would be ... precisely to *start thinking*. Don't get caught into this pseudo-activist pressure [to] "Do something" ... and so on ... The famous Marxist formula was, "Philosophers

instead uses insights from anthropology, development studies, and philosophy to develop perspectives that I hope have added usefully to the existing body of food security work new elements of authentic portraiture, phenomenological veracity and ethical reflexivity. If the academe is to be relevant, it must be relevant to people not only mechanically (in the field of food security, for example, such matters might include questions of how often and how much and what people do and might eat) but also experientially and essentially (that is, considering how and how well food security itself *and* the work to assure it regards people's fundamental humanity). I hope that, in this work, I have been able to capture something of both.

Of course, there awaits a plenitude of research that better captures the qualitatively relevant aspects of the food-worlds in which real people really live (and, often, really suffer), and I encourage future researchers to assume precisely this task. In particular I suggest drawing from the strengths of the approaches I have used to benefit here – interpretive, discursive, and ethnographic ones – and remaining hospitable also to the wider family of creative and interpretive research methods and perspectives that are not typically (or at least not widely) used in the domain of food security research.

Second, this research project exists at borders – in those interstitial zones of indefiniteness and opportunity that endure between methodological tactics, disciplinary traditions, theoretical legacies, geographic scales and cultural heritages. The concept of liminality suggests an opportune lens with which to view the vantage in this positioning. Originally used by Van Gennep (2013) to describe the spaces and moments that characterized rights of passage in tribal societies, Turner (1991) developed the concept by emphasizing that such spaces and moments of transition – that is, *liminal* ones – necessarily involve *construction* as well as *destruction* (particularly, of norms and values) and are characterized by ambiguity and uncertainty. I would like to use the idea, however, in an expansive sense to describe the transitional spaces between methodologies, disciplines, theories, geographies and cultures that I have spanned here. Drawing on Turner's insistence upon the constructiveness inherent in such spaces, I insist that the interstitial *research* spaces that I have pursued here are likewise characterized not only by ambiguity and uncertainty but also by a certain sense of opportunity and promise.⁴²⁵

have only interpreted the world; the time is to change it". Maybe today we should say, "In the twentieth century, we maybe tried to change the world too quickly. The time is to interpret it again, to *start thinking*".

As urgent and practical a matter as food security is, at the conclusion of this research I cannot help but agree with Zizek: we must *think* much more about it, and far more carefully, deeply and broadly than we are accustomed – even if this means disrupting our intuitive practical response.

⁴²⁵ This sense of promise calls to mind also Harvey's (2000, 2012) rendering of cities – geographically liminal spaces – as 'spaces of hope', an idea that, at the conclusion of this research, I echo heartily.

This research has profited immensely from its liminality, the multiple perspectives generated from all sides of all borders proving themselves to be, in the company of each other, relief-giving and insight-provoking. Interdisciplinarity (and multi- and transdisciplinarity) have been much lauded for their promise (as well as for their challenge) (e.g., Hinrichs 2008). I echo the sense of general enthusiasm for such work, and I believe that this research stands as an example of its promise and the promise offered by other such liminally situated research efforts. I encourage future researchers, then, to avail of the particular opportunities to be found in the margins and hyphens.

Third, this research has elevated the importance given to dignity in the ambit of food security, and this is an advance that must not be overlooked. I suspect that the vast majority of researchers, policymakers and people stand generally and vaguely in support of dignity, but it continues to largely escape our conscious, intentioned scholarship and work. For example, a search on Scopus for articles that include the terms *food security* and *dignity* in their titles produced no results at all; more creative searching yielded only four related articles (and, for the most part, these only obliquely so). There is wide berth, then, for scholarship that focuses on the notion of *dignified food security*, as I have termed it here, and I hope that such efforts might help to advance its practical deployment, as well.

At this point of conclusion – which is also necessarily one of commencement, of course – I turn in this vein once more to the wisdom of the Ancients. We must choose, in the *real* questions of food security that we have examined here, what must be essentially a *philosophically* reasoned response. Shall we prove that *homo homini lupus est*? Or shall we settle, rather and finally, upon a well more agreeable – and dignified – alternative position: *homo homini sacra res*?⁴²⁶

⁴²⁶ I must credit Gearty (2012) for suggesting the utility of these lemmata in the context of human rights.

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