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# Agrarian Change and Peasant Prospects in Haiti

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Agrarian Change and Peasant Prospects in Haiti

(Thesis format: Integrated Article)

by

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Graduate Program in Geography and the Collaborative Graduate Program in Migration and  
Ethnic Relations

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment  
of the requirements for the degree of  
Degree Doctor of Philosophy

The School of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies  
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## **Abstract**

Haiti is one of the poorest and most severely hunger-stricken countries in the world (GHI 2013). Its contradictions are jarring: although Haiti has the largest relative agrarian population in the Western Hemisphere and relatively less land inequality than the rest of the region (Smucker et al. 2000; Wiens and Sobrado 1998), it is extremely food insecure. Almost 90 percent of the rural population lives below the poverty line (FAO 2014; IFAD 2014), and Haiti relies on food imports for 60 percent of national consumption (OXFAM 2010). Some scholars argue that the spread of commodity relations, persistent rural class differentiation, and dispossession mean that most peasants can no longer reproduce themselves outside of markets, having been transformed into petty commodity producers with many households depending upon some degree of off-farm earnings (Bernstein 2001; Araghi 1995). Others, however, claim that ‘de-peasantization’ is far from inevitable, and stress that peasants continue to persist with varying relations to markets, still constitute a large share of humanity, and are actively fighting to defend their livelihoods (Ploeg 2009; Borras and Edelman 2008; McMichael 2006). At the broadest level, this dissertation explores contemporary struggles facing Haitian peasants in the belief that while they face extremely adverse circumstances, their continuing decline is far from inevitable. On the contrary, this dissertation is premised on the conviction that improving the livelihoods of peasant farmers is fundamental to reducing poverty and food insecurity in Haiti.

More specifically, the papers in this dissertation explore various key aspects of Haiti’s agriculture and food system, including dietary aspirations, an intensifying agro-export push, and competing visions for rural development in the wake of the disastrous 2010 earthquake. Individually and collectively, considerable attention is given to some of the

enduring legacies of the colonial period, and the interconnections between race, class, and food, while being sure to situate the cultural dimensions of peasant problems in their political economic context. This includes focusing heavily on the role played by dominant ‘development’ actors in Haiti (the foreign donor community; NGOs; the state; transnational corporations; domestic agribusinesses and merchant elites) and their relations with peasants in the post-earthquake period. The foundation of this dissertation is extensive field research conducted between November 2010 and July 2013 in a commune in Haiti’s Artibonite Department, the most important food producing part of the country. Field research involved a range of qualitative methods, including interviews, focus groups, and participant observation. My hope is that this dissertation offers a rich, deeply grounded contribution into some of the most crucial issues influencing agrarian change and food security in Haiti today, and provides valuable insights into agrarian change and peasant livelihoods and struggles in Haiti and beyond.

**Keywords**

Colonialism; Race; Peasant resistance; Agrarian Change; Agrarian Political Economy; Food  
Sovereignty; Haiti; Peasant Studies; Ethnography; Development; Qualitative Methods

## **Co-Authorship Statement**

Chapter 2 is co-authored with Tony Weis.

Chapter 3 is sole-authored.

Chapter 4 co-authored with Yasmine Shamsie.

Chapter 5 is co-authored with Tony Weis.

## **Acknowledgments**

I fondly remember the day I met Ari Nikola at his *choukoun* in the mountains above Port-au-Prince. That day Ari pricked my consciousness about the complexities of race and identity in Haiti, planting the seeds for this dissertation. I spent many more days with Ari and was always captivated by his stories and his wisdom. Today I am thankful to consider him a mentor, friend, and *parenn* of my son.

In my doctoral studies, I was privileged to receive research funding from the International Development Research Council of Canada, the Ontario Graduate Scholarship, and the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada. In Western's Geography Department, I am thankful for the input, guidance and friendship of many. I would like to thank: Rachel Bezner-Kerr for her support early on in my studies; my comprehensive examination committee members, Jamie Baxter, and Belinda Dodson; and Lori Johnson for guidance and encouragement along the way. I am especially grateful to Jola Ajibade and Karen Ross who braved the PhD pathway before me and provided helpful advice, comforting words of wisdom and a hug or two when the path ahead seemed daunting. I also wish to offer sincere thanks to Yasmine Shamsie at Wilfrid Laurier University, for opening doors, for providing counsel, and for giving me the opportunity to collaborate in both research and writing. This process was very rewarding and I am very grateful to Yasmine for her heartening encouragement.

I owe a great deal to Anton Allahar, first for obliterating my understanding of “race”, and then for providing new foundations that helped shape my research on colour-coded class relations in Haiti. My first encounter with Prof. Allahar was on the first day of a graduate course entitled “Race, Class and Colonialism.” Those who know him will not be surprised to

learn that his first words to the class that day were audacious: “What race are you?” The reactions of my peers and the conversations that followed remain etched in my memory and that class has been extremely influential in shaping my conceptions of identity. Prof. Allahar’s captivating lectures and his courage to challenge some of the deep-seated beliefs of his students has made him one of my most favourite teachers, and I have never felt more passion for learning than when in his class. He also deserves special thanks for lifting my spirits with his generous comments on my writing.

Tony Weis has been both a committed advisor and important mentor for me both within and beyond academia. During my first year as a doctoral student I developed a strong desire to conduct extended field research in rural Haiti, and while some questioned the feasibility and risk associated with such a project, Tony was fully supportive. I am so grateful to him for his faith in me, and for encouraging me to pursue long-term field research. During fieldwork, Tony’s unwavering support was invaluable; he was both a source of comfort, always sympathetic to the health and other struggles of our family, and also a source of energy to push forward.

I returned to Canada in 2013 with mountains of data and often struggled with how to identify the most important problems to tackle and how to frame my arguments. Tony has always spurred me on by asking thoughtful questions and by pointing me to literature rather than by taking the reins. The balance Tony struck between guiding me on one hand and allowing me the freedom to pursue my own interests on the other, has helped make this experience rewarding and, as a result, I am completing this degree not only with confidence in the scholarly contributions that will result from this dissertation, but with a much deeper sense of fulfillment that has come from doing work that is meaningful to me on a more personal level.

Tony has edited and provided comprehensive and constructive feedback on multiple drafts of this dissertation, and somehow he has always managed to do this with incredible patience, grace, and with a spirit of encouragement. I am extremely grateful to have had the privilege to work with and learn from such a brilliant man and I will very much miss the mini-lectures I received over coffee or in his office. I always came away from our conversations baffled by Tony's memory and by the breadth of his knowledge, but also energized by his keen sense of social justice.

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## 1. Introduction: Research Problems and Approach

### 1.1 Contextualizing the Problem

The levels of poverty and food insecurity in Haiti are unmatched in the Western Hemisphere, along with an extremely high degree of income inequality. Recent estimates are that three-quarters of the Haitian population lives on less than US\$2 per day and over half live on less than US\$1 per day (WFP 2015). Despite having the largest agrarian population in the region – over 60 percent of the country’s labour force is involved in agriculture (OXFAM 2010)<sup>1</sup> – Haiti is a net food importer and imports account for roughly 60 percent of food consumption in the country, including as much as 80 percent of all rice, its most important dietary staple (Dupuy 2014; IFAD 2010). Since 1986, food has become an increasingly significant part of Haiti’s persistent macro-economic imbalances. The large trade deficit steadily increased in the 1990s, and by 2006 four-fifths of all export earnings went to purchase imported foods (McGuigan 2006). Just prior to the January 2010 earthquake, in a country of around 10 million people, nearly 1.8 million were already considered food insecure (IOM and UN 2010), and this subsequently got much worse.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> The largest national peasant organization *Mouvman Peyizan Papay* (MPP) contests this statistics, claiming 80 percent of Haiti’s population is involved in agriculture, but there is considerable complexity since many peasant households rely on varying degrees of off-farm earnings.

<sup>2</sup> According to the FAO (2009), food insecurity exists when people lack “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.” In a general sense, food insecurity can be measured and experienced at the national, household, and individual levels. At the household level, food insecurity is typically conceptualized in terms of the management of the food supply, whereas at the individual-level food insecurity relates to experiences of hunger and insufficient food consumption (Campbell and Desjardins 1989).

The earthquake was a catastrophe of staggering proportions: over 220,000 were killed and as many as 3 million people were affected at some level. In 2010, estimates of food insecurity soared, rising to between 2.5 and 3.3 million people (WFP 2010). One of the major international responses to the disaster was, unsurprisingly, a flood of food aid. On one hand, direct food aid obviously had a role to play in the face of the humanitarian crisis. But on the other hand, as free and cheap food flooded local markets it dampened the earnings and incomes of Haiti's small farmers (Stephenson and Denyer 2010) and threatened to worsen Haiti's dependence upon imports and vulnerability to food price spikes (FAO/WFP 2010).

The response of the international community to the earthquake also inadvertently brought another deadly catastrophe, a cholera epidemic, which hit the Artibonite region in October 2010 and killed over 3,000 people by the end of the year (Aljazeera 2010). It was later confirmed that the virus was introduced to Haiti by UN military forces, and outbreaks have continued to unfold ever since during the rainy season. By early 2015, there have been over 700,000 cases of cholera in Haiti, the disease has killed more than 9,000 people, and it remains a major threat for over one-third of the population that lacks access to clean drinking water. The food security outlook has also not improved; roughly 75 percent of the population was still deemed food insecure in 2015 (WFP 2015). Vulnerability to cholera and food insecurity was especially acute for the more than 85,000 registered Internally Displaced People, and remains so for those who continue to eke out an existence in over 123 congested camps, which are mostly located in what amount to economic deserts (FAO 2015; IOM 2015; UN-OHRLLS 2015).

In large measure, media and scholarly explanations of Haiti's food insecurity can be divided into two broad camps. On one side, Haiti's poverty, food security, and underdevelopment are blamed on Haitians themselves, a central part of which is a belief that resistance (to modernization, the state, urban elite, and foreign powers) among the allegedly 'backward' peasantry coupled with overpopulation have inhibited progress and development (Girard 2010; Felima 2009; Diamond 2005; Myrthil 1979). On the other side, some critics have described structural adjustment dictated trade liberalization and heavy flows of US food aid as the primary culprits that have exacerbated food insecurity, which is often tied to the claim that Haiti was largely food self-sufficient before the onset of adjustment in 1986 (Dupuy 2012; Schwartz 2008; McGuigan 2007). Both narratives draw attention to some major issues, and they are not entirely exclusive. For instance, some peasant land use practices (particularly cutting forests for charcoal production) are a major force in environmental degradation, the period of structural adjustment clearly ushered in a wave of food imports, and both narratives regularly include indictments of corrupt and irresponsible governments, though with widely varying degrees of recognition of the roles that foreign intervention has played in this.

Explanations of the earthquake disaster have generally mimicked these divergent understandings of Haitian poverty and food security. Some laid blame on Haitians themselves, with Pat Robertson the most notorious example, suggesting that the earthquake was a consequence of Haitian Independence leaders once having made a "pact with the Devil" (CNN 2010). Other mainstream media outlets similarly construed Haitians as barbaric and unruly, albeit without the degree of racism and ignorance displayed by Robertson, disseminating images of chaos and impending violence in the

wake of the earthquake. Even when Haitians were painted as undeserving victims, it was often in patronizing terms, without agency to adequately respond (Dubois 2012). Such portrayals continued in the aftermath of the earthquake, with the mainstream media typically ignoring the fortitude and solidarity of Haitians and their own contributions to the recovery (Schuller and Morales 2012).<sup>3</sup>

There has been considerable attention to rural poverty and pathways for change in the post-earthquake period, with agriculture featuring prominently in post-disaster plans. However, as I repeatedly emphasize, peasant perspectives remain peripheral to rural development planning, though peasants still make up the majority of Haiti's population. This disjuncture between the increased attention to agriculture in development planning and the neglect for peasant interpretations and priorities is at the heart of this dissertation. I believe that if rural poverty and human suffering continue to the extent that they have, and peasant producers continue to be politically marginalized, and isolated from debates about the future of Haitian agriculture, then the unsustainable levels of rural-urban migration that contributed to one of the most deathly disasters in modern world history are likely to continue and intensify. This dynamic is starkly reflected in the fact nearly half of the estimated 600,000 Internally Displaced People who fled the capital to the countryside returned to Port-au-Prince less than a year after the 2010 earthquake, most to the sort of conditions – rickety ‘lean-to’s’ on steep hillsides – where earthquake casualties were concentrated (Bengtsson et al. 2010).

---

<sup>3</sup> Better analyses of the causes of the disaster and its aftermath could be found in the alternative media (Schuller and Morales 2012; Dubois 2012; Bell 2010).

At the broadest level, my research is guided by an argument made a quarter-century ago by one of Haiti's most prominent scholars and peasant advocates, the late Michel Rolph Trouillot. As Trouillot (1990, 229-230) put it:

Any solution to the Haitian crisis must find its roots in the resources of the peasantry...And to do this...intellectuals, politicians and planners – foreign and Haitian alike [must] talk less about (or 'for') the peasantry and begin listening more attentively to what the diverse subgroups have said in the past and have to say now about their own future.

From this starting point, I have sought to ground my research in the lived experiences of Haitian peasants. My hope is to push beyond the piecemeal narratives of food insecurity and peasant livelihoods in Haiti noted earlier and shed light on a much more complex reality, drawing attention to crucial and underappreciated elements like food culture and contemporary land struggles that are central to prospects for rural development. Yet while I deeply admire the courage and resourcefulness of Haitian peasants, and have sought to contribute to peasant struggles, I have also made concerted efforts to avoid romanticizing rural Haiti and refrain from making lofty claims about peasant visions for agriculture. My aim is to recognize peasant agency to shape their own futures in the face of forbidding historical, cultural, and political economic circumstances, recognizing that this agency is part of a long legacy of resistance against the political and economic elites and international actors who have long dominated the country. Though the balance of power is uneven, and the success of peasant struggles has been limited to this point, there are many sources of inspiration and optimism in contemporary movements and I hope my research might in some small way contribute to them.

## 1.2 Research Questions

This dissertation is centrally concerned with the problems and prospects for Haitian peasants, including responses to recent rural development schemes (which include dynamics that are in line with the wider phenomenon of land grabbing), food culture and dietary aspirations, and the post-earthquake intensification of neoliberal agricultural development policies. These objectives were framed by three interlocking questions:

- 1) How do post-earthquake reconstruction and development plans for agriculture and rural development compare with the visions expressed by national peasant movements in Haiti?
- 2) How do colour-coded class hierarchies influence attitudes towards food and farming in Haiti, and how is this reflected in dietary preferences?
- 3) How are competing visions for agriculture among peasant groups and the key creditor and donor institutions<sup>4</sup> and Haitian government playing out on the ground?

These questions reflect a tension between structure and agency, giving attention to the weight of historical legacies (and the complex ways they are reflected in culture), power,

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<sup>4</sup> In Haiti, the line between creditors and donors is sometimes blurry as institutions like the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) and World Bank (WB) have been historically important creditors, yet at the same time have provided the Haitian state with an unusual amount of aid and grants, especially in the wake of the 2010 disaster. Alongside these influential multilateral institutions, which serve as both creditors and donors, are many other donors, including both bilateral foreign aid agencies and non-governmental organizations (NGOS). This combination of creditor and donor institutions plays a significant role in informing state policy and development objectives in Haiti, and hereafter (where specific institutions are not explicitly identified) it is referred to as 'creditors and donors'.

and inequality in Haiti, in a way that strives to be sensitive to peasant interpretations of problems and visions of rural development.

### **1.3 Theoretical Context and Core Theoretical Foundations**

#### *1.3.1 A Brief Note on Neoliberalism*

The obstacles faced by the peasantry have long and deep historical roots, as developed especially in chapter 2. However, a significant share of this dissertation focuses on how the policies associated with neoliberal economic restructuring, enacted since 1986, have exacerbated the historic struggles of Haitian peasants.

At its core, neoliberalism is an ideological and political project that suggests human well-being can best be enhanced by continually reducing barriers to businesses and capital accumulation (Harvey 2005); or, as Klein (2007, 303) succinctly puts it, neoliberalism is “capitalism stripped of its Keynesian appendages.” The neoliberal state is expected to prioritize a favourable business climate above all else, securing and extending private property rights and liberalizing markets, trade, and investment.

The neoliberal turn in development policy and planning took root amidst a series of debt crises that shook much of the Global South in the 1980s, which followed a period of declining terms of trade, state over-borrowing (largely from private financial markets), and rising interest rates. To prevent widespread loan defaults and a global financial crisis, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and World Bank managed the repayment of national debts to foreign creditors through extensive loans, which came with a series of interlocking policy conditions that became known as Structural Adjustment Programs (SAPs). In essence, SAPs necessitated: fiscal austerity and deep cuts in social spending;

trade liberalization, market deregulation, and the encouragement of foreign investment; the privatization of state corporations and services; and the extension of private property rights. The ideological belief was that deepening integration within global markets would enhance the flow of goods and investment, with countries such as Haiti gaining increased foreign investment as result of the cheaper cost of labour, which in turn would enhance export capacity and enable greater access to cheaper goods, spurring economic growth and enable debt repayment (Weis 2007). Since 1986, Haiti's policy restructuring has followed the SAP prescription very closely, including: the privatization of many state-owned resources and public corporations (including the state-owned telecommunications company Teleco, the state-owned cement factory, and the state-owned flour mill); trade liberalization and deregulation (including massive reductions on import tariffs and a series of bilateral trade agreements); and a decline in public subsidies, including for agricultural production (though these were meager to begin with). In Haiti, as elsewhere, these neoliberal reforms have led to the deepening of social inequalities and a steady decline in most development indicators (Schuller 2010), as enormous reductions in public spending have disproportionately affected the poor, while liberalization has failed to improve unemployment rates or wage levels (McMichael 2012).

### *1.3.2 Theoretical Foundations*

The core theoretical foundations for this dissertation are drawn most heavily from literature in: agrarian political economy; political ecology; identity formation and symbolic consumption; and peasant studies, including recent articulations of food sovereignty. In a broad sense, agrarian political economy is a field that examines agrarian change in the context of uneven power and social relations, and uneven distributions of

land and wealth. As Bernstein (2010, 22) puts it, the essential questions through this lens are: “Who owns what? Who does what? Who gets what? What do they do with it?” The literature in agrarian political economy has provided a valuable theoretical framework that helped me to frame my questions and analyses on land conflict and labour relations, class and race-based differentiation, rural social movements, and peasant decision making (Bernstein 2014, 2010, 2001; Ploeg 2010; 2009; Akram-Lodhi 2007a, 2007b; Bryceson et al., 2000; Chayanov 1966).

My theoretical foundations are also informed by the broad field of political ecology, which similarly aims to expose and denaturalize exploitative social relations, with a focus on understanding how power and inequality relate to processes of environmental degradation (Walker 2005; Robbins 2004; Blaikie and Brookfield, 1987). A major theme within political ecology concerns how the unequal distribution of land and other resources must be situated with attention to both wider spatial scales and older historical processes (Robbins 2004; Blaikie and Brookfield 1987). My research reflects the ‘structure-agency’ tension that is common to research in political ecology, investigating both the structural dynamics driving de-peasantization in Haiti (intensifying with post-disaster rural development schemes and the rural commercial ventures of the merchant elite) and the agency of individual actors in responding to these changes.

My research also draws from literature on identity formation and symbolic consumption in the broad field of cultural theory. A theme in this literature focuses on understanding how meanings, ideologies and symbols are used as tools for communicating status and identity. I have drawn from the work of sociologists and cultural anthropologists who have explored the social meaning of things; how human

cultures seek social mobility through the consumption of prestigious goods; and how the consumption of goods can influence identity formation and social standing (Douglas 2003[1970]; Appadurai 1988; Mintz 1986; Bourdieu 1984). I have drawn from this scholarship to explore how ‘food meanings’ and cultural values of foods influence dietary preferences and social relations in rural Haiti.

Finally, my research was informed by literature on food sovereignty, an emerging concept that challenges dominant neoliberal policy approaches to food and agriculture, and sets out alternative policies which would foster greater local and democratic control over food systems (Borras 2008; Weis 2007a). While the meaning of ‘food sovereignty’ continues to be debated, in concrete terms it implies: action on such issues as land reform that will lead towards more equitable social relations in agriculture (including strong, explicit attention to improving gender equity); policy-making that is centrally guided by the participation of small-scale farmers and the rural poor and oriented towards ecologically sustainable practices; and trade policies that protect domestic production from de-stabilizing imports. The emergence of food sovereignty has contributed to a deepening critique of how industrial food systems together with global market integration have negatively affected the livelihoods of peasants and the rural poor in the Global South (Edelman et al. 2014). However, in celebrating the importance of small-scale and more locally-oriented agriculture, and democratic governance, the literature has tended to neglect or downplay the ways that social hierarchies have influenced food cultures, and how things like ‘race’ and class can influence ideas of inferiority and, in turn, bias food consumption decision-making. That is, negative perceptions of domestic food and farming can act as a serious barrier to mobilization

towards the broad goals of food sovereignty, and Haiti provides an illustrative case study in this regard, which I explore in Chapter 3.

## **1.4 Methods and Methodology**

### *1.4.1 Critical Ethnography*

My methodological approach comes from ‘critical ethnography’, which involves situating a local culture within broader historical, political, economic, and social processes (Van Maanen 2004) and “begins with an ethical responsibility to address processes of unfairness or injustice” (Madison 2005, 5). What makes ethnography ‘critical’ is to study culture and knowledge in a way that seeks to reveal forms, ideologies, and symbols of social control and oppression, expose hidden agendas, and ultimately to try to use new knowledge to contribute to the process of social change (Madison 2005; Thomas 1993). One of the principal objectives of ethnography, and a core goal of my research, was to explore cultural and social patterns through experience and observation (Schensul et al. 1990) in order to establish a sound basis for knowledge (Van Maanen 2004), identifying dominant trends rather than concrete truths.

The field research that informs this dissertation took place from November 2010 to July 2013 in the town of Dezam in Haiti’s Artibonite Valley (See Figure 1).<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> This period also included the birth of our second child Vienna on May 24<sup>th</sup> 2011 in the small village of Deschappelle (roughly 20 km from Dezam), and a subsequent maternity leave.

**Figure 1: Map of Haiti**



Source: Maps.com

To explore food culture and dietary practices I intentionally observed and recorded various aspects of community food systems, such as foods sold and consumed in public kiosks, street-side ‘*restoran-s*’ [restaurants], open-air markets, and homes, as well as food practices during religious ceremonies and celebrations. I also actively participated in community familial activities that I might not have been privy to without intentionally seeking out opportunities to engage with people. This included working with peasants on their land, participating in religious ceremonies and community meetings, and cooking and sorting beans and vegetables with women and children. My long-term immersion in the field enabled me to benefit and learn from many unintentional observations. Lessons about social codes, jokes, food hierarchies, non-verbal cues, and meaning systems resulted from countless daily experiences living in Dezam and performing very mundane activities and chores, from washing laundry and

bathing in the river, to marketing for food and household goods, to gardening in our yard, and perhaps most of all, to the activities surrounding raising my children. As Katz (1994) so aptly put it: I was “always, everywhere in ‘the field’,” and because of this I frequently found myself taking in unexpected and unrequested information about the lives, practices, and coping mechanisms of very poor and marginalized peasants. I regularly witnessed how peasants in the area suffer, adapt to scarcity, and negotiate various challenges presented to them, sometimes struggling against exploitation.

My ability to be immersed over a significant period of time was a privilege that was both personally fulfilling and invaluable to my research. I lived in the Artibonite Valley for over 6 months before conducting formal interviews with key informants in the community, and before finalizing my interview guides and food preference surveys with community members. Miller and Crabtree (2004) emphasize that understanding the research context and having a sense of participants prior to conducting interviews can greatly enhance the rigour of qualitative research. In my work, I strongly believe that my long-term immersion enhanced the quality of my interview guides, enabling me to frame my questions in more appropriate language and deepening my sense of the community food culture before I sought to identify and discuss complex subjects like food hierarchies. In addition, long-term participant observation helped me, as it often does (Herbert 2000), catch tensions between the words and actions of community members that I might otherwise have overlooked. For example, while people tended to openly articulate disdain for certain foods like *pitimi* [which refers to either sorghum or millet] and black beans, I learned that they consumed these foods in private spaces, in Voudou

ceremonies, and during *konbits* [collective agricultural work day, most often an exchange without monetary compensation].

#### *1.4.2 Study Site*

I moved with my family to the rural community of Dezam in Haiti's Artibonite Valley in November 2010. Dezam is a growing town that straddles the urban-rural continuum. The small tin shops that line the main road signal an interface between the global and the local economy, as sacks of freshly harvested beans stand beside an auto parts shop that doubles as a water filtration depot. The tarps of drying rice spread out on the road hint at the engine of the local economy: rice. Hidden behind the bustle of the main roads and concrete block fences lies some of the most fertile land in Haiti, locally referred to *Bas Rak* [the lower stratum], which backs onto the Artibonite River, the largest river in the country. During the colonial period the valley was a sugar plantation worked by slaves while over time, the mountains above became home to maroon communities of escaped slaves. In the 1930s, a US-based corporation, the Standard Fruit Company, enveloped over 3,500 acres in this area to establish a large banana plantation, but in the periods between sugar and banana plantations, the fertile valley has been subdivided into small plots that are cultivated by peasants, many of whom cultivate several dispersed small parcels. Today, the landscape is a patchwork of small plots irrigated by a decrepit canal system that empties into the Artibonite River. The small plots are referred to locally as *jaden* [gardens], and stretch through the valley and continue up the mountains that surround Dezam. In the rainy season, the landscape resembles a quilt of fertile gardens, whereas in the dry season much of it looks tormented: dry, deforested, and rocky. Dezam sits at the bottom of a valley framed by two mountain ranges, the *Maté* range to the south

and the *Kayé* range to the north. From November 2010 to July 2013 my family and I lived off the main road about one-half kilometer in a small *abitasyon* [which roughly translates to hamlet or neighbourhood].

Dezam is formally split between two municipal *seksyon*-s [Haiti's smallest political and administrative unit] in the Verrette commune, though in practice Dezam is more of an informal designation, as boundaries shift depending on whom one asks, with varying combinations of over 30 *abitasyon*-s counted in different definitions. The fluid boundaries even between *abitasyon*-s make population estimates difficult to corroborate. The Institute for Haitian Statistics and Informatics (2009) estimated that Central Dezam, which includes about a dozen *abitasyon*-s, has a population of roughly 5,000, with a population density of roughly 3,700 people/km<sup>2</sup>. The area of greater Dezam includes approximately 12,000 - 15,000 inhabitants with rural areas in the commune holding about 260 people/km<sup>2</sup>, though the reliability of census data is difficult to assess as the most recent national census was in 2003 and its accuracy is questionable (the challenge of numbers is further elaborated below).

#### *1.4.3 Class and Social Differentiation in Dezam*

There are a range of rural classes in Dezam that are locally differentiated into four primary strata: *gwo planté* [big planter], *gwo peyizan* [big peasant], *peyizan* [peasant], and *ti peyizan* [small peasant]. While the “conventional hierarchy of status among the rural poor ... smallholder, tenant, wage-labourer” (Scott 1976, 34) broadly characterizes the social relations in Dezam, many act as smallholder, tenant, and sharecropper simultaneously, and it is not only land ownership but also land quality that influences relative social positions (Ellie 1992). For example, *ti peyizan*-s generally own land, but it

is often of such poor quality that they are also obliged to *vann jounen* [to work as daily wage labourers]. At the same time, even the wealthiest people in the area, though they may employ agricultural wage labourers, can be seen working on their fertile, irrigated land in *Bas Rak*. Though I never encountered a person in Dezam who did not consider him or herself a peasant, three individuals there are widely considered *gwo planté* because they own large amounts of land (roughly 50-70 acres dispersed in multiple plots), including sizeable parcels in the irrigated valley.

Disparities between rural classes are also marked in a few other ways. First, the residence of the household and the location of land ownership reflects relative status, with wealthier inhabitants living in the valley and cultivating land in *Bas Rak* and poverty increasing as one ascends the mountains. Second, the produce grown and agricultural practices of producers further influence relative social positioning, with rice cultivation more prestigious than *pitimi*, for example, and fertilizer use a symbol of wealth. The relationships that women in the community have to agriculture and food also influence their socio-economic standing and household status. For instance, women who cook food for *konbit-s* tend to carry higher social status than women who work the land, and women who *fè kòmès* [purchase foods and goods to resell] tend to enjoy higher social status than women who sell produce that they or their family members have cultivated. Housing styles and materials are also obvious indicators of class. *Peyizan* and *ti peyizan* are more likely to live in houses made of rock and mud, have their land fenced with candelabra cactus, and walk longer distances to access water. Wealthier inhabitants of central Dezam generally reside in concrete brick houses, and concrete roofs are more prestigious than corrugated tin. Some *gwo peyizan-s* have solar panels, with the wall surrounding the

*lakou* [the familial courtyard is composed of a cluster of homes] made of concrete bricks, and a few have concrete water basins that collect piped spring water. Here, it is important to note that the relative prosperity of *gwo peyizan-s* carries certain obligations to neighbours, kin, and tenants, informal rules of reciprocity embedded in *patwon-kliyan* [patron-client] relations that serve as a kind of social insurance for *peyizan-s* and *ti peyizan-s* (Smith 2001).

#### 1.4.4 Agricultural Practices and Land Tenure

The cultivation patterns of peasants vary by class and by geography. Key crops grown in the valley include rice, corn, okra, eggplant, black beans, peanuts, and scallions, along with some other minor crops like sweet potatoes. Mountain crops are more likely to be sorghum or millet (*pitimi*), root crops like sweet potatoes or yams, and sometimes coffee. Tree fruits like mangoes, avocados, or breadfruit may grow in the *jaden* but are more common in the *lakou*. The majority of peasants, including the *gwo planté-s*, continue to produce goods both for sale in local markets and for familial subsistence, and cultivate in labour-intensive ways, polycropping with mutually beneficial combinations and limited external fertilizers (fertilizer use in the region is most common among rice-growers in the valley). The predominant agricultural tools are the hoe and sickle, and donkeys are the primary means of transporting agricultural goods from farm to home or market. It is very common for households to raise a pig in the *lakou*, and many peasants of some means may own a small number of goats (1-3 is common), chickens, and ducks, all of which roam free and return to the *lakou* in the evening. Some peasants raise guinea hens or pigeons, though this is far less common.

As occurs throughout Haiti, land access in Dezam is governed by both formal and informal tenure systems. A recent demographic study in the area (financed by the Canadian International Development Agency) estimated that over 55 percent of Dezam households cultivate between 0.75 and 1.5 acres of land, with 75 percent of the population cultivating less than 0.75 acres (GASA 2011). But this assessment glosses over the reality that land access in Dezam is highly complex and lacking formal records, as in most of rural Haiti, to an extent that it is often impossible to identify ownership (Ellie 1992). In general, peasants make ownership claims from several different premises, including if they have purchased or inherited land or if they cultivate *té leta* [state land]. There are also various leasehold arrangements between private interests and in gaining access from the state. This can include direct rental of land for a season [*lweyaj*], for a year [*fèmay*], or for many years [*pòtèk*]. Various sharecropping [*demwatye*] arrangements also exist in Dezam, though the predominant deal is to split the harvest at a ratio of 2:3 in favour of the tenant. *Bay kenbe* is a system of land exchange that tends to be sought when a landowner faces financial struggles, owing to such things as funeral costs, familial sickness, or successive poor harvests. In this system, the landowner is loaned cash for the temporary use of land and can reclaim this land after repaying the debt, though in practice it often proves very difficult for peasants to pay back the loan and hence regain access to their land (Ellie 1992). In Dezam, the local irrigation committee estimates that half of the land is worked under the *bay kenbe* tenure arrangement, but it is recognized that precise data would be nearly impossible to determine due to the frequent changing of hands.

While many transfers occur peacefully, there is also a long history of land conflict in Dezam and in the Artibonite Valley more broadly. The most prevalent form of conflict

occurs between peasants, often caused by disagreements over the boundaries of inherited land or the timing of irrigation schedules. Some recent cases of micro-scale land reform in the region were initiated by the state Institute for the Application of Agrarian Reform (INARA) during the Preval presidency (1995-2000), with small pieces of state land distributed to peasants. More recently, larger scale conflicts have occurred around the outskirts of Dezam, in which peasants have so far successfully resisted attempts from large landowners who were seeking to extend their holdings in the mountain regions.

#### *1.4.5 Public Infrastructure and Services*

Like most of rural Haiti, public services are extremely limited in Dezam. Near the end of my stay there, the main road was finally connected to an electrical grid, although the only practical benefit at that point was one streetlight at the main crossroads. Various shops and a local gas station did periodically use generators, and some solar power streetlights (financed by international NGOs) were introduced on the main road through town. Dezam has a decrepit water system that is sourced from a spring in the Maté mountain range, which provides only sporadic access through open pipes that haphazardly stick out of the ground, generally without faucets. Secretive tapping of the line is a chronic problem and has caused heated community conflict. The poor quality of this water system surely amplified the cholera epidemic, as did the lack of an ambulatory or emergency system.<sup>6</sup> Those with some cash resources purchased drinking water from a water filtration depot in the town's centre at roughly US\$0.10/gallon, while others with less

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<sup>6</sup> During the cholera crisis Hospital Albert Schweitzer funded an ambulance that served the commune of Verrette, including Dezam, which is about 25 km away from the hospital. As the sound of the ambulance echoed through the countryside, some would note how it signaled another cholera victim.

means treated river water with water purification tablets (when distributed by aid organizations) or more regularly with *klorox* [clorox bleach]. Still others with the least means drank from the canal directly – the same canals are where people bathe, wash laundry, and draw irrigation water in the portions of the valley. There are no functional indoor toilets in Dezam and household latrines are few, which presents major problems in the rainy season when torrential rains wash over the mountains and the residue collects in the valley below. Many expressed fears that the lack of sewage management was increasing the spread of cholera, with one friend describing how she saw human feces floating through the canal while working in her rice paddy.

There is a small health clinic in central Dezam that is operated by a medical technician and a nurse and offers a range of antibiotics, vitamins, and vaccinations. A large open-air marketplace operates bi-weekly and offers a wide range of goods, ranging from processed foodstuffs and second-hand clothing from North America, to plastic wares and garlic from China, to some foodstuffs like spaghetti and Maggi bouillon cubes and polyester clothing from the neighbouring Dominican Republic. It is notable that although *diri miyami* [imported rice from the U.S.] has flooded many markets throughout the country, it was not available in Dezam. This might stem in part from the large supply of local rice in the area, but peasant resistance to *diri miyami* has also contributed to its absence. Peasant leaders spoke of how peasant demonstrations and roadblocks prevented the entry of imported rice to the Artibonite department in the 1980s and 1990s, and there has always been strong anti-*diri miyami* sentiment in the region.

#### *1.4.6 Study Site Selection*

I chose Dezam as the primary study site for my research for a number of reasons. First, I had experience working in this community and visited it regularly when I worked for a medium-sized NGO in Port-au-Prince from 2007 to 2009. I had well-established relationships and partnerships there, and a working knowledge of the power dynamics. Second, the Artibonite Valley is one of the most fertile regions in Haiti and produces roughly 80 percent of domestic rice, the country's core food staple, and Dezam is in the heart of the region (Winter and Samdup 2008; CNSA 2007). To enhance the reliability of the food preference and dietary recall surveys I felt that it would be important to choose a relatively fertile study site to limit the influence of lack of access to food or poor agricultural production on food preferences. Third, as a fertile and productive region, the Artibonite Valley is central to both agrarian change and any prospect for enhanced food sovereignty in Haiti. It is a region that was highlighted as an important site for agricultural development in post-earthquake plans, and it is still largely controlled by small producers. This allowed me to investigate some of the struggles surrounding agricultural development plans as new projects were initiated, a focus of Chapter 5. Finally, as noted, there is a range of peasant classes within a relatively small area of about 30 km, and this was key to examining food preferences across class groups.

#### *1.4.7 Cross-Cultural Fieldwork and Reflexivity*

A core dimension of ethnographic research is the continual process of self-review by the researcher, which means being reflexive about how the researcher's positionality and experiences of field research influence the data collected (Nayak 2006; Madison 2005; Thomas 1992). In this section I offer a brief description of my field research experience

with particular attention to how my position as an outsider in Dezam influenced the data I collected.

The cross-cultural dynamics of this project were simultaneously deeply rewarding and immensely taxing on many levels. One of my aims for field research was to integrate myself, and my family, as much as possible into community life. Still, the power relations marked by my phenotype, class, and nationality unavoidably influenced my relationships and experiences. There has been extensive debate about the advantages and drawbacks of researchers coming from an ‘insider’ or ‘outsider’ position (Nayak 2006; Ruben and Ruben 2004; Shensul and Schensul 1999; Said 1989). Though theoretically I concur that a researcher who shares the same phenotype, gender, or class group of the study population will not necessarily be more capable of soliciting an authentic truth than an outsider (Nayak 2006; Miles and Crush, 1993), I also must admit that being such a hyper-visible outsider in Dezam created certain limitations. Outside of the *ti wout* [small road] that I lived on, with roughly 20 other households, I remained ‘*blan*’ [a Kreyòl word meaning both white people and foreign people, including non-Caucasian foreigners] to most people in Dezam for over 2.5 years. For example, a neighboring young boy who was a fast friend of my son and a daily visitor at our home took the better part of a year to transition from calling me *blan* to calling me Marylynn.

I worked hard to find an appropriate voice in Dezam. In practical terms this involved such things as: regularly going to the local market; cooking ‘Haitian’ food; conversing with neighbours about how to master local recipes; gardening and raising animals in our yard; getting Haitian dresses made and wearing them; seeking health care in the local dispensary and hospital; and raising children among others in the town. Some

of my most rewarding and informative moments were in the marketplace after I had learned some of the art of bantering with *Madanm Sara*, the term for Haitian market women who are known to chatter and gossip like the yellow and black canaries of the same name. Still, often the race and class barriers seemed insurmountable and I would be remiss to deny the reality that I was often met with varying combinations of suspicion, hostility, and contempt. This meant that my subjective experience was often one of unbridgeable difference and it frequently took considerable force of will to brave the marketplace and the jeers.

In many ways I think my 'race' position served to enhance my understanding of how racially charged rural Haiti is, a dynamic that may have been less visible for a black Haitian researcher. Part of this was tied to an important decision I made early on not to rely on a 'fixer' (a research assistant who might double as a sort of casual bodyguard) to accompany me, with the exception of my research in Caracol in Haiti's North Department, an area that I did not know nearly as intimately. In most cases, I developed relationships either through friends I had already established during my earlier work in Haiti or independently. I strongly believe that decision was advantageous for several reasons. First, my independence and lack of association with a Haitian community member enabled me to be 'strategically naïve' (Smith 2001) and to ask detailed questions about things like cooking practices, social codes and rules, farming, and eating behaviours that people often seemed excited to share. Second, my autonomy allowed me to experience and assess some of the race and class relations in the region that might not have been obvious to me had I been accompanied by a local fixer. I often noticed that when I walked with a Haitian friend or Haitian research assistant I was far less likely to

be heckled or met with apprehension. Alternately, when I walked in the town independently or with my children, the frequent race-based comments I received – though a source of frustration – often provided valuable opportunities to discuss issues of race with community members. At the same time, I was also mindful of the ways that my class and phenotype influence social dynamics and concede that the perception of me as an affluent *blan* may have inhibited me from obtaining truthful information from certain research participants. To minimize this, I sought three Haitian research assistants who helped develop interview guides and conducted interviews and surveys with community members (the decision to have them conduct these interviews is discussed further below). I subsequently conducted interviews with local leaders and key informants independently after a lengthy discussion with research assistants about whether this would be appropriate. The advice I received was that because power imbalances were generally less stark between key informants and myself I could conduct these interviews and expect to have open discussions. Certainly the accuracy of the data retrieved for this study is dependent on the honesty of the participants, but I have no reason to question their truthfulness.

While key informant interviews produced rich data in spite of my race and class position, this positionality certainly complicated my initial desire to pursue participant observation with peasant farmers in Dezam (along with daily life in general), and it was much more difficult to find strategies to minimize this. I want to be clear that throughout field research I was very aware that my very presence as a *blan* in rural Haiti might be perceived as audacious and arrogant, and I often vacillated between feeling like I had no right to conduct research or live in rural Haiti and frustrated by the lack of broader

acceptance beyond a relatively small radius of people we knew me best. At times I was met with staunch hostility; in one instance, I was surrounded by a group of furious rock-armed peasants for whom my skin shade evidently marked a threat. At other times I was glorified as if I had special powers; once, I was followed by a young girl who urged the small, half-paralyzed child she was carrying to touch my arm, whispering to her that I was closer to God and might help her to heal. I offer these stories not to suggest that either was the norm but to emphasize how perceptions of *blan* are often extreme, and how the ensuing interaction can vary widely. I often felt like I was swinging on an unpredictable pendulum, never really certain of how I would be perceived but always aware that my skin colour carried enormous historical and cultural baggage.

As my knowledge of local race relations, food meanings, and markers of class became more developed during field research, I became increasingly sensitive of the fact that by doing things like buying and consuming things like carrots and rice (both prestigious foods) I might be reinforcing the sorts of race and class stigmas I found so problematic and wanted to struggle against. I dealt with these tensions by trying to express my solidarity with peasants and by attempting to reduce some of the markers of my class in different ways. Sometimes this meant eating *pitimi* [sorghum] and *patat* [sweet potato], two foods widely disdained and associated with the lowest class of peasants. At other times it meant putting on an alter-ego (what a mentor and friend called my *Madanm Sara* look: firm and brave) which included trying to master the gestures, expressions, and banter of Haitian woman. I took pride when people would say, “you’re not a *blan* any more, you’re a Haitian.” Still, I often struggled with my failure to translate my human-ness to many others for whom I recognize I never became ‘*moun*’, or a total

person. Though in some spaces and relationships I moved closer to understanding, I never escaped a power imbalance and the privilege of my circumstance. Ultimately, like other foreigners have described (Katz 2010; Schwartz 2008; Smith 2001), I came away with a deep but complicated love for Haiti.

Throughout my field research, I carried a deep tension and unease about the privilege which allowed me to work in Haiti yet also leave it – my ability to get on a plane, my ability to enjoy a life without hunger, without malaria, without cholera – and these feelings are not yet resolved, as I return to in the conclusion of this dissertation. I also remain uneasy with many of the choices I made in the field and frustrated by the fact that I will benefit from this research professionally even as I cannot claim that it has benefited research participants in any substantial way. I continue to wrestle with the question of whether my research in an impoverished and exploited population was ethical, and what moral and political responsibilities this entails. My sincere hope is that my methodological choices facilitated some meaningful cross-cultural insights into the problems of agro-food systems and the challenges of food sovereignty, and that my writing and advocacy might, in some small way, contribute to the struggles of the poor in Haiti against the enduring injustices they face.

#### *1.4.8 Interviews, Focus Groups, and Sampling*

The data for this dissertation was principally collected through qualitative research methods. The most important methods throughout the dissertation were semi-structured interviews with key informants and community members, focus groups with peasant producers, and content analysis of key policy documents, while food preferences surveys with community members were an important part of Chapter 3. All interviews and focus

groups were conducted in Haitian Kreyòl, with the exception of the interviews with representatives from the USAID, which was conducted in English. All interviews and focus groups were audio-recorded, with permission, and were transcribed verbatim.

Chapter 2 begins with an historical analysis of Haiti's agro-food system, before exploring the competing visions for rural Haiti between those proffered in post-disaster development plans and those articulated by leaders of peasant movements. The empirical component of this chapter is based on a critical content analysis of post-earthquake development and reconstruction plans and open-ended semi-structured interviews with key informants. Long-term immersion in the field also enriched my ability to critique the post-disaster development plans for agriculture, to see both visions and responses through the lens of projects unfolding on a local scale. At the same time, my analysis of post-earthquake development plans provided insights on the ideology and decision-making of dominant actors and how new projects were re-shaping the agro-food system in Dezam from 'above'. I paid close attention to power relations between class groups throughout my field research, and various interactions with peasant leaders, other activists, and community members at large made the broad dissatisfaction with the post-earthquake reconstruction and development agenda clear to me, along with the widespread recognition it was largely orchestrated by external actors. The justification for sampling leaders of peasant movements to inform this research was to identify 'articulate persons' (Baxter and Eyles 1999) who could speak for many, as their leadership position within these movements made them well-positioned to represent the perspectives and concerns that are at the basis of peasant mobilization.

The research that informs Chapter 3 was based on two sets of semi-structured qualitative interviews (n=108) and food preference surveys (n=108) with purposively sampled community members, with the aim of understanding a range of dietary preferences. The sampling sought to include an equal number of men and women but a wide variety of class and age groups, with the intent of learning from a range of perspectives (rather than aiming for representativeness) and enhancing credibility by maximizing variability in the group (Rubin and Rubin 2004; Schensul et al. 1999). As noted, poverty in the area tends to increase as one ascends the mountain, and three *abitasyon-s* were chosen to get a range of class groupings: in the valley (n=36), halfway up the mountain (n=36), and near the mountaintop (n=36). Several informants whom I trusted assisted me in identifying individuals for the sample groups in each area, and I relied on the following local categorizations of social class to inform the sampling: individuals with *plis mwayen* [an individual of some means]; individuals who are *plis w mwens* [an individual who gets by]; and those who are *malere* [very poor]. However, it is important to note that perceptions of these categories differ from the valley to the mountain. For example, a valley dweller with *plis mwayen* might have a concrete house while a mountain dwellers with *plis mwayen* would likely have mud/rock house with a corrugated tin roof. In response, I sought to diversify the class groupings within each *abitasyon* (the sample guide used for each community is in Appendix 5).

Understanding local food culture was obviously a complex task, and I approached this by exploring values, meanings and beliefs around foods and sought to explore how these are reflected in patterns of food production and consumption (Lang and Heasman 2004). I drafted both the interview guides and food preference surveys in the field after

living in Dezam and observing local food practices for roughly six months. This draft was informed by many discussions with community leaders, market women, peasant producers and neighbours, and by my own investigations into the types of foods regularly consumed at home and those sold by street vendors, at street side restaurants, in the open-air market place. After I had drafted an interview guide and food preference survey, I sought input and advice from research assistants, who helped to re-shape some of the questions, adding to certain areas and revising others. The process of developing interview guides in a team and having multiple researchers work on this project can be an important form of triangulation that can increase both dependability (Baxter and Eyles 1997) and scientific rigour (Turner and Coen 2008), and I have no doubt that the input of the research assistants enhanced the quality of the surveys and interview questions and made them more appropriate to the participants and the local food culture (the interview guide is attached in Appendix 1 and food preference surveys are contained in Appendix 6 and 7).

As I navigated the insider/outsider question on the ground through a combination of my own observations and experiences and discussions with various peers, community leaders in Dezam, and my research assistants, it became clear that my positionality was likely to influence responses from some community members. I made the difficult decision that it was more appropriate for Haitian research assistants to conduct interviews and food preference surveys with community members, and two research assistants assisted with this. Prior to this field research, I held a full-day workshop on qualitative methods and conducting interviews, which included attention to the importance of allowing respondents to answer freely and without interruption, avoiding leading

questions and inserting personal opinions, and gently probing for more detail when necessary. We also reviewed the process of introducing the research project and intentions to the participants, requesting verbal consent to participate in the study, and reviewed the interview guides and surveys and conducted several practice interviews in an afternoon workshop. The first round of interviews and surveys was conducted in December 2011 and the second round in June 2012. The intent in this 2-stage process was to capture food choices and agricultural practices both mid-way through the rainy season and mid-way through the dry season. Interviews and surveys generally took between 45 minutes and 1.5 hours and participants were modestly compensated for their time in the study.

Open-ended semi-structured key informants interviews (n=40) were a key component of my field research that informed all four research chapters of this dissertation.<sup>7</sup> The open-ended interview approach allowed for rich responses and informal, free-flowing discussions. I conducted interviews with government officials, representatives from bi-lateral organizations and NGOs based in Port-au-Prince, representatives from the prominent Haitian agribusiness operating in the Artibonite Valley, and leaders of peasant movements in a range of locations including Port-au-Prince, the Central Plateau, various locations in the Artibonite Valley, and in the North Department. A detailed list of the themes and questions that guided interviews can be found in Appendix 1. Interviews ranged significantly in length from roughly 1.5 hours to over one-half day, with some leaders of peasant movements inviting the conversation to

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<sup>7</sup> A detailed list of key informants can be found in each research article.

continue over lunch. Although the broad interview themes remained consistent, I adapted most interview guides in the field. This flexibility allowed me to adjust interview guides as I became more familiar with the expertise and knowledge of each prospective respondent and made interviews more focused and productive.

The research that informs Chapter 4 took place in the town of Caracol in January 2013 in Haiti's North Department. Focus groups were a central part of this research, and were conducted with a wide range of interests including: workers in the Caracol Industrial Park (n=13); members of the Boards of Directors of Communal Sections (CASECS) and Communal Section Assembly (ASECS) in the commune of Caracol (n=15); peasants who were displaced because of the park (n=8); and members and leaders of local peasant and community groups; a list of which can be found in Appendix 8). The research drawn from focus groups was augmented by a few key informant interviews including with the former and current mayors of Caracol and with the Catholic Priest in the area. The interview guide that helped inform these meetings was created in collaboration with Dr. Yasmine Shamsie of Wilfrid Laurier University (see Appendix 9). In Caracol, the process of organizing focus groups and interviews was greatly assisted by a member of a national peasant organization, and a Haitian research assistant helped facilitate focus group discussions and the interviews that were conducted.

The empirical research in Chapter 5 involves a combination of content analysis of policy documents, a few interviews with key informants, and focus groups with members of a peasant struggle contesting a land grab near Dezam. Due to the fact that this research concerned a very heated and complex land struggle, it was more difficult to access participants because peasants were initially very apprehensive to meet and discuss these

subjects. To build trust, I first met informally with the former lawyer of the peasant organization/movement, and then later conducted an interview with him to get a more detailed account of the nature and history of the land conflict as well as to share information about my research project and politics, which the respondent then communicated to the peasant group. Next, I met with a neighbour who is a confidant of many peasants in the group and he facilitated a meeting with the peasants fighting to stay on the land they had long farmed.

Peasant group members insisted on the location of the meeting, which was near the contested land, and that it was a group meeting. My fluency in Kreyòl proved a crucial means of establishing trust, since it is the language of the peasantry and of the Haitian poor more generally (while this fluency helped to mark my solidarity with peasants in other instances, nowhere was it more important than in this instance). In this focus group (n=15), my broad thematic objectives were to: capture the nature and history of the land conflict from the peasant perspective; detail acts of violence and injustice expressed by participants; assess how the land conflict might threaten food security; and explore why peasants were mobilizing to resist this land grab. This meeting was conducted in July 2013 and I returned to Canada shortly after. A follow-up focus group (n=8) with some of the same peasants was conducted by a research assistant in December 2013 and sought to get an update on the status of the conflict. Investigating this land conflict and the same chronology of events from multiple perspectives helped build redundancy into the research design and thereby increase the rigour of the data analysis (Rubin and Rubin 2004).

#### *1.4.9 Transcription and Analysis*

I transcribed most interviews in the field, which had two major advantages: it helped me to identify emerging themes and gave me insights on areas to explore in future interviews and helped me to pay attention to emerging data and to identify when I had reached ‘sufficient redundancy’ of information (Schensul and Schensul 1999). However, not all transcriptions were finished when I left, and the remainder were completed in Canada between August 2013 and January 2014, during which time I also simultaneously began the process of data analysis. I coded interview and focus group transcripts by identifying major themes and then doing a line-by-line coding, which allowed me to group data on various themes together in relation to the key research questions. I entered all survey data into Excel, and conducted simple frequencies to determine food preferences. I also coded interviews with community members with the aim of identifying all references to food preferences and associations between food preferences and race and class hierarchies.

#### **1.5 A Note on Numbers**

Statistics on Haiti are difficult to acquire and to assess and “should be taken with more than a small grain of salt” (Smith 1998, 36). This goes for a wide range of social and economic data, such as yields, assessments of land ownership, population statistics and household data, and unemployment rates. One stark example about the variations in numbers can be seen in the spectrum of estimates of the death toll from the 2010 earthquake, which have ranged from 85,000 to 320,000. Another example can be seen in a study of unemployment rates conducted in the 1980s, which initially estimated them to be in excess of 70 percent of the national population, but which was later lowered to between 5 and 20 percent – still a very large variance, which partly reflects the fact that

many work in the hard-to-measure informal sector (Katz 2010; Fass 1988). I came to question a lot of the data I encountered in agricultural reports and planning documents, including production and exports statistics, as I learned that: harvests tend to be measured by donkey (in loads); much of the land is measured in *pa* [strides]; and that sales of grains, sugar, and beans are conducted in the local measuring units *gode* and *mamit*, which are various sizes of cups and tins that are roughly consistent but hardly precise.

The problem with population statistics stems from a range of factors including a low propensity for people to have birth records, a high propensity for undocumented individuals to be excluded from reports, and the questionable accuracy of household enumeration methods in general. Alvarez and Murray (1981) suggest that a household tends to be understood as including those who eat from the same cooking pot rather than household sleeping conditions, and note how this can confuse household sampling. In the course of my research I became aware of a study by a local community development organization for a latrine project in several *abitasyon-s* of Dezam that sought to assess household numbers but (it was realized part way through) did not count children.

All of these examples indicate the enormous barriers to quantitative evaluations of social and economic conditions, especially in rural Haiti, and are part of why I chose a qualitative research approach, along with the fact that I was most interested in motivations and perceptions and sorts of insights that are not generally accessible to surveys and quantification.

## **1.6 Dissertation Outline**

This dissertation is organized in the integrated manuscript style, with Chapters 2 to 5

composed of four research chapters followed by a brief concluding chapter. Chapter 2, “Agrarian Roots of the Haitian Catastrophe,” starts with a historical analysis of peasant farming and agrarian change in Haiti, arguing that contemporary food insecurity, rural poverty, and peasant persistence must be understood as the culmination of a long history of peasant exploitation by foreign actors, the state and the merchant elite. It then examines the competing visions for agriculture that have in some ways been intensified in the process of Haiti’s post-disaster reconstruction: on one side is the continuation of a neoliberal approach from ‘above’, which is assessed through a content analysis of key policy documents; on the other side is the resistance and alternatives that are coming from ‘below,’ which is principally based on interview data collected from leaders of peasant movements.

Chapter 3, “Eating Up the Social Ladder: The problem of dietary aspirations for food sovereignty,” examines how food hierarchies in Haiti tend to mirror social inequalities, in that conceptions of ‘black’ and ‘peasant’ foods are widely viewed with disdain while ‘elite’ and ‘foreign’ foods are widely held in higher esteem, with dietary aspirations geared toward the consumption practices of the lighter-skinned urban upper and middle classes. This paper, which is based on qualitative interviews and food preference surveys, argues that attitudes about food and dietary aspirations pose a significant barrier to the prospects for food sovereignty in Haiti. This suggests a need to appreciate how the cultural geographies of food interact with – and can in fact exacerbate – political and economic inequalities, which raises challenging questions for peasant movements and advocates of food sovereignty.

Chapter 4, “Manufacturing Corporate Landscapes: The case of agrarian displacement and food (in)security in Haiti,” investigates historical foundations and contemporary causes of food insecurity, arguing that Haiti’s severe food insecurity today is tied to a long orientation towards export expansion, driven by both foreign interests and Haiti’s elite, at the expense of domestic production. This argument is informed by Robert Fatton’s concept of the ‘outer periphery’, to draw attention to Haiti’s marginal position as an exporter of a small range of cheap-labour goods in the neoliberal global economy. The empirical focus of the paper examines the impacts of one post-earthquake development project – the export manufacturing facility, the Caracol Industrial Park – on peasant livelihoods and local food security in the surrounding communities.

Chapter 5, “Peasant Balances, Neoliberalism and the stunted growth of non-traditional agro-exports in Haiti,” examines divergent peasant responses to the various models of export mango production that have been promoted in post-earthquake Haiti. These responses range from outright rejection on one side to hesitant participation in new marketing arrangements along with efforts to increase the scale of production on the other, and a mix in between. The analysis of these responses is informed by a neo-Chayanovian framework that stresses attention to an array of balances that peasant households seek to maintain, and the importance of thinking about labour outputs in relation to household consumption. The paper suggests that by understanding the dynamic tension in peasant-capital relations in contemporary Haiti the ways that capital is attempting to organize production and the ways that peasants are inhibiting this. More specifically, the paper argues that peasants are conditioning the dynamics of agro-export expansion in Haiti and in the process frustrating some of the ambitions of the country’s

political and economic elites. At a broader scale, this highlights some of the ways that peasant producers can push back against exploitative arrangements and maintain a degree of autonomy over their cropping systems.

The concluding chapter summarizes the major findings and unifying themes of the four research chapters, before reflecting on the research process as a whole. One of the overarching arguments is that the behaviours, perceptions, and mobilizing capacity of peasants are such that they will not simply abide by development prescriptions and projects determined from above. Centuries of slavery followed by varying combinations of marginality and exploitation have not undermined peasant resilience and their desire for autonomy and dignity. This suggests, I argue, that peasant perspectives should be a fundamental component of development policy in Haiti if it is to have any possibility of reducing poverty and enhancing food security.



## 2. Agriculture In and Beyond the Haitian Catastrophe

### Abstract

*Although the devastation from Haiti's 2010 earthquake was concentrated in urban Port-au-Prince, it must be understood to have deep rural and agrarian roots. This paper begins by situating Haiti's urban poverty in the chronic exploitation of the country's agricultural producing classes, which provides a necessary foundation from which to assess debates over the role that agriculture will play in Haiti's post-disaster reconstruction. The focus of the paper then turns to a critical assessment of the competing contemporary visions for agricultural development; both the continuation of a neoliberal approach from 'above', examined through a content analysis of key policy documents, and the resistance and alternatives that are coming from 'below,' an analysis based on qualitative interviews with leaders of peasant movements. Ultimately, it argues that in light of the pervasiveness and complexity of peasant land ownership, and the peasantry's resolute determination to maintain control over land, the future of rural Haiti will be shaped by the peasantry – in spite of post-disaster plans. We also argue that the potential for Haiti's agricultural systems to move towards the core goals of food sovereignty will be based on the strength of Haiti's peasant movements and their ability to collaborate and grow as a political force.*

## 2.1 Introduction: Historicizing the Haitian Catastrophe

*Ti kou ti kou fè mò.* (Enough little hits can kill you)  
-Haitian Proverb

Overurbanization...is driven by the reproduction of poverty, not by the supply of jobs.

-Mike Davis (2006,16)

On January 12, 2010, Haiti was hit by an earthquake that had an immense human impact, affecting between 3 and 4 million – up to two-fifths of the national population (UNDP 2011). An estimated 220,000 people were killed (PDNA 2010), 300,000 injured, over 1.5 million people were displaced, and 85,000 remain in camps as of early 2015 (FAO 2015; IOM 2015; UN-OHRLLS 2015).<sup>8</sup> The devastation was largely concentrated in Port-au-Prince, and on the streets of this ruined capital, the catastrophe quickly came to be known by the haunting moniker “Goudou Goudou” – a onomatopoeic term for the grinding sounds of the quake. Buildings, sanitation, and basic services were destroyed on a massive scale: 190,000 homes were destroyed, 3,978 schools and educational establishments were ruined, and 30 hospitals and health centers were severely damaged (IHRC 2011; PDNA 2010). Economic losses amounted to US \$7.8 billion, a staggering 120 percent of Haiti’s annual GDP (IHRC 2011). The mass exodus from Port-au-Prince strained rural resources and households for months, but the lack of opportunity for internally displaced people (IDPs) in rural Haiti has since meant that rural re-migration has not been durable. A large majority returned to Port-au-Prince in the subsequent two

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<sup>8</sup> The death toll has been the subject of much contention. In the immediate aftermath of the earthquake the UN stopped matching the toll given by the Haitian government after it passed 230,000 (Katz 2013). The Haitian government finally placed the number above 220,000, though one USAID-financed study attempted to revise it considerably lower, estimating that no more than 85,000 people died. Following that, a US academic team asserted real death toll was 316,000 (UNDP, 2011).

years,<sup>9</sup> and it is widely recognized that those who have remained in rural areas often have aspirations to return to the capital. A focus group (n=10) conducted in June 2013 with IDPs residing in the Artibonite Valley shed light on why this is so, as respondents despaired the lack of opportunity for work or education in rural areas. According to one,

Before the earthquake I was in 12th grade. Now, it's like I'm not living anymore. I have nothing to do. Every day I ask myself: What will I do? How will I be able to stand up? It's not like I want to stay here, but I have no means to go back to Port-au-Prince.

The enormous challenge of reconstruction efforts was further compounded by a serious outbreak of cholera in late 2010, which infected over 650,000 people, killed over 8,000, and was subsequently confirmed to have been carried to Haiti by UN Stabilization Mission (MINUSTAH) forces whose presence went back to 2004 (GAO 2013).<sup>10</sup>

As has been widely emphasized, this humanitarian catastrophe is not solely a 'natural' disaster. Haiti is by far the poorest country in the Western Hemisphere, and though it is also the most rural, the proliferation of extremely vulnerable urban environments cannot be understood apart from the country's chronic rural poverty and

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<sup>9</sup> A study monitoring the migration of cell-phones and users found that by November 2011, 68 percent of those who had fled Port-au-Prince following the earthquake had returned to the capital (Bengtsson 2011).

<sup>10</sup> MINUSTAH was established by the UN Security Council the aftermath of the second coup that toppled Jean Bertrand Aristide, and after the earthquake the scope of its mandate expanded beyond 'stability' to include support for reconstruction. In addition to their role in the cholera outbreak, some MINUSTAH soldiers were charged with various counts of sexual abuse, including of minors. The result was widespread public anger and low confidence (Schuller 2012).

how it has driven unsustainable levels of urbanization. Port-au-Prince in particular has long been characterized by: overcrowding; huge slums, many perched on steep hillsides; poor infrastructure; a sizable sweatshop sector yet high levels of overall unemployment; and a large informal sector with people hustling as petty traders. The suffering of Haiti's urban poor, in fact, drew considerable attention just prior to the earthquake, amidst the volatility of world food prices in 2007-8. Various media outlets along with a number of prominent scholars drew attention to the fact that people were rioting in response to the rising costs of basic staples (Holt-Gimenez and Patel 2010; Bello 2009; Patel and McMichael 2009).<sup>11</sup>

Some aspects of the rural and agrarian roots of the 2010 catastrophe emerged in subsequent media coverage and analysis, though often in fragments. One of the most notable and frequently cited of these occurred when, in the near aftermath of the earthquake, former US President Bill Clinton (and formal UN envoy to Haiti) apologized for how US-directed trade policies had devastated Haiti's agricultural sector. In a speech to the US Senate Foreign Relations Committee on March 10, Clinton apologized for his role in championing neoliberal economic policies in Haiti, including his support for the liberalization of US rice imports which overwhelmed Haiti's domestic rice production, noting that it "may have been good for some of [his] farmers in Arkansas but it has not worked. It was a mistake" (Katz 2010). Where this flood of cheap, subsidized US rice

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<sup>11</sup> Along with food price related riots, there were widespread reports that many poor Haitians were eating 'mud cakes' in 2008 to quell their hunger. Without diminishing the severity of food insecurity many faced, this story was grossly oversimplified, as clay cakes have long history of production in Haiti. They are sourced from a specific area in the central plateau, widely valued for pregnant women, and tied to the Voodoo religion.

was noted, it was regularly juxtaposed against the fact that Haiti was largely self-sufficient in the production of rice and basic foodstuffs only a quarter century earlier. Some accounts have gone further back into Haiti's long history of exploitation and foreign domination, noting how slave plantations made it the most lucrative colony in the world in the 18th century, and how France continued to extract onerous debt payments well into the 20th century, more than a century after the Haitian Revolution. The momentous biophysical problems of the Haitian countryside – in particular the nexus of deforestation, soil erosion, and desertification – were also pointed to in some discussions of rural poverty and migration, with varying degrees of historical context. In light of Haiti's enduring poverty and food insecurity, the magnitude of devastation to the built environment, and migratory pressures (both rural-to-urban movement prior to the earthquake, and urban-to-rural which followed it), the question of how agriculture will factor in the country's reconstruction is enormous and urgent.

One end of the spectrum of answers proffered might be characterized as disaster capitalism (Klein 2009), flowing from much of the multilateral and bilateral donor financing, which constitutes the overwhelming source of the government budget. This includes a predominant focus on security and policing (via a combination of the Haitian police forces, MINUSTAH, the US Marines, and private contractors), urban-biased infrastructure (including to foreign contractors), and aggressive encouragement of foreign investment in the hope that Haiti can recover and expand in its global economic niche as an exporter of garments and other light manufactures. Implicit here is a recognition that Haiti's competitiveness in these products is fortified by its immense reserve army of labour in the countryside, particularly as rural areas have been further strained by their

role as a de facto sponge for the displaced. One explicit way that agriculture featured directly in a disaster-capitalist reconstruction initiative was in Monsanto's offer to donate 'improved' seeds, ostensibly to help 'modernize' Haiti's backwards agricultural sector, with the unspoken aim of inserting its proprietary technology into landscapes and farming practices and establishing new dependencies and an input treadmill.

The other end of the spectrum of views on the future of agriculture in Haiti is the case that 're-peasantization' could be actively encouraged as a central pillar of Haiti's longer-term reconstruction, guided by the broad goal of enhancing food sovereignty. In this conception of intentional re-peasantization, domestic food production should be prioritized (including state flexibility to protect markets against de-stabilizing agricultural imports) alongside support for redistributive land reform and agro-ecological research and training. Obviously, this runs up against very powerful narratives of modernization and development, and more concretely must face an emaciated state subject to the tremendous influence of myriad multilateral and bilateral donors, an enormous NGO sector that expanded in this vacuum, and an unrepresentative government with dubious claims to legitimacy.<sup>12</sup> Yet while these barriers are formidable, there are some indications

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<sup>12</sup> The 2010 presidential elections, which came less than a year after the earthquake, had questionable legitimacy from the outset as *Fammi Lavalas* was forbidden from participating, though it was by far the largest party in Haiti and had overwhelmingly won the elections prior to the 2004 coup. The elections and their aftermath reflected the unrepresentative nature of Haitian politics, the degree to which ordinary people recognize this, and the willingness of the international community to turn a blind eye. Only about one in five eligible voters cast a ballot and myriad observers reported widespread fraud, yet the US, the Organization of American States, and Haiti's provisional Electoral Council deemed the process legitimate if problematic – content with the election of reactionary former music star Michel ('Sweet Micky') Martelly (Coughlin 2011).

that peasant movements are growing in strength, including the popular resistance to Monsanto's seed 'donation' and struggles against a number of collusive private sector-state land grabs.

Our aim in this paper is to situate the acute vulnerability of Haiti's urban poor, exposed so devastatingly in the 2010 earthquake, within the context of the long-term exploitation and marginalization of small farmers and agricultural workers, in order to assess ongoing agricultural prospects, possibilities, and struggles. We argue that the immense suffering from the earthquake can be seen along the lines of the proverb at the outset: as a deathly culmination of a long history of foreign domination, surplus extraction by the national bourgeoisie and a predatory state, and rural impoverishment.

This historicized lens helps to connect some of the fragments noted earlier, from slavery (and France's historic debt) to neoliberalism (and Bill Clinton's apology), to the unfolding disaster capitalism and the highly uneven contest over the nature of reconstruction.

## **2.2 Slavery, Independence and the Emergence of the Haitian Peasantry**

Haiti was the only successful slave revolution in world history, the first fully free independent country in the Western Hemisphere, and to this day land inequality is much less marked than it is in most other parts of Latin America and the Caribbean. Nevertheless, there are few places in the world where the legacies of colonialism and neocolonialism have been more intense and debilitating than in Haiti. As Trouillot (1994) put it, the poor have been entrapped in a particularly powerful historical nightmare, and a

long temporal lens is necessary to appreciate contemporary struggles over the future of agriculture and food in Haiti.

In 1789, on the cusp of the French Revolution, Saint-Domingue was the richest colony in the world, the famed ‘Jewel of the Caribbean’, and led the world in the export of sugar and coffee and the import of slaves (Hallward 2010; Farmer 2003; Heintz and Heintz 1996; Trouillot 1994, 1990). As throughout the colonial Caribbean and other slave plantation economies, Saint-Domingue was overwhelmingly structured around a narrow range of agricultural exports and reliant upon a wide array of imports – the first region in world history where food security hinged so utterly upon the long distance movement of basic foodstuffs like grains and dried fish and meat (Weis 2003; Mintz 1985).

The slave population of Saint-Domingue was roughly 500,000 in 1789, which dwarfed the combined numbers of French planters, ‘small whites,’ mulattos, and free blacks. The mulatto population had an important role as a social buffer between planters and slaves, supplemented by the small number of free blacks. For the most part, the cultural tastes and social aspirations of this small middle stratum were geared toward ascending the social hierarchy rather than challenging it. Yet it was mulattoes, along with white planters and so-called ‘small whites,’ who first gave spark to the Haitian Revolution in 1791, each seeking to capitalize on the tumult of the French Revolution to achieve divergent goals (James 1963).

This initial fracture was seized on by slaves (led by Toussaint L’Ouverture) who rose up and won their Emancipation in a long and bloody struggle. L’Ouverture was the pivotal figure from 1793 to 1803, and he took a conciliatory approach to white planters in

the period between Emancipation and Independence. To him, plantation agriculture was the inescapable core of Haiti's economy, and the knowledge of the planters was needed for the system to function, and for a time there was a remarkable revival of plantation production from the ashes of war (James 1963). While L'Ouverture's long-term course was unclear, James (1963) urged caution in judging his unwillingness to confront plantations, the planter class, and the harshness with which ex-slaves were compelled into low-wage labour, insisting that it would have been very hard to see other options in the short-term in light of the immense constraints set by Haiti's history and geopolitical circumstances. L'Ouverture's pragmatism did little to placate France, and he was deceived, captured, and died in a French prison as Jean-Jacques Dessalines was leading the final triumph towards Independence for Haiti in 1803 in intense fighting that further ravaged the agricultural landscape and the existing infrastructure. Haiti was, in short, 'born in ruins' (Galeano 2004).

It is impossible to overstate the challenge of reconstruction which followed more than a decade of war: tens of thousands of working age men had been killed; most plantations and sugar mills had been razed; and basic food security had historically been contingent on colonial trading networks. Further, as Beckford (1972) emphasized, one of the most persistent barriers to development in plantation economies was an utter lack of internal dynamism and technological innovation from which to build post-slavery societies. It is not surprising that Dessalines, like L'ouverture, could not see any alternative but to attempt to rebuild the productive capacity of plantations. Unlike L'ouverture, however, there was no conciliation with the planter class after Napoleon's forces (sent to reconquer and re-enslave Haiti) had been defeated, as all of the remaining

whites were purged shortly after Independence. In the turbulent post-revolutionary period, the process of class formation was influenced by three conflicting internal dynamics. First, Dessalines led an attempt to forcibly establish quasi-serf relations as the means to rebuilding plantation production, and appropriated for himself a series of large estates (and the title of Emperor) before being assassinated in 1806. Second, the majority of emancipated slaves resisted the reconfigured forms of exploitation on plantations, and emerged as small peasants on land they were able to buy or occupy from the state or from large landowners in retreat. Third, stemming from the powerful fusion of race and class interests in the slave period, the mulatto minority maneuvered to capture the state and assert themselves as the new elite in positions of political and economic control over the black majority – which meant finding ways to extract wealth from the newly emergent peasantry. Amidst these intense class struggles beyond independence, Haiti split for a short period into a northern and a southern state before being reunified in 1820, in the context of very forbidding external circumstances (Hallward 2010; Smucker et al. 2000; Trouillot 1994, 1990; Nicholls 1985; Mintz 1974; Leyburn 1966; James 1963).

Overarching the internal reconfiguration of class relations was Haiti's complicated position as an extremely trade dependent economy that was cut off from its historic metropole and isolated in a sea of imperialism, as France, England, and the US all desperately wanted the revolution to fail. In 1825, the Haitian government was effectively compelled into a neocolonial trap: in exchange for the promise of peace and the renewal of trade relations it accepted an enormous debt burden to France for property 'lost' in the Revolution. This debt dwarfed the scale of the Haitian economy and forced the state to borrow from French banks, and the debt and interest burden magnified the

need to generate foreign exchange and the urgency of rebuilding the country's export capacity. A series of anti-peasant laws known as the Rural Code soon followed, aimed at forcing emergent peasants into plantation labour by attaching workers to specific estates for life. Despite this repression and reestablished trade relations with France, widespread squatting persisted and plantations remained unviable. In addition to the aversion to plantation labour, the revival of sugar was further complicated by competition from slave-based sugar production from Portuguese Brazil, the British Caribbean, and Spanish Cuba. By the 1830s, plantation land was increasingly being sold or abandoned, and by the early 1840s plantation production of sugar, cotton, and cocoa had all but ceased, with small farms coming to dominate the Haitian landscape. In this context, coffee emerged as the primary export crop, as it did not have prohibitive scale demands and was easily integrated into peasant cultivation patterns (Trouillot 1994, 1990; Joachim 1979; Leyburn 1966; Rodman 1961).

As this landscape of small farms took shape, many peasants felt no interest or compulsion to work with the state to establish formal legal rights to land. Meanwhile, the process of land inheritance – both legally and informally – followed the French tradition in which property was divided equally amongst children upon the death of the landowner. On one hand, as Geggus (1989) suggested, this inheritance system can be seen to have broadened access to land, but on the other hand it also led to the repeated subdivision of small plots – against which the Haitian government has sought, without success, to legislate since the mid-19th century. This history helps explain why land distribution in Haiti is much less unequal than in the rest of the region at the same time as many poor rural Haitians lack formal legal claims to land. Excessive fragmentation of land is often

given a central place in elite narratives about the persistence of rural poverty in Haiti, typically alongside Malthusian images of high rural birth rates, overpopulation, and environmental decline (Murray 1987; Lundahl 1984). However, the matter of scale cannot be understood in isolation from struggles to control the surplus value from production because while peasants were in a sense spatially triumphant in Haiti, the central agrarian class struggle effectively shifted to attempts by political and commercial elites to extract peasant surpluses. To put it another way, both the state and the commercial elites in Haiti became utterly dependent upon their ability to squeeze value from peasant production from a very early stage. For much of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and well into the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the Haitian state was almost entirely financed by the revenues it soaked at the customhouses, primarily from coffee exports (Smucker et al. 2000; Trouillot 1994, 1990).

Exporters were aided by the emergence of rural middlemen, or *spéculateurs*, who negotiated the purchase of coffee from peasants from very unequal positions. In general, peasants tended to be poorly informed about market conditions, spatially isolated by deficient rural infrastructure, and lacking alternative outlets, and hence were highly dependent upon *spéculateurs* to transport and sell their product to exporters, a relation which largely persists to the present day with coffee and mango production (Farmer 2003). Meanwhile, urban-based merchants failed completely to reinvest in industry or technology; true compradors in the framework of dependency theory. The net effect was a great transfer of surplus value from peasants to *spéculateurs* to exporters in ports such as St. Marc, Jérémie, Jacmel, and Cap Haïtien, and to government coffers in Port-au-Prince, dynamics which were hard for peasants to comprehend fully (Trouillot 1994,

1990; Mintz 1974; Rodman 1961). As Trouillot (1994:48) put it, rural Haiti quickly became “a class colony of the urban elites” beyond independence, as the “state reproduced itself by sucking up the peasantry” while “the urban classes reproduced themselves by sucking up the state and the peasantry”, within a political system that was so opaque that “many peasants would not have been able to name the President” prior to the rise of the François (‘Papa Doc’) Duvalier.

It is also crucial to appreciate the international dimension of this surplus extraction, particularly through the staggering scale and persistence of Haiti’s post-independence debt. By the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, roughly four-fifths of Haiti’s state budget was still flowing to French banks, and payments on the original debt persisted for decades further – a cumulative burden, in current terms, of many billions of US dollars (Hallward 2010, 2004; Prince 1985). Because of this, Haiti effectively paid France three times over – through slave labour, compensatory debt, and the enduring interest payments – and as Hallward (2004, 26-27) puts it, “no other single factor played so important a role in establishing Haiti as a systematically indebted country, the condition which in turn ‘justified’ a long and debilitating series of appropriations-by-gunboat.” Not only was this burden directly borne by the Haitian peasantry, it also subverted the state’s capacity to invest in rural development (Joachim 1979) would it have been so inclined.

Finally, in addition to the reconfiguration of exploitative class relations, domestically and internationally, agrarian change beyond independence was marked by profound environmental transformations. Throughout the slave-colonial period,

settlement was concentrated on the coastal lowlands and river valleys,<sup>13</sup> and the expansion of peasant farms carried with it a new wave of deforestation across the mostly rugged interior, the impact of which was magnified by the accompanying charcoal production for cooking fuel. The growth of mahogany exports was another major factor in 19<sup>th</sup> century deforestation, with earnings again dominated by both merchant and political elite. Less than one-tenth of Haiti's land was forested by the middle of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, and today only about 2 percent of the original forest cover remains. The rugged nature of the Haitian landscape means that peasants have long had to wrestle with serious problems of soil erosion and watershed degradation (Smucker et al. 2000; Dupuy 1989; Zimmerman 1986).

### **2.3 From US Occupation to Duvalierism (1915-57)**

While powerful economic ties to France persisted into the 20<sup>th</sup> century, reflected in both export patterns and debt payments, Haiti became increasingly indebted to US financial institutions. The transition from French to US dependency was capped by the US marine invasion of Haiti shortly after the outbreak of the First World War, which was followed by a two-decade occupation between 1915 and 1934. The US occupation involved the rewriting of Haiti's constitution to facilitate debt service and increase foreign investment, most notably by taking control of the banking system and legally enabling foreign interests to own land, which had been outlawed since the Revolution (Hallward 2010; Heint and Heint 1996; Trouillot 1990; Nicholls 1986; Schmidt 1971). Worse still, the US

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<sup>13</sup> The primary exception being Maroon communities of escaped slaves. Although Hispaniola was relatively densely populated at the time of Columbus, Taino settlements were mostly on coastal planes and the island was almost entirely forested.

occupation was paid for in part by borrowing from US banks and, much as had occurred with the 19<sup>th</sup> century debt to France, the burden was again largely transferred to the peasantry and collected through the customs houses (Lundahl 1982).

Considerable dispossession followed the legalization of foreign land ownership. As many as 50,000 peasants with insecure tenure lost their land in the north alone and plantation agriculture was re-established on over 250,000 acres of land, as constitutional changes made it possible for companies like Standard Fruit to procure land and establish large banana estates in the 1930s (Mintz 1974). Dispossession continued in the 1940s through a collaborative project between the American and Haitian governments, the *Société Haitienne-Américaine Pour le Développement Agricole* (SHADA), which forcibly evicted roughly 40,000 peasants, destroyed many homes, felled a million fruit trees, and converted more than 47,000 acres of peasant land to large-scale production of sisal and rubber for export (Smith 2009).

Another very important aspect of the US occupation was the increasing centralization of power in the Haitian military. This stemmed from a desire to pacify oppositional peasant groups known as *cacos*, which had been manipulated by political rivals to help overthrow ruling governments and were consequently blamed for the political instability preceding the US occupation. To do this, US marines used force at first but over time transferred the job of internal repression to the Haitian military. Once tasked with defending Haiti's independence against recolonization, the National Guard was strengthened and reorganized to discipline dissent in Haiti. By the time the US marines departed in 1934, the National Guard was a source of not only military but political power, capable of determining the rise and fall of Presidents. The rising

authoritarianism that ensued was concentrated overwhelmingly in Port-au-Prince, and it also transformed the nature of peasant exploitation. Before 1915, surpluses were primarily extracted from peasants through the petty traders who preyed on the isolation and knowledge imbalances, and through distant customs houses, but the rise of the Garde made physical coercion and the threat of force a new feature disabling the ability of peasants to seek better terms or to organize collectively (Farmer 2003; Heintz and Heintz 1996; Trouillot 1990; 1994; Nicholls 1986; Mintz 1974; Schmidt 1971).

Although one can easily see a direct line connecting the US occupation to the increasing power of the Haitian Garde to Papa Doc's rise to power in 1957, it is also important to recognize that there were significant mass mobilizations during this period which might have led towards a different course, as Smith (2009) emphasizes. In the 1930s, progressive social movements began taking on a more radical character from the populist nationalism of the occupation period, led partly by the growth of organized labour. Marxism came to inform ideas about class and inequality alongside a racialized *noiriste* discourse, though the latter had a strong anti-liberal component.

After the Second World War, the Mouvement Ouvrier Paysan (MOP) (Peasant Worker Movement) emerged at the forefront of Haiti's racially charged class politics, which had been enflamed by the establishment of large-scale plantations and destruction of peasant holdings across large areas of Haiti's best land in the 1930s and 1940s. The MOP sought to represent the black working class and peasant farmers and to challenge the prevailing economic and cultural power of the mulatto elite, and it quickly transformed from a mass organization into a political party. Unfortunately, it was here that Papa Doc Duvalier found his initial political foothold as general secretary, and he

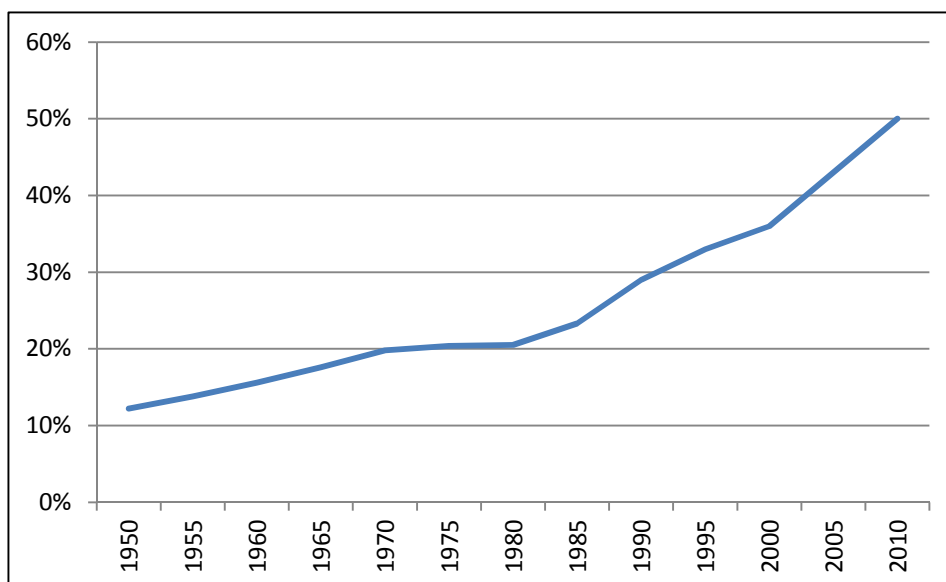
came to appropriate and manipulate the racialized *noiriste* discourse in the service of his totalitarian government (Smith 2009).

The expansion of plantation agriculture and the SHADA project were flashpoints in the 1946 overthrow of Élie Lescot, who was sympathetic to US interests and strongly supported SHADA. The coup, led by a coalition of Marxist, *noiriste*, and populist groups, gave rise to Haiti's first black President, Dumarsais Estimé, whose government nationalized the banana industry in 1947. This nationalization quickly proved unsuccessful and lands were reconverted into peasant smallholdings with one great drawback: the productive fruit trees that previously occupied the land were mostly gone (Smith 2009). Estimé struggled to balance the coalition between more moderate factions allied to mulatto interests, and more radical ones, especially organized labour, which had brought him to power, and eventually he lost the support of both and was pushed out of power in 1950. The next President, Paul Magloire, subsequently sought to ally Haiti strongly with the US, create a favourable climate for foreign investment, and to pursue export-led growth. For agriculture, this involved a renewed expansion of coffee production, even in the face of low international prices, and the vulnerability laden in this narrow export dependence was seen clearly in 1954 when Hurricane Hazel destroyed nearly half of the total coffee crop (Dupuy 1989). Around this time, rural-to-urban migration began quickening, and by the mid-1950s roughly half of the population of Port-au-Prince had been born in the countryside, with roughly three-fifths of the housing stock contained in growing *bidonvilles*, or shanty-towns (Smith 2009; Lundahl 1979). Amidst deteriorating social and economic conditions, Magloire transferred power to Papa Doc Duvalier in 1957.

#### **2.4 The Duvalier Dictatorships: Intensifying the predatory state (1957-1986)**

Papa Doc's rise to political power was enabled by his footing in the MOP, during which time he spoke of the need to liberate Haiti's poor black masses and improve the conditions for the peasantry. But in practice he built an even more ferocious predatory state on their backs, while regularly invoking a populist, pro-peasant rhetoric that played on the racialized *noiriste* discourse. For Trouillot (1994; 1990), the predatory state was essentially organized to prey on the poor rural majority, exclude them entirely from the political sphere, and crush any dissent. Under Papa Doc, the state's historic grip on the peasantry tightened, as regressive patterns of taxation – skewed heavily towards both peasant production and consumption – not only continued but became more systematic and coercive, with very little returning to rural areas through social spending or infrastructure. The centralization of wealth and power in Port-au-Prince was made worse by the scale of state corruption, as some government officials embezzled huge personal windfalls, and by the escalating repression against oppositional social movements, led by Papa Doc's personal security forces, the *Tonton Macoutes* (Hallward 2010; Heintz and Heintz 1996; Trouillot 1994; 1990; Lundahl 1992a; Nicholls 1986; Mintz 1974). As before, elite merchants still relied on spéculateurs to extract surplus from peasants, but under Duvalier some came to work simultaneously as Tonton Macoutes, with intimidation and violence amplifying the unequal relations. These exploitative conditions contributed to growing rural-to-urban migration evident in Figure 2 (Trouillot 1994; Dupuy 1989).

**Figure 2: Percentage of National Population in Urban Areas, 1950-2010**



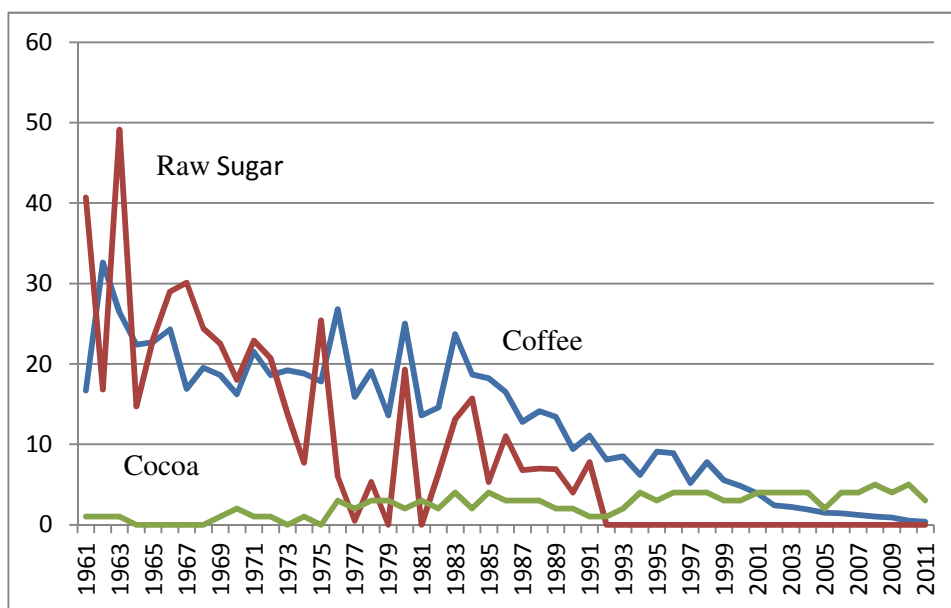
Source for data: UNWUP (2012)

In 1971, an ailing Papa Doc transferred power to his 19-year old son Jean-Claude ‘Baby Doc’ Duvalier, and the US ambassador oversaw the coronation. The general flow of the state’s tax revenue from rural poor to a small and mostly urban elite persisted, with Baby Doc at the apex of state corruption and theft. The urban bias was also augmented by the establishment of a light assembly export-oriented manufacturing sector in the 1970s, with products like garments, sporting goods, and circuitry, in line with the global ‘off-shoring’ of these industries occurring around this time. US advisors encouraged Baby Doc to capitalize on Haiti’s growing urban population as a source of cheap labour capable of attracting foreign capital, which was to be welcomed under generous terms. This low-wage, low-tax investment climate drew increasing foreign investment, as the number of light assembly manufacturing enterprises swelled from 13 companies in 1966 to 127 by 1978 (LCFRD 2006), and the relative share of light manufacturing in Haiti’s GDP jumped from 17 to 25 percent between 1975 and 1985 (Katz 2013). But its ability to absorb labour has always been modest: even at its highest levels in the mid-1980s low-

wage manufacturing only employed 7 percent of the Haitian workforce (Dupuy 2010), with roughly 250 assembly firms employed nearly 80,000 workers in the industrial parks of Port-au-Prince (LCFRD 2006; Heintl and Heintl 1996).<sup>14</sup> Nevertheless, this undoubtedly augmented rural-to-urban migration to some degree, adding to the push associated with rural poverty.

By the 1980s, Haiti's lack of agro-export competitiveness was also clear, with traditional agro-exports coffee and sugar in sharp decline, though with marginally growth in cocoa exports as evident in Figure 3. Making matters worse, domestic agricultural production was largely stagnant in the context of a fast rising population – meaning that per capita food production was declining.

**Figure 3: Traditional Agro-Exports by Volume (000 Tonnes), 1961-2011**



<sup>14</sup> The Haitian elite, who had been historically averse to productive investment, benefitted from this growth through their position in sub-contracting relationships with US firms and banked much of their earnings abroad (Dupuy 1994; Trouillot 1990, 1994)

Source for data: FAOSTAT (2014)

In the early 1980s, the World Bank declared Haiti to be the poorest country on earth in terms of food consumption. One clear indication of this was that the average Haitian was only consuming 1,901 calories per day, 14 percent less than the minimum level recommended by the World Health Organization (WHO). This problem was overwhelmingly centered in rural areas, where the average person was consuming a mere 1,300 calories per day, 42 percent below minimum WHO recommendations (LCFRD 2011).

One other noteworthy aspect of Haiti's declining food security in the 1980s was the drastic response to an outbreak of swine fever that occurred in some of Haiti's Creole pig population in 1982. Creole pigs had previously been at "the heart of the peasant economy," according to Aristide (2002, 1), with most peasants raising them in small numbers. Pork made up about half of household meat consumption, and fat was used abundantly to make *mantég*, a household-made cooking lard. Citing fears over the potential spread of swine fever to North America, the Organization of American States (OAS) and U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) organized the wholesale slaughter of Haiti's entire Creole pig population, killing around 1.3 million pigs over a 13-month period. New 'Iowa pigs' were subsequently introduced, but peasant households were only granted one if they could demonstrate an ability to pay for imported pig feed at a prohibitive rate, which led to a steep fall in domestic meat production (Aristide 2002; Nicholls 1986) along with increasing dependence on imported American meat and cooking oil (Smith 1990).

Thus, while Haiti has sometimes been presented as a poster-child for declining food self-sufficiency in the wake of structural adjustment and agro-trade liberalization, its agricultural sector was far from healthy prior to this time.

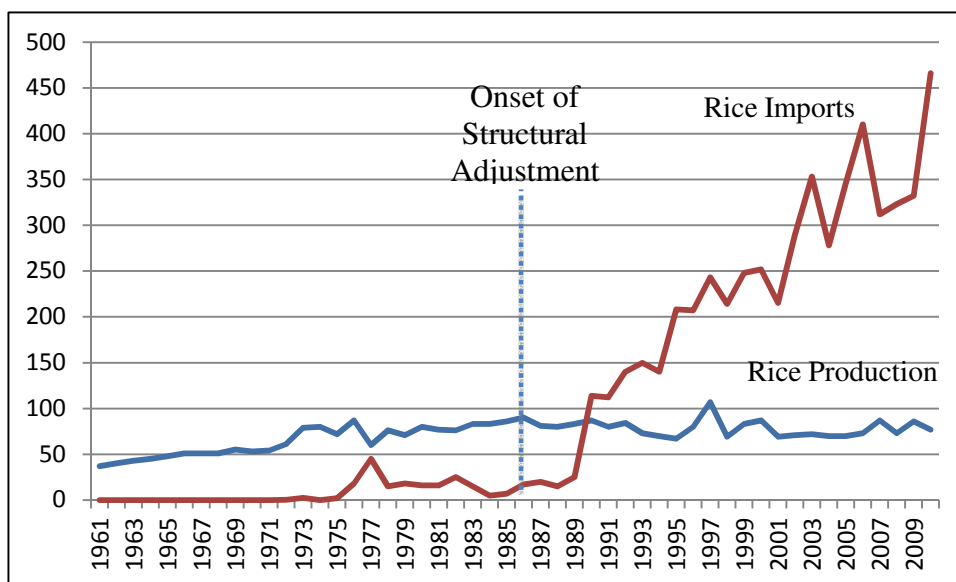
## **2.5 Neoliberal Restructuring**

Although Baby Doc pursued trade and investment liberalization as a central policy in the expansion of light manufacturing, Haiti's domestic food markets remained significantly protected into the 1980s through a combination of quotas and high tariffs (Jensen et al. 1990). This changed quickly after Baby Doc was toppled in 1986, no longer able to contain the enormous discontent welling up. Shortly after Baby Doc fled for France, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) quickly began the process of structural adjustment with the transitional government in an economic context of stagnation, severe payments imbalances, and extensive food shortages. As elsewhere, this included trade liberalization, deregulation, export-promotion, currency devaluation, and fiscal austerity (Hallward, 2010; Shamsie 2004; Lundahl 1992b). In short, the prescription for dismantling the predatory state was a dose of neoliberal 'shock therapy,' which was promised to bring macroeconomic stability and private sector-led growth. In addition to adjustment, trade liberalization was also pursued through bilateral and multilateral agreements, a key aspect being the 2000 Caribbean Basin Trade Partnership Act (CBTPA) through which Haitian textiles and apparel are granted duty-free access to U.S. markets. In 2006, the CBTPA was bolstered when the U.S. Congress passed the Hemispheric Opportunity through Partnership Encouragement Acts (Hope I and Hope II) guaranteeing Haitian exports duty and quota free access to U.S. markets, which was expected to enhance Haiti's position as an export platform for US markets – though

employment levels in light manufacturing barely budged. For instance, only 5,000 of the 30,000 manufacturing jobs that were predicted to follow the 2006 HOPE Act materialized in the ensuing years (Shamsie 2010).

In agriculture, structural adjustment was ostensibly intended to increase efficiency and promote export growth. This included a plan to reorient 30 percent of Haiti's arable land from domestic to export-oriented production at the same time as quotas and tariffs on cereals and other food imports were slashed (Jensen et al. 1990; Dupuy 1989) – a clear reflection of the IMF's free market approach to food security. That is, the basic instruction was to find comparative advantages in exporting in order to enhance foreign exchange earnings while opening domestic food markets to purchase the greatest volume of low-cost imports (Weis 2007a). But as often occurred, these reforms contributed to a dramatic increase in Haiti's food import dependence, with rice at the forefront. Rice is Haiti's most important food staple, and though it was long imported in modest volumes, domestic production had previously supplied the majority of national consumption. For instance, in 1986, just prior to adjustment, Haiti produced 86,000 tonnes of rice and imported a mere 7,000 tonnes. Rice imports took off after 1989, especially with the second wave of extreme import tariff reductions on rice in 1993, and by 2010 rice imports had soared to over 465,000 tonnes, an import surge that has contributed to the stagnation of domestic rice production that is evident in Figure 4.

**Figure 4: Haiti's Rice Production and Imports (000) Tonnes, 1961-2011**



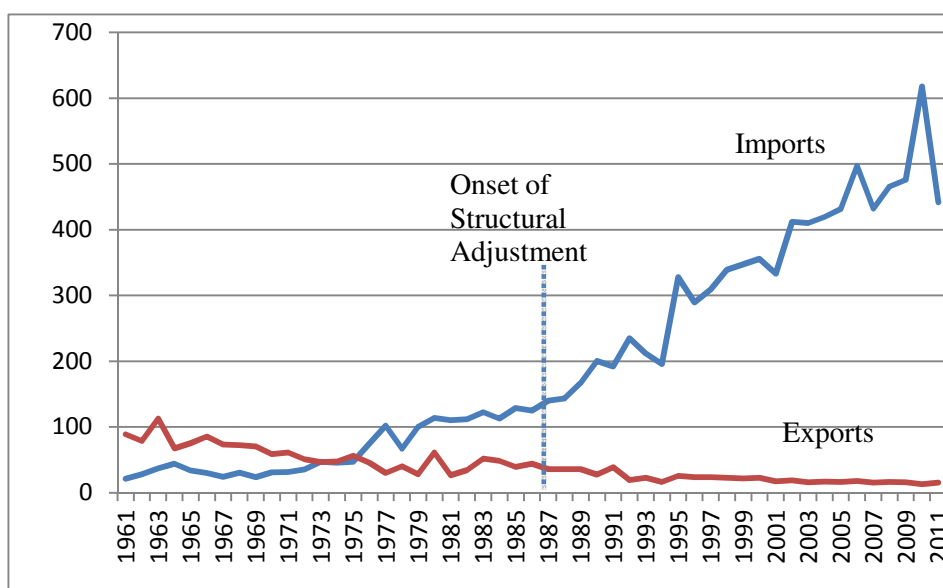
Source for data: FAOSTAT (2014)

In addition to the pressure from import competition, peasant production has also been affected by the intertwined dynamics of rapid population growth and continuing land fragmentation. Haiti's population grew by a factor of 2.5 from 1960 to 2010, from roughly 4 to 10 million, while a complex inheritance legacy and patchwork of ownership rights contributed to land division into smaller and smaller parcels.<sup>15</sup> The average national landholding shrunk by more than one-third since the early 1970s, from over 3.5 acres to less than 2.5 acres today, in spite of the rising urban and external migration over this period (IFAD 2010; Zuvekas 1978). Environmentally, this has contributed to the further deforestation of steep hillsides for agriculture, in turn worsening soil conditions and the desiccation of watersheds (Farmer 2003; Trouillot 1990; Zimmerman 1986).

<sup>15</sup> Most land has long been bought, sold, and inherited without updating land titles, and ownership rights are not usually legally regulated. In the mid-1990s, it was estimated that 95 percent of all land sales avoided legal formalities associated with land title transfers (Smucker et al. 2000).

A few non-traditional agro-exports (notably mangoes, cocoa and essential oils) did increase after the onset of adjustment but this growth has paled in comparison to the sharp increase in food imports to Haiti, adding up a rising agro-trade deficit that is starkly apparent in Figure 5.

**Figure 5: Haiti's Total Agricultural Product Trade by Value (US\$000,000 Base Price) 1961-2011**



Source for data: FAOSTATS (2014)

The political context of Haiti's neoliberal restructuring is also crucially important. In 1990, Haiti's first ever free and fair elections brought Jean-Bertrand Aristide to power with two-thirds of the vote, which as Hallward (2010) convincingly argues, was the culmination of very long struggles for democracy and social justice. Aristide and the *Lavalas* movement sought to pursue a broadly pro-poor agenda, which involved increasing access to health care, education, and adult literacy, disbanding the military, doubling the minimum wage, supporting peasant farmers through land reform and other programs, and establishing a food distribution network to provide low cost food to the poor at below market prices. Such was the threat to Haiti's elite that they engineered a

coup soon after the elections, forcing Aristide to flee to the US, where he lived in exile before being restored in 1994, at which point he was unable to seriously pursue the broad program envisioned at the outset of his presidency (Hallward 2010).

In 2001, Aristide returned to power again, winning with an overwhelming majority of over 90 percent of the vote. His criticism of trade liberalization and Haiti's place in the global food economy was loud and pointed, and he drew a clear link between Haiti's agrarian decline and its unsustainable urbanization: "our fear is that the global market intends to annihilate our markets. We will be pushed to the cities, to eat food grown on factory farms in distant countries" (Aristide 2000, 10). Yet there was a marked disjuncture between his radical aspirations and rhetoric on one hand and the powerful structural constraints facing his government on the other. Haiti was beset by severe macroeconomic imbalances, including an unsustainable trade deficit and extreme dependence on multilateral creditors and donors, and keeping the government solvent depended upon appeasing foreign creditors and donors, led by the IMF and World Bank. The net result was that while Aristide was openly critical of liberalization at the same time as he was signing onto policies that deepened the neoliberal economic restructuring of Haiti. Yet however much Aristide was constrained, he was still seen to pose a threat to the Haitian elite and to foreign interests, and in 2004 the US organized another coup, accompanied by Canada and France, and sent Aristide into exile in Africa (Podur 2012; Hallward 2010; Engler and Fenton 2005).

On the cusp of the food riots in 2008 and the catastrophic earthquake in 2010 it was estimated that 76 percent of Haitians lived in poverty and 54 percent were undernourished, while the country had a Gini coefficient of 0.65, placing it among the

most unequal societies in the world (CIA 2009; McGuigan 2006). The Port-au-Prince metropolitan area was home to one in four Haitians, or about 2.5 million people (IHSI 2009) with a density of over 25,000 people/km<sup>2</sup>, had a formal unemployment rate of 46 percent, and the housing stock was dominated by makeshift lean-to's on steep hillsides (IHSI 2009; UNWUP 2009; DSNCRP 2007). Peasants remained firmly at the bottom of the social order, in some ways operating much as they would have in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, producing food for household consumption but generally dependent on buying and selling for their food security, squeezed by both merchants and the state. However, as noted, small plots of land had become smaller and more fragmented, with rural population density estimated to be roughly 199/km<sup>2</sup> (IHSI 2009), and domestic markets had become thoroughly flooded with cheap food imports, which accounted for between 50 and 60 percent of the country's total food consumption (IFAD 2010).

At the time of the earthquake, Haitian peasants were up against a long history of exploitation and marginality that were being intensified by the pressures associated with global market integration. Although peasants still accounted for by far the biggest social class in Haiti, the rural population was declining by almost 2 percent per year by the late 2000s and the urban population was projected to continue growing steadily into the future (UNWUP 2009).

## **2.6 Rural Poverty, De-peasantization, and Over-Urbanization in the wake of the Catastrophe: Which way forward?**

On a global scale, there is a strong link between the decline of the peasantry as a share of the overall population and the rapid growth of the 'Planet of Slums' sprawling out across much of the Global South (Araghi 2009; Davis 2006). Yet while rates of urbanization far

outpace the growth of decent and stable livelihoods, it is important to recognize that the world's agricultural population is not declining in absolute size and there are many signs of re-peasantization occurring in a range of settings (McMichael 2009; Ploeg 2008). Although the global peasantry is extremely complex and differentiated, with many households surviving through various forms of waged labour, the 'death of the peasantry' is far from inevitable and there are good reasons to imagine that – contrary to how development has long been understood – policies geared towards supporting rather than eliminating peasant agriculture might provide a crucial foundation for economic and social improvements. This has become further apparent in light of the recent volatility of world food prices, which has hit many of the world's poorest countries, such as Haiti, most severely (Holt-Gimenez and Patel 2011; Bello 2009). Indeed, there are few places in the world where food import dependence, enduring rural poverty, and job-starved over-urbanization are entwined to such a precarious extent as in Haiti.

The obvious problems of urban overcrowding, substandard housing, and poor public infrastructure along with the subsequent dynamics of chronic rural-to-urban migration seemed to provide an opportunity to rethink rural development, and even to imagine how re-peasantization might be construed – not merely as short-term crisis response but as a planned endeavor. Unfortunately, little seems to have changed, and attention now turns to the competing visions of agriculture in Haiti at this momentous potential crossroads, which are broadly framed as those coming from 'above', involving a broad nexus of the Government of Haiti, creditors and donors, foreign investors, local elites, and powerful NGOs, and the responses from peasant movements as they contest top-down plans and struggle for alternatives.

The vision of agricultural development from above is understood through: a content analysis of key post-disaster development planning documents (identified in Figure 6) and reports on their initial application; and qualitative interviews with key informants in relevant government ministries as well as with representatives from the USAID, and the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) (the latter reflecting the fact that the USAID and the IDB have been very influential agencies in post-disaster financing and planning). The broad vision for agriculture set out in these plans is to modernize production, led by domestic agribusinesses and a small class of more entrepreneurial farmers, with support from transnational corporations. The majority of peasants barely register, implicit in which is an expectation that they will be absorbed as labour on larger estates or in other sectors like light manufacturing, or else will continue toiling in poverty on the margins of Haitian society.

However, peasants are not passive actors resigned to their continuing marginality, and peasant movements have begun to challenge some aspects of the plan to modernize production, such as the promotion of GM seeds and attempts to grab land for industry and export-oriented estates. The analysis of contemporary peasant struggles is based upon qualitative semi-structured depth interviews and focus groups conducted between December 2010 and July 2013. Interviews targeted a range of key informants (n=35) in peasant and allied social movements and community development organizations listed in Figure 7, and focus groups involved peasants in the Artibonite Valley (n=18) and Caracol (n=11) and workers of the Caracol Industrial Park (n=12). The insights evident in interviews and focus groups are strengthened by the growing vibrancy of wider

movements, which are ultimately grounded in the intense commitment to the land held by peasant farmers.

**Figure 6: Key Post-Earthquake Planning Documents**

<b>Title</b>	<b>Year</b>	<b>Supporting Agencies</b>	<b>Description</b>
The Post-Disaster Needs Assessment (PDNA)	2010	Government of Haiti (GoH), the World Bank (WB) The Inter-American Development Bank (IDB), the United Nations (UN), the European Commission (EC) and the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC).	The foundational analysis of the damages and losses incurred as a result of the earthquake.
The Action Plan for National Recovery and Development (APNRD)	2010	The WB and IDB provided research support.	The cornerstone document that guided both short- and long-term disaster response programming, including budgetary guidelines.
The National Agriculture Investment Plan 2011-2016 (NAIP)	2009	This agricultural plan was created prior, and was revised shortly after. It intended to direct almost US\$800 million in investment.	Created with assistance from the IDB, 16 WB, the U.S. State Department, the FAO and the private sector, and was later edited to include results of the PDNA.
The Vision and Roadmap for Haiti (PSEF)	2010	The APNRD, PDNA and NAIP all urge increased public-private partnerships, which points towards the importance of considering private sector development plans and objectives.	This document was created by the Private Sector Economic Forum and involved consultations with over 150 institutions, including some of Haiti's most influential businesses and business associations, as well as bilateral and multilateral institutions such as MINUSTAH, UNIBANK, and USAID.
Recommendations of the Haitian Diaspora Forum (HDF)	2010	The Haitian Diaspora has a considerable impact on Haiti, both politically and economically through remittances and investment.	Based on the Haitian Diaspora Forum in March 2010. These recommendations were formally presented to the Government of Haiti.
The Growth and Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper 2008-2011 (DSNCRP)	2007	This document was an extension of the Statement of General Policy (2006), which was ratified by parliament in that year. The DSNCRP was the chief document orienting Haiti's	Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (PRSPs) are prepared by member countries in consultation with development partners, including the World Bank and the IMF.

<sup>16</sup> In its Country Strategy Paper for Haiti, the IDB uses the NAIP (2009) as its framework for agricultural engagement.

		development just prior to the earthquake. Its inclusion here helps to assess the degree of continuity in development planning in the periods both preceding and following between pre- and post-earthquake.	
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**Figure 7: Peasant Organizations**

Organization Name	Founded	Funding	Members	Area
Kooperative Prodikite Agrikol Vigilant (KOPAV) (Vigilant Cooperative of Agriculture Producers)	2008	Member contributions	200 peasants	Verette Commune
Mouvman Inite Ti Peyizan Ayisyen (MITPA) (United Movement of Small Haitian Peasants)	1996	Pre-earthquake funding from the Haitian Institute CRAD (Sant Réchech Aksyon Devlopman). This funding ended after the earthquake.	Before the earthquake there were 3015 members, but lack of funding and programming since has meant membership has dwindled to 2000	Artibonite
Mouvman Peyizan Papay (MPP) (The Peasant Movement of Papaye)	1973	MPP receives funding from selected organizations and NGOs, but restricts its donors. <sup>17</sup>	50,000 peasants	National
Partnership for Local Development (PDL)	2009	Groundswell International	Works with various peasant organizations with their own membership	Various Communes
Rezo Asosyasyon Kooperatif des Bas Artibonite (RAKPABA) (Network of Cooperative Associations for Agricultural Commerce and Production in the Lower Artibonite)	2002	Oxfam	RAKPABA is a network of cooperative, of which there are there are 7 in the lower Atibonite, and in the Verette commune there 2000 members	Artibonite
Tèt Kole Ti Peyizan (Heads Together Small Producers of Haiti)	1970	American Jewish World Service	80,000 peasants	National

<sup>17</sup> For example, president of MPP Chavannes Jean-Baptiste describes that in the early 1980s while MPP denounced the eradication of the Creole pig, one donor threatened that, “If we burned a *grimél* (foreign) pig they would cut our funding – we said ‘bye-bye’.”

## **2.7 Old Wine in New Bottles: The crisis-tinged reformulation of neoliberal development planning**

### *2.7.1 Expanding Light-Manufacturing*

Haiti's post-earthquake development plans are heavily influenced by the 2008 IMF-sponsored *Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper*, and in a general sense are underpinned by a neoliberal ideological framework. An overarching tenet is that trade and investment liberalization and export-led growth are essential to macro-economic stability and poverty reduction, with a combination of foreign corporations and Haitian elites expected to lead the way. Post-disaster plans consistently treat light manufacturing, especially in textiles, as the most important vector of future economic growth, emphasizing the need to take advantage both of preferential trade agreements and the 2002 amendment of Haiti's investment code to enable Export Processing Zones (EPZs), which effectively guarantees even lower wages through investor-friendly labour laws and exempts the industry from income and other government taxes as well as import duties on equipment and raw materials (IMF 2013). Other recurring policy directives include: the orientation of infrastructure investment to support light manufacturing exports (including highways, ports and electricity infrastructure as well as residential projects in targeted areas to house the manufacturing labour force); the need to pursue further free trade agreements; and the need to establish a national land registry (which bears on plans for both light industry and agriculture). Another central part of how EPZs have been promoted has been to identify geographically strategic hubs. This includes both preexisting industrial parks, such as the *Société Nationale des Parcs Industriels* (SONAPI) in Port-au-Prince and the *Compagnie de Développement Industriel* (CODEVI) in Ouanaminthe, as well as the development of new ones, such as the Caracol Industrial Park (CIP) in Haiti's North Department.

The CIP is a US\$250 million mega-project financed by the US government, the South Korean textile giant Sae-A Trading Co. Ltd, and the IDB (HGW 2013; IMF 2013; IFC 2011). In 2010, the CIP was expected to be a major part of the expected growth of jobs in textile manufacturing; initial projections were that it would create 20,000 new jobs by 2015 and employ between 65,000 and 100,000 people once fully operational (Johnston 2014; GAO 2013). The employment prospects of the CIP are closely tied to the Haiti Economic Lift Program (HELP) Act (2010-2020), which extended previously established preferential programs (Hemispheric Opportunity through Partnership Encouragement Acts) until 2020, with the goal of rapidly accelerating the export earnings and jobs in light manufacturing (WEF 2011). However, as indicated earlier, the 2006 HOPE Act had little impact on manufacturing job creation, with inadequate infrastructure cited as a prominent explanation for this failure (GAO 2013; IFC 2011).

The CIP mega-project is a clear illustration of how poor infrastructure has continued to impede light manufacturing growth in the post-earthquake period. In 2010, the road network, power plant, and deep-water port needed for the project were either absent or dilapidated, and the CIP simply could not operate without enormous investments in infrastructure. The IDB promised US\$180 million in grants for the CIP from 2010 to 2016, targeted for both the construction of factories and administrative buildings and for a range of infrastructure, principally road networks. The USAID also budgeted nearly US\$100 million towards a power plant and US\$72 million towards rehabilitating the Caracol port (GAO 2013; IDB 2012). Although the buildings were complete and the CIP was inaugurated in 2011, it had only one tenant by the end of 2013 (Katz 2013). Part of this was because the port and power plant, both vital to the project's

long-term viability, were still years behind schedule; only 6 percent of promised funding for the port funding had been disbursed in the ensuing two year, and it was estimated that the project could take another 10 years to complete (GAO 2013).

In addition to the trickle of promised financing, the port development has been slowed by unforeseen costs which led one USAID official to warn of the “risk that no private company interested in operating the port would be willing to cover the entire remaining costs of construction” (GAO 2013, 26). A further problem relates to high construction costs in the post-earthquake period. The enormous damage to the built environment in Port-au-Prince was initially valued at over US\$4.3 billion (PDNA 2010), and the proliferation of reconstruction projects heightened demand for materials, mostly imported from the US, and caused price spikes and cost overruns. In fact, the International Financial Corporation (IFC 2011), a member of the World Bank Group, estimated that building costs for factories in Haiti were over 50 percent above the global average. High construction costs have also constrained the USAID-led housing project geared towards CIP employees (GAO 2012). Initially, the USAID allocated over US\$80 million to build 15,000 homes in the vicinity but numerous setbacks led to a greatly reduced target of less than 3,000.<sup>18</sup>

While development has been far behind schedule, the nature of the CIP posed considerable risks even if it materialized as planned. For instance, advocacy

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<sup>18</sup> The USAID has had trouble maintaining staff (more than half of whom left Haiti shortly after the earthquake) and there has been high turnover ever since. Project planning and report submissions were consistently late and rising costs led to much higher expenditures than predicted (GAO 2013; Katz 2013a; Sontag 2012).

organizations like *Haiti Grassroots Watch* and *Batay Ouvriye* have expressed concern that the project could attract somewhere between 100,000 and 300,000 migrants to the region (KOIOS 2010), bringing with it the sort of slum development that has plagued other light manufacturing hubs in the country,<sup>19</sup> risks that are obviously magnified by the shortfalls in the housing project. The prospect of ‘slumification’ in Caracol is made more worrying still by the low earnings of CIP employees. When CIP construction began, workers earned barely US\$4 per day, though the minimum wage subsequently increased by Haiti’s Supreme Council on Wages, spurred partly by demands made by workers in the CIP and other light manufacturing hubs.<sup>20</sup>

These wage increases came in spite of the fact that industry leaders along with some donors and influential Haitian economists railed against them, arguing that it would impede the country’s competitive advantage (Roshan Lall 2013a), and there can be little doubt they will fight further increases. Yet although Haiti still has by far the cheapest average labour costs in the Caribbean region, it remains less competitive than its main competitors in textile manufacturing, such as Bangladesh and Cambodia, partly owing to the absence of a multi-shift workday. Thus, post-disaster plans, including a report by the IFC (2011), argue against existing labour code restrictions that prevent three 8-hour work shifts per day, with the claim that these are restricting investment and productivity (although they have not succeeded as of 2015, this seems likely to be a flashpoint of

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<sup>19</sup> Camille Chalmers, who is an economics professor as well as the coordinator of PAPDA suggested that “while SONAPI [Société National des Parcs Industriels] might have created 60,000 jobs, it also attracted two million unemployed people” (HGW 2011).

<sup>20</sup> The Haitian minimum wage was increased to roughly US\$6.40 per day for some sectors in October 2012, but this reform excluded garment workers who continued to make US\$4.30 per day until May 2013, when the wage was increased to US\$4.81.

labour struggles in the years ahead).

Another significant barrier to investment in light manufacturing is the expensive and erratic energy supply, which partly reflects the heavy reliance on oil for electricity generation, most of which is imported from Venezuela (Roshan Lall 2013b; IFC 2011). Haiti lacks a national electricity grid and has the lowest electrification rate in the Hemisphere and, with less than 60 percent of the population (and only 5 percent in rural areas) having access to electricity, and those with electricity have it for only an average of 10 hours per day. Only 15 percent of businesses have access to electricity and industries pay an average of US\$0.32 per kWh, more than double the Latin American average (MIF/BNEF 2013; GAO 2011; IDB 2010).<sup>21</sup> For decades Haiti's primary supplier of electricity, *L'Electricité d'Haiti* (EDH), has not been profitable and since 2006, EDH has been at risk of bankruptcy (WB 2013; IDB 2010; KOIOS 2010). Post-disaster plans stressed the need to expand power plants and associated infrastructure through public-private partnerships, drawing on disaster funds to encourage private investment in light manufacturing<sup>22</sup> – though with a clear recognition that the instability and expensive nature of the energy supply is not something that could be quickly

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<sup>21</sup> Haiti's energy sector is also affected by the fact that one-third of electricity clients do not pay their bills and tapping electrical lines is common throughout the country (IFC 2011), while an estimated 50 percent of electricity users connected to the electricity grids illegally (MIF/BNEF 2013).

<sup>22</sup> In the early aftermath of the earthquake, this included a US\$16 million project to rehabilitate the electrical transmission line connected to the Péligre Dam, financed by the Haiti Reconstruction Fund (determined by a combination of the Haitian government, the IDB, and the World Bank), and a US\$1.25 million project to supply Liquefied Natural Gas to EPZs in Port-au-Prince, financed by the IDB, Haytrak Power and Gas, and US transnational AECOM.

overcome (IFC 2011).

The final and perhaps most contentious obstacle to light manufacturing growth in Haiti is the challenge of gaining land access for EPZ development. Haiti has no functional national land registry and the IDB (2013) estimates that 60 percent of privately owned land parcels lack a property title, a situation that has been widely cited as a massive constraint to EPZ development (GAO 2013; IFC 2011; IHRC 2011; KOIOS 2011; WEF 2011). In response, the formalization of Haiti's land tenure system was identified as a key strategic priority in post-disaster plans,<sup>23</sup> although there has been only modest tangible progress on this front. The primary change stems from an IDB-led US\$15 million project (co-funded by a number of other multilateral and bilateral partners), entitled *Institutional Strengthening and Reform of the Agriculture Sector*, which has made headway simplifying land registration procedures to an extent that has decreased the average cost and time period to register a land title (IDB 2013b).<sup>24</sup> Nevertheless, the complexity and informality of much land tenure has proven to be a barrier to EPZ investment. In 2011, as the site of the first new EPZ was being negotiated, the IFC contended that "getting hold of an industrial building or serviced land is a bottleneck that frustrates investment and Haiti's economic development" (IFC 2011), while a report prepared by a US-based consultancy emphasized that "many of the planned industrial parks and free zone projects are based on a range of unrealistic

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<sup>23</sup> For instance, the PDNA (2010) recommended spending US\$154 million alone on efforts to enhance the land tenure management.

<sup>24</sup> Between 2011 and 2015, the IDB (2013b) estimates that average number of days to process a land registry declined from 400 to 70 day and the average cost fell from roughly US\$600 USD to \$150.

assumptions and are confronted by critical obstacles... [including] lack of land title” (KOIOS 2011).

The conflict over the siting of the first new EPZ project after the earthquake gives a powerful illustration of how land tenure has constrained manufacturing in Haiti. In 2010, the Haitian government identified Corail-Cesselesse, a desolate stretch of arid land approximately 10 miles north of Port-au-Prince, as the preferred location for this development. Meanwhile, NABATEC, a conglomerate owned by some of Haiti’s wealthiest families, claimed ownership over a portion of the land targeted for the EPZ and NABATEC’s president sat on the steering committee that facilitated the contract between the Haitian government and the Korean firm SAE-A Trading Co. The initial contract was compromised, however, when the government reclaimed over 18,000 acres of land in the area to establish a camp expected to hold 300,000 IDPs. In response, NABATEC and other landowners demanded a hefty compensation package (roughly US\$20,000 per acre) from the state, which resisted, and after the refugee camps were established IDPs described being harassed by ‘gangsters’ hired by landowners. This conflict prompted the relocation of the EPZ to Caracol, where securing land also proved problematic, though for very different reasons. At the Caracol site, much of the land was assumed to be owned by the state though peasant producers had occupied it for decades, and “the exact cadastral boundaries [of state land were] unknown” (IFC 2011). In the course of establishing the CIP, over 350 individual plots spanning over 600 acres of fertile agricultural land were expropriated from peasant producers, sparking community conflict and local food insecurity (Steckley and Shamsie 2015; which appears as Chapter 4 in this dissertation).

This expropriation, or land grab, was the impetus for intense and widespread frustration with the CIP in many surrounding communities. In a focus group with representatives of local government known as *Conseils d'Administration des Sections Communales* (CASECs), the failure of CIP planners to engage in any local consultations prior to the fencing and bulldozing of the land was collectively stressed. Representatives then described telling CIP management that the community did not support the project, and urged them to change the location. As one participant put it:

I told them it is a fertile zone, that the peasants will be victims, that what they're doing is wrong, and that they should have chosen another place. They said 'No, this is where we've chosen! Whether you want the park or not we're putting it here'.

Representatives also described how local peasants subsequently engaged in frequent protests at the entrance to the CIP as it was getting constructed and how, though these protests were always peaceful, the managers of the CIP called in the *L'Unité Départementale de Maintien de l'Ordre* (the harshest branch of the Haitian police force) to "take them out."

Even many who were able to find scarce jobs in the CIP expressed frustration with owners and management over earnings and working conditions. For instance, in a focus group (n=12) with CIP labourers, earnings were consistently described as being insufficient to meet daily needs for transportation and food, forcing many to rely on credit – an obviously unsustainable arrangement that reflects both the lack of employment alternatives and the pull of even meagre-paying EPZ jobs. After income taxes were extracted and debts paid off, respondents estimated that their biweekly take-

home earnings averaged roughly US\$11.50, or a mere US\$0.82 per day. They also described how workers were frequently denied access to their employment contracts, were prohibited from speaking with journalists, and faced regular incidents of physical abuse from management, with one participant reporting sexual violence by a superior. Yet while participants expressed that they wanted to resign, they also described a need to continue to work to provide for their families. One put this compulsion in very stark terms:

If we had a choice, we would not have let the industrial park come. I wouldn't have wanted it to come in. But we have to stay. We're always thinking about our kids.

We have no option but to stay.

In short, the CIP has involved considerable expropriation and displacement, yet brought few tangible benefits. To this point, it has neither attracted the anticipated investors nor provided much employment. By the end of 2014, the CIP was still largely unoccupied and provided fewer than 5000 jobs, and the jobs that have materialized are most at the minimum wage level (USAID 2014; Johnston 2014) and give little indication that this form of development is likely to alleviate poverty or contribute to more dignified livelihoods even if it is to expand (Steckley and Shamsie 2015).

### *2.7.2 Modernizing Agriculture*

While the goal of significantly expanding the light-manufacturing sector has been the central pillar of post-disaster plans for future export-led growth, Haiti's agricultural sector has also been identified to have significant potential simultaneously to increase export earnings and reduce imports. The goal of expanding agro-export production

focuses on a few key crops, primarily fruit (like mangos, the focus of Chapter 5), coffee, cocoa, and natural oils, along with enhanced agro-processing capacities. The goal of import substitution in post-disaster planning focuses on increasing the production of tubers, beans, plantains, grains and vegetables.

The desire expressed in post-disaster plans both to expand agro-export earnings and enhance domestic production is united by a vision of agricultural modernization that was previously articulated in a number of earlier plans (NAIP 2009; DSNCRP 2007). This vision of modernization hinges on such things as: improving infrastructure; establishing a formal national land registry to enable land security; encouraging the rise of entrepreneurial farmers and the development of large-scale orchards; providing credit for agricultural enterprises and small-holding producers; subsidizing agro-chemical inputs; and taking advantage of high value export markets, including fair trade and organic markets (the latter obviously sitting in tension with some other strategies). If such modernization were seriously pursued, the PSEF (2010) projected that agro-export volumes could be tripled between 2010 and 2015 and that such a boom could create 300,000 jobs by 2015, both on commercial farms and in agro-processing enterprises. In interviews, representatives from the USAID and the IDB also claimed that increasing production oriented for sale in domestic markets (rather than peasant household consumption) had an important role in reducing rural poverty and food insecurity.

Two key infrastructure priorities highlighted in post-disaster plans are roads and irrigation. The poor quality of Haiti's transportation system was blamed for serious post-harvest losses which, prior to the earthquake, were estimated to be as high as 35 percent on products like fruits, vegetables, roots and legumes (NAIP 2010 APNRD 2010). With

respect to irrigation, it was estimated that less than 60 percent of the irrigable land has necessary infrastructure, resulting in diminished yields (PDNA 2010). In response, the Haitian government allocated US\$30 million to road-building and US\$15 million towards irrigation projects in the first 18 months following the earthquake, while an IDB financed project expanded irrigation across 12,000 acres in the Artibonite Valley (IDB 2012). This initial expenditure was accompanied by a commitment to devote a further US\$600 million towards roadways and over US\$100 million to rehabilitate 38 irrigation systems and construct 15 new ones (NAIP 2010; APNRD 2010).

While there has been vast improvement in the condition of major highways, most minor roads are in decrepit conditions and this continues to be a significant contributor to high post-harvest losses (Fuller-Wimbush and Fils-Aimé 2014; MARNDR 2013). The irrigation improvements in the Artibonite region noted above have contributed to increasing land values there, which has had the serious and unforeseen consequence of heightening land conflict. According to an IDB official, this increasing land conflict in the Artibonite Valley should make creditors and donors wary of pursuing further irrigation projects there and in other areas with land tenure insecurity.

As discussed earlier, the absence of a formal land registry has long been identified as a significant barrier to agricultural modernization, and this was echoed again in post-disaster plans. As with light manufacturing, agricultural development plans aim to establish a national land registry to identify clear legal private property rights (i.e. formalizing land titles) and land values, in order to enhance the ability to buy and sell land. Key informants from the IDB and the USAID also stressed the importance of

formalizing land tenure in interviews, describing the complexity and informality of land tenure as a major barrier to expanded agricultural production.

Another goal of establishing a land registry is to enable the Haitian government to “make land concessions” of state-owned lands (PSEF 2010, 20) and thereby facilitate the advancement of large projects – including commercial farms in addition to light manufacturing projects (APNRD 2010; PSEF 2010; NAIP 2010). However, the realization of this goal is filled with deep tensions and high uncertainty, one reflection of which is the fact that some creditors, donors and NGOs have chosen to focus attention on small-scale production in pursuit of export growth. Two good examples of projects aiming to increase export-oriented production by working with small-holding farmers are *Haiti Hope*, a US\$7.5 million initiative co-financed by the USAID, the IDB, the Clinton-Bush Haiti Fund, and The Coca-Cola Company (discussed in more detail in Chapter 5), and the *Improving Lives of Farm Families through Post Harvest Loss Reduction Program*, led by Mercy Corp and the Taiwanese International Cooperation and Development Fund. However, there have also been some attempts to scale-up agro-export production. For example, the *Nourribio* project, implemented by the Haitian agribusiness *Agritrans* in Haiti’s Northeast Department, is Haiti’s first Agricultural Free Zone, which implies an exemption from government taxes on export-oriented production. If it materializes as planned it will convert nearly 2,500 acres of land into an organic banana plantation, a trade-off that has come with a promise to provide 3,000 jobs (Haiti Libre 2013a). Haiti’s largest agribusiness, *AgroTechnique*, has also been actively trying to grow in scale, including multiple attempts to expand a 160-acre export-oriented mango orchard in the Artibonite Valley. However, as is discussed in Chapter 5, local peasants

have resisted *AgroTechnique*, accusing it of illegal and violent tactics.

Yet even as agro-exports are being encouraged in various ways, it is also important to note that there is broad recognition amongst key international creditor and donor institutions and the Haitian government that there is need to diversify and boost overall agricultural production for domestic markets. The USAID has led some of the largest domestic-oriented agricultural programs, including the *Development of Agricultural and Environmental Security* project, which prioritizes corn, rice, cacao, beans and plantain production (Haiti Libre 2013b), and the *Feed the Future West* program, which supported the construction of over 300 greenhouses in the mountains above Port-au-Prince to produce non-traditional crops like lettuce, broccoli, peppers, tomatoes, leeks, beets, carrots, and strawberries to sell to domestic supermarkets, hotels, and restaurants (Mattila-Litvak 2013; Haiti Libre 2013b).

While plans for export promotion are often tied to organic and fair trade markets, new agricultural projects geared to expand domestic production tend to favour input-intensive methods, including the distribution of chemical fertilizers, pesticides, and high-yielding varieties (HYV) of seeds, which were contrasted against “traditional” peasant practices described as “weak” (NAIP 2009, 31) and “rudimentary” (PDNA 2010, 95). During the 18-month emergency period after the earthquake, the *Ministere de L'Agriculture des Ressources Naturelles et du Developpement Rural (MARNDR)* – with funds from a range of foreign donors – initiated the US\$687 million dollar *Emergency Food Production Assistance Program* to increase the distribution of chemical fertilizers, pesticides and HYV seeds (Claxton 2010). In 2012, the MARNDR (this time with financial support from the IDB) spent US\$1.5 million to subsidize the cost of 15,000 MT

of fertilizer for agribusinesses and distribute fertilizer to over 4,000 farmers in four departments, an initiative that was accompanied by putting a ceiling on the price for fertilizer (MARNDR 2013; IDB 2013).<sup>25</sup> The USAID has also been at the forefront of increased agro-chemical distribution since the disaster, the centerpiece of which was its 5-year, US\$126 million dollar *Watershed Initiative for National Natural Environmental Resources* (WINNER) program that includes the previously noted *Feed the Future West Program*. The *Feed the Future West Program* introduced HYV seeds, some new technologies (e.g. ‘mobile money’ to simplify transactions, mechanized hand tillers, training in operating tractors where gradients allowed), and fertilizer to over 30,000 farmers (CJ 2013), and the *Feed the Future North* program is intended to reach 40,000 farmers with a similar array of supports.

In sum, post-disaster agricultural planning has set out to expand production both for export and domestic markets either by transforming subsistence-oriented peasants into more commercially-oriented and input-intensive operations or by displacing smallholdings with larger, consolidated farms, ostensibly creating new employment opportunities for wage-labourers (APNRD 2010; NAIP 2009), while the poorest and most isolated continue to be largely ignored. Ingrained in this prescription is a belief that subsistence-oriented production is not capable of enhancing food security, a view clearly summed up by a representative of the IDB, who noted that peasants must increase their sales or the rural poor “must have employment” if they are “to access [more] food.”

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<sup>25</sup> As of early 2015, this initiative was set to expand into a series of non-state subsidy projects, to be financed by the IDB, WB and EU.

As the next section will emphasize, such perspectives are not shared by peasant movements, which contest the nature of agrarian change being promoted from above – an approach they believe will only intensify rural inequality and reduce food insecurity for the majority.

## **2.8 Peasant Struggles for Alternatives**

The post-disaster plans do not coincide with the interest of peasants.

-Tét Kole leader

All official post-disaster discourse on agriculture is a strategy to eliminate peasant agriculture and to empower the market. There is no project that supports the peasant economy.

-PAPDA leader

Peasant leaders repeatedly expressed strong beliefs that post-disaster agricultural planning and policies will accelerate rural differentiation and displacement, with some expected to benefit at the expense of many. One peasant leader in Verrette described the overall nature of the post-disaster agenda for agriculture as being rooted in “a capitalist analysis of the food system, involving only an analysis of production and ignor[ing] the peasant perspective.”

However, peasant leaders were not always aligned in how they critiqued post-disaster plans, and some of the visions of agriculture they articulated actually overlapped with certain aspects of post-disaster plans. For instance, a number of peasant leaders held conflicting views of the post-disaster fertilizer subsidies and distribution programs. At one end of the spectrum, the president and founder of MPP was adamant that “chemical fertilizer is a dependency trap, a petrol product that poisons the soil!” A MITPA representative was equally disdainful of agro-chemical inputs, stating bluntly, “Fertilizer makes people sick! We strongly discourage peasants from using chemical fertilizer.”

However other peasant leaders were less resolute, exemplified by the co-ordinator of PDL who noted that,

On one hand I have an ideological position, and I side with organic fertilizer, composting, and with better management of organic matter. But, I am also a pragmatist. I'm not going to eliminate chemical fertilizer in all instances.

The leaders of KOPAV and RAKPABA likewise expressed hesitancy about the efforts to increase the use of chemical fertilizers while ultimately conceding that some agro-chemical inputs are necessary. According to the coordinator of KOPAV:

We have goals to use other methods – for composting and organic practices – but fertilizer is a total necessity for peasants. Peasants know that if they don't use fertilizer, their kids can't go to school.

Peasant leaders also varied in how they view agro-export production. Although it was generally assumed that production for local consumption should be prioritized, many did acknowledge that export sales can enhance peasant earnings. One MPP representative suggested that decisions about the markets for agricultural goods should be guided by what he called a 'food first' logic; that is, where production for family consumption is prioritized, followed by production oriented towards markets at different scales starting with the village and moving outwards to national, Caribbean, and wider global markets. The coordinator of PDL expressed a similar belief that a peasant should strive to "be able to produce enough to meet his/her needs and to sell a portion of what he/she produces so that he/she can conduct his other affairs [sic]." In discussing the post-disaster initiatives to boost mango exports, the coordinator of MPP explained that, "we are not inherently

against mango production for export, but we are against [the sorts of] mango production that is detrimental to production for local consumption.” This implies that while peasants might have mango trees interspersed on their land in ways that do not negatively affect other food production, and might benefit from these sales, when mangos are produced in commercial orchards there are very different implications for both food security and who derives the benefits.

Peasant leaders also expressed a range of views about the need for a national land registry and more formalized tenure relations, which as emphasized, has been repeatedly professed in agricultural planning documents. On one hand, many agreed with assessments that informal land tenancy and excessive subdivision can inhibit agricultural productivity under some circumstances, yet most condemned the calls to establish a national land registry. A PAPDA leader effectively summed up the widespread fears underlying peasant opposition to the idea of a registry:

...[it] is another trap. The state wants to make a land registry to take land that peasants have been on for decades. The state will sell that land to multi-national enterprises. They want peasants to have legal land titles so that the land can be bought from the peasants.

Rather than focusing on a land registry to enhance the buying and selling of land, which seems likely to abet consolidation into larger estates, peasant movements advocate a very different vision. One Tét Kole leader explained that any agrarian reform must first and foremost ensure “that land is owned by those working it.” For him, this “doesn’t necessarily mean that peasants must have title to the land they’re working – it could be

state land – but peasants must have [some kind of] a guarantee that no one can kick them off.”

While the complexity and informality of land tenure is seen from above to inhibit an active land market, some peasant leaders expressed the opposite fear – that this has actually increased peasant vulnerability to land appropriations since the earthquake. Indeed many claimed that private land purchases, the sale of state land to private enterprises, and outright land seizures have escalated since 2010, with informal claims offering little defense. Some prominent examples were cited often, including: the 2011 eviction of 350 peasants to make room for the CIP; the attempted evictions of 140 families in Seguin in July 2012 (which erupted in a violent conflict between local peasants and the Haitian police, with four peasants killed); and an ongoing conflict between *AgroTechnique* and over 250 peasants in the Artibonite Valley (discussed in Chapter 5). There is a strong belief among peasant leaders that the Haitian state is either too weak to stop moneyed landowners from forcefully evicting peasants or complicit in these evictions. In the words of one peasant, who was embroiled in a fight against a land grab (of state-owned land that peasants have long occupied) in the Artibonite Valley: “Our state is dormant, it’s not managing its land appropriately. It is corrupt.” Another involved in the same fight nevertheless held out some hope that the state would ultimately intervene on the side of local peasants:

Even as we *leve kanpe* [fight against] against this land grab, it will never be finished until the state gets involved. Because now justice is not given to people who deserve justice! It’s only those with money who get justice!

Peasant leaders consistently expressed disdain for the leadership of both the Haitian state and the various foreign organizations that exert such powerful influence over agricultural policy, sentiments that relate to issues much broader than land. For example, peasant leaders regularly made comments like:

- “Peasants don’t recognize the state.”
- “The state doesn’t do anything, so you can’t believe in it.”
- “What the state says is not true. Even if what is written down in their plans, it will not happen.”
- “Every big country that says they’re our friend is lying!”
- “With exception of Venezuela and Cuba, the other countries are hypocrites.”
- “International organizations come in and do whatever they want. They hurt the country terribly.”

The perceived incapacity (and, for some, corruption) of the state together with the widespread suspicion of foreign leadership are central to why peasant leaders have little faith in post-disaster plans. According to the coordinator of PDL, post-disaster plans were flawed from the beginning because “the Haitian government did not have the capacity either for post-earthquake diagnostics or to identify appropriate solutions.” Peasant leaders consistently indicated their sense that post-disaster agricultural initiatives have prioritized agribusinesses and the urban elite over the peasantry, and that whatever participation has been invoked has been mostly cosmetic, merely to justify the priorities of key creditor and donor institutions without genuinely seeking peasant involvement in decision-making. Peasant leaders were most disdainful of programs geared to distributing

foreign food and corporate seeds (including both GMO seeds and chemical laden hybrid seed) frustration that was evident in comments like:

- “The USAID does ‘food for work’ projects and gives out *blè* [a soy and bulgur wheat blend]. In this scheme, Haitian peasants are working to support American wheat, American farmers! They shouldn’t do that. They should be buying local products to help our economy.”
- “They always bring us food in cans! That’s not what we ask for.”
- NGOs didn’t come to develop us, they came to envelop us!”
- “The biggest organization in Haiti is USAID, and they are doing the worst things in this country, like giving out seeds!”
- “Seed projects that offer imported seeds will destroy our traditional crop varieties. We will never work with the USAID or the FAO!”
- “The USAID is trying to introduce seeds that will destroy the peasants!”

The critiques articulated by peasant leaders are not mere words, and the depth with which they are understood is evident in the range of ways that peasant movements have resisted rural development projects and land seizure attempts and struggled to undermine the associated programs of the nexus of the state and key creditor and donor institutions. One of the earliest and most celebrated illustrations of this peasant resistance was organized by MPP on June 4, 2010, World Environment Day, when over 10,000 peasants marched in protest of Monsanto’s ‘donation’ of 475 tons of ‘improved’ seeds – a donation that was approved by the Haitian government and was distributed through the

USAID WINNER program.<sup>26</sup> One MPP leader described the peasant response bluntly: “We fought against them! They planted them in the Central Plateau and we pulled them up and burned them.” Other peasant leaders expressed firm belief that the distribution was done under the guise of humanitarian aid, and that this was a ploy to create Haitian peasant dependence on Monsanto seeds. Such views are reflected in comments like:

- “They put chemicals on those seeds that make the land infertile. They are not good for us!”
- “The state and Monsanto are colluding to destroy peasant food sovereignty.”
- “Any institution that gives people a gift covered with poison –a gift he can kill himself with – is not a humanitarian organization.”

One MPP leader suggested that the significance of this protest was reflected in how it spurred struggles against imported seeds in another area of the Central Plateau:

The people rose up against WINNER-affiliated stores where they were selling these seeds at a subsidized price [and] because of this, the stores in the Central Plateau closed.

Peasant leaders drew from this example to stress both the importance of collective peasant resistance and to highlight the power of peasant mobilization, celebrating the fact that Monsanto has not returned to Haiti since these protests. Following this direct action in 2010, MPP has continued to lead workshops and conferences for peasant producers,

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<sup>26</sup> There is some controversy about whether these were indeed GM seeds; MARNDR officials claim they were hybrid seeds but most peasant leaders expressed the belief that they were GM seeds.

and in March 2013 MPP organized a march for food sovereignty to denounce the incursion of input-intensive agriculture. Forty thousand peasants participated, chanting “Yes for an agro-ecological agriculture” and “We want genuine agrarian reform.” The leader of MPP expressed “We are seeing a re-colonization of Haiti and we must do something! We will demonstrate that peasants are a force in the country” (Haiti Libre 2013c).

Tét Kole has also remained a powerful peasant movement in the post-earthquake period and has had a leading role in struggles against land seizures. Resistance tactics have included organizing and sending groups of peasants and peasant leaders from some areas to accompany peasants in other areas, in order to fortify those peasants under threat and forge collective strategies. In describing one such case in July 2013, where peasants were threatened by a land seizure from mining companies in Haiti’s North Department, a Tét Kole leader noted how:

Peasants *dechouké* [ransacked] the housing and storage sheds that mining exploration companies built. Now we are sending others to accompany those peasants, to encourage them to stay on their land and to stand strong!

Peasants in the Artibonite Valley have also resisted land seizure attempts made by the Haitian agribusiness *AgroTechnique*. Core resistance tactics have included: peaceful protests to try to gain wider attention and rally support for their struggle; maintaining a 24-hour presence on the land; and digging trenches in feeder roads to restrict access to the land by vehicles. Yet even in spite of this support, in a focus group peasants involved in this struggle still described feeling too isolated, and strongly hoped to connect with a

national peasant movement in order to make their struggles heard more broadly. National peasant leaders expressed similar sentiments, with many pointing out how hard it is to quickly communicate local level struggles to national-scale networks. Still, there is considerable sense that new alliances are growing in strength. For example, after suggesting that what is at stake with new policies, investments, and projects is nothing less than a “plan for the total destruction of the peasant economy,” the coordinator of PAPDA went on to convey his sense that,

There is growing unification and peasant movements are taking action and working together! If we can continue to grow as a national movement, the peasantry will have a bright future.

Peasant movements present a very different vision of agricultural development than that coming from above, a vision that is broadly aligned with the goals of food sovereignty as articulated by Via Campesina (some of the core ideas associated with Via Campesina are discussed in Chapter 3). Figure 8 indicates the most common agricultural priorities articulated by peasant leaders in interviews, and it is notable that all spoke in terms of food sovereignty. Most peasant leaders also advocated the importance of polyculture cropping techniques geared towards producing a range of healthy and nourishing foods in ways that regenerate the health of the soil and minimize other inputs, like fertilizers and agro-chemicals (though as indicated earlier, what exactly this means varied somewhat with respect to input usage). Peasant leaders described poly-cropping traditions as being essential to maximizing peasant autonomy and to any conception of food sovereignty. As one peasant leader in Verette put it:

When a peasant plants a range of crops in his garden he can have food any time he

goes to his land. That is food sovereignty. This is a form of peasant resistance that is unconscious. The peasant isn't necessarily conscious that he is being revolutionary, he doesn't yet agree to enter into a war against the capitalist system, he doesn't do it in the name of food sovereignty...but he is doing these things just the same.

Only MPP and Tét Kole leaders articulated environmental principles in terms of agroecology, reflecting the fact that both movements are well acquainted with the discourse and concepts in critical agrarian studies and both are members of the global peasant federation Via Campesina.

**Figure 8: Key Priorities of Peasant Organizations in Haiti**

	APV	KOPAV	KROS	MITPA	MPP	PDL	RAKPABA	Tét Kole	Vedek
Food Sovereignty	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Agroecology					x			x	
Seed Saving	x	x		x	x	x		x	
Agricultural Modernization		x	x				x		
Polyculture cropping	x		x	x	x	x		x	x

The pursuit of food sovereignty was understood to demand action at various scales beyond the level of securing land rights. As indicated earlier, rather than establishing a formal land registry and an active market in land, peasant movements are primarily concerned with increasing the security of peasant rights to land, as well as supporting the redistribution of state lands and other large-holdings where possible. They also generally advocated that agrarian reform must go beyond redistribution and also include things like technical training and ongoing extension support to maximize domestic agricultural

diversity and subsidized agricultural insurance and credit. While peasant leaders stress the importance of poly-cropping and that some subsistence orientation is fundamental to peasant autonomy, many also identified the importance of changing the marketing system to reduce or eliminate the power of spéculateurs and improve the share of profits that peasants receive from the sale of their food in domestic markets. Along with this is a common perception that the nation state must also have the power to protect domestic markets against the foods that peasants produce. For example, a Tét Kole leader said that at the national level, “arriving closer to food sovereignty means de-occupying the country from food colonization,” with flexible trade policies seen to be essential in this. Related to this, though beyond the realm of policy and into a greyer area of culture, peasant leaders (as well as other leaders of civil society organizations) suggested that the pursuit of food sovereignty demands an ideological shift on the part of Haitian consumers who must begin to privilege peasant production in diets. For example the coordinator of the PAPDA said:

Haitians must adopt another mentality, another mode of understanding both food systems and peasants. The national mentality must be aligned with the interests of the peasant masses and favour peasant production.

Peasant leaders were optimistic that national advocacy efforts to revalorize peasants and peasant foods could motivate consumers to practice ‘dietary solidarity’ with peasants. Further, some were also hopeful that such a cultural shift could in turn inspire peasants who were not already doing so to farm in more ecologically responsible ways, encouraging them to reduce inputs, practice poly-cropping techniques, compost more, and end slash and burn practices.

The deep commitment that Haitian peasants have to their relatively small plots of land means that they tend to have shared interests in protecting what they have from outside threats. Because peasants work and live in close proximity they regularly communicate and organize quickly in response to recurring challenges like flooding, field injuries, and transport for harvests, and this also abets the ability of communities to respond to bigger, episodic threats like the sorts of land grabbing discussed earlier. To be clear, this is not to say that peasants constitute a homogenous class group, or diminish the fact that there are intra-peasant antagonisms and conflicts from time-to-time, but to suggest that the strength of the shared commitment to land and water resources is a powerful unifying force.

Many peasant leaders stressed that this combination of peasant commitment to land paired with the capacity to mobilize against common threats helps explain why peasants have maintained control over the large majority of Haiti's agrarian landscapes, and why they will continue to be a formidable force, which is further reflected in comments like:

- “If you take advantage of one peasant, they will all put you out! Mobilization is the greatest tool of the peasantry.”
- “In Haiti, the revolutionary class is the peasant class ... [The] Haitian peasant fights for liberty!”
- “When there is a common peasant interest, we will *leve kanpe* [rise up] in an instant! Peasants will get on their feet and move! The Haitian peasants, they will never lose hope, they will never let go.”

## **2.9 Conclusion**

Although the deaths and damage in the 2010 earthquake catastrophe were centered in

Port-au-Prince, this paper argues that the magnitude of the catastrophe has deep roots in Haiti's agricultural history. The peasantry still constitutes a large share of the Haitian population, and the problems they face stretch back to the era of French colonialism, and the ways that they have been exploited by the merchant elite, the state, and international powers ever since. The aftermath of the earthquake catastrophe also bears heavily on the future of agriculture in Haiti. In the post-earthquake period, the neoliberal orientation of development policy and planning has intensified, with foreign and state actors bent on pursuing new projects and infrastructure to support Haiti's perceived comparative advantages in low-wage light-manufacturing and certain forms of agro-exporting – a focus that has overwhelmingly ignored the visions and interests of peasants. But where the land has been threatened, peasants have risen up, and there are important signs peasant movements are growing in strength.

The long history of peasant exploitation in Haiti suggests that any radical shift towards a pro-poor development agenda is going to have to come from the ground up, which is why it is so fundamental to take seriously the strengths and visions of peasants themselves. Peasant movements are struggling to resist powerful domestic and international agribusiness interests, foreign donor projects, and complicit state actors, and threats ranging from land grabbing to GMO seed 'donations'. They have shown resolute determination to maintain control over their land in the face of aggressive and even violent attempts to take it. Rather than tying Haiti more deeply to narrow export niches in the global economy, peasant movements are articulating demands in terms of food sovereignty, and seem poised to grow as a political force as local struggles over land grow and get connected to one another.

Scholars and activists have an important role to play in supporting the peasantry, as it is especially important at this juncture to shed light on the forces driving land grabbing attempts and highly uneven consequences of rural development schemes. Most of all, advocacy must start from a position of solidarity and process of engaged learning; as Troillot (1990, 229-230) puts it: “intellectuals, politicians and planners—foreign and Haitian alike—[must] talk less about (or ‘for’) the peasantry and begin listening more attentively to what its diverse subgroups have said in the past and have to say now about their own future.”

### **3. Eating Up the Social Ladder: The problem of dietary aspirations for food sovereignty**

#### **Abstract**

*In Haiti, as in many developing countries, the prospect of enhancing food sovereignty faces serious structural constraints. In particular, trade liberalization has deepened patterns of food import dependence and the export orientation of peasant farming. But there are also powerful cultural dimensions to food import dependence that further problematize the challenge of pro-poor agrarian change, which are sometimes underappreciated in the food sovereignty literature that assumes there will a preference for local or ‘culturally appropriate’ foods. In Haiti, historically ingrained and persistent ideologies of racism magnify class hierarchies and the common perceptions of peasants at the bottom of the social order. This paper explores the intersection of socially constructed ideologies of racism with peasant aspirations for socio-cultural mobility, drawing from 30 qualitative interviews with key informants in government, non-governmental organizations, and social movements, and 108 qualitative interviews and 216 food preference surveys that were conducted in three sites in rural Haiti between November 2010 and July 2013. The core argument is that racially-coded class hierarchies exert a powerful influence on dietary aspirations, as ‘peasant’ foods like millet, root crops and molasses bread are commonly devalued by Haiti’s poor, including peasants themselves, while ‘elite’ and ‘foreign’ foods like white flour bread, Corn Flakes, and spaghetti get held up as superior. This suggests a need to appreciate how the cultural geographies of food interact with – and can in fact exacerbate – political and economic inequalities, which raises challenging questions for peasant movements and advocates of food sovereignty.*

### **3.1 Introduction: The necessity of food sovereignty in Haiti**

Global circuits of agro-food production, distribution, and trade are increasingly managed by large transnational corporations (TNCs) and are narrowing diets on a world scale, undermining the local provisioning of food, and the livelihoods of smallholder farmers. Across large parts of the Global South, dietary narrowing has been entwined with a decades-long pursuit of modernity and development. Starting in the 1950s, industrialized countries led by the US began dumping food surpluses in many countries of the Global South, which simultaneously undercut the earnings of smallholder farmers and cultivated tastes for foreign foods. Food import dependence was exacerbated by the debt management policies of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and World Bank from the 1980s onwards, and then the institutionalization of trade liberalization through the World Trade Organization (WTO) after 1995. The global food economy is organized by the imperatives of buying and selling commodities and the pursuit of capital accumulation, without concern for either food security or farm livelihoods (McMichael 2013; Weis 2013; 2007a, Akram-Lodhi 2012; Patel 2010).

The neoliberal conception of development assumes that food security is best pursued by freeing-up markets and organizing production according to comparative advantage. Trade liberalization is expected to either discipline farmers to become more efficient and competitive, or force them out of agriculture altogether and into sectors where they can earn better wages to buy more food (Weis 2007a). This approach continues to be pursued widely and aggressively, despite that it has done little to reduce the population of chronically malnourished and hungry people on a world scale, with estimates hovering between 800 and 900 million for decades (FAO 2013). Haiti

illustrates powerfully the vulnerability of the free market approach to food security: following roughly two decades of liberalization and austerity, the daily per capita caloric deficit is 430 kcal and 45 percent of the population is undernourished – including a staggering 87 percent of the rural population (SSSA 2010; Taft-Morales and Drummer 2007).

But while the global food economy threatens smallholder farmer livelihoods, it would be mistaken to view farmers as passive subjects doomed to a bleak fate in the face of market integration. On the contrary, new rural social movements have arisen and grown in strength and international alliance over the past few decades (Borras et al. 2008; Desmarais 2007), with the banner of food sovereignty increasingly used to frame various smallholder struggles (McMichael 2013; Akram-Lodhi 2012; Patel 2010; Vía Campesina 2007). Although it is an evolving and increasingly debated conceptual framework (Edelman et al. 2014), in a general sense food sovereignty challenges the neoliberal approach to agriculture and food and advocates for a range of alternative policies to foster more equitable and sustainable farming systems. Advocates also stress that enhancing smallholder livelihoods and the localization of agro-food systems will tend to enhance access to healthy, culturally appropriate food, which reflects the fact that diverse cuisines historically emerged out of local agricultural conditions.

More specifically, food sovereignty can be seen to cohere around a number of key pillars. These include calls for: redistributive land reform; increased transparency, democratic control, and gender equity in all decision-making from farm households to agricultural policy-making; support for agro-ecological research and pro-poor agronomy; and recognition of the rights of nations and peoples to support culturally-appropriate and

diverse food systems, including autonomy in trade policies (Edelman et al. 2014; McMichael 2013a; Wittman et al. 2010; Patel 2010; Altieri 2009; Desmarais 2007; Bové and Dufour 2001). However, some critics have pointed out that the literature on food sovereignty has too often failed to interrogate certain theoretical ambiguities and contradictions, and that there has been insufficient attention to such things as the dynamics of patriarchy and racism, conflicting aspirations of differentiated producing classes, and the role of markets and trade (Edelman et al. 2014, Bernstein 2014; Minkoff-Zern 2013; Park and Young 2013). Yet in spite of this conceptual imprecision, it seems clear that the general aspirations of food sovereignty are extremely urgent in Haiti and peasant movements there are increasingly drawing from the discourse and conceptual framework of food sovereignty to articulate their aspirations.

This research was motivated in part by a strong belief that Haitian peasant movements have tremendous potential to lead Haiti towards a healthier and a more equitable, ecologically sustainable, and democratic agro-food system. But it was also motivated by a concern that the pursuit of food sovereignty in Haiti faces considerable cultural and ideological barriers; in particular that, as Smucker (1984, 46) suggested three decades ago, there is a general “social devaluation of what is Haitian as opposed to what is foreign or European,” and that this serves to deepen the political economic challenges that peasants face. These persistent ideas of inferiority are rooted in colonial domination.

In the late 16<sup>th</sup> century, the indigenous Taíno population on the island of Hispaniola – now Haiti and the Dominican Republic- was exterminated, and imported African slave labour became fundamental for plantation sugar. The colonial plantation system enforced race-based social hierarchies that were ruthlessly and violently imposed

for over three centuries, but in 1804, the only successful slave revolution in modern world history made Haiti an independent nation – an accomplishment for which Haiti has never been forgiven. Following independence Haiti was cut off from trade relations with Europe and in 1825 was compelled to accept a deal with France for the renewal of trade in exchange for an enormous debt burden that crippled the country's treasury and undermined development for two centuries. The gaping disparity between the urban elite and poor masses deepened over the centuries and today Haiti is one of the most unequal societies in the region, with the wealthiest 2 percent of the population controlling 26 percent of the country's wealth (IFAD 2014). This wealth disparity is tied to phenotype in complex ways. Despite a successful slave revolution, colour coded class hierarchies persisted (Trouillot 1990) and phenotype is still an important contributor to perceived status. Deepening food import dependence in the neoliberal era has been transposed onto complex race-class social hierarchies and this paper explores this nexus between race-class social hierarchies and Haitian food culture by examining three interlocking questions: How do race and class hierarchies influence attitudes towards food in Haiti?; how is this reflected in dietary aspirations?; and how might peasant food culture influence prospects to move towards the core goals of food sovereignty?

### **3.2 Approach and Argument: Exploring perceptions of food and their implications**

This research paper is informed by ethnographic field research that was conducted between December 2010 and July 2013, and comprised two central components. The first involved key informant interviews (n=30) with leaders of peasant organizations, community groups and officials in relevant branches of government who were targeted for their understanding of rural development and agriculture and food politics, their

vantage that enables them to interpret many issues on a wider scale, and their influence either within or outside of the state. Throughout the dissertation the organizational bases of participants are referred to by their acronym or short name, as identified in Figure 9.

**Figure 9: Organization Affiliations of Research Participants**

- Kore Pwodiksyon Lokal (KPL; Support Local Production)
- Kooperative Prodikite Agrikol Vigilant (KOPAV; The Cooperative of Vigilant Agricultural Producers)
- Mouvman Inite Ti Peyizan Latibonit (MITPA; The United Movement of Small Peasants in the Artibonite)
- Ministère de l’Agriculture des Ressources Naturelles et du Développement Rural (MARNDR: The Ministry of Agriculture, Natural Resources and Rural Development)
- Mouvman Peyizan Papaye (MPP; The Peasant Movement of Papaye)
- Oganizasyon Devlopman Dezam (ODD; the Development Organization of Dezam)
- L’Organisation de Développement de l’Artibonite (ODVA; The Organization for the Development of the Artibonite Valley, a departmental branch of the Ministry of Resources and Agricultural Development)
- La Plateforme Haïtienne de Plaidoyer pour un Développement Alternatif (PAPDA; The Haitian Platform to Advocate Alternative Development);
- Platfom Inite Des Oganizasyon de Dezam (PIOD; The United Platform of Organizations in Dezam)
- Rezo Asosyasyon Koperativ Ba Atibonit (RAKPABA; The Cooperative Network of Associations of the Lower Artibonite Valley)
- Réseau National Haïtien pour la Souveraineté et la Sécurité Alimentaires (RENHASSA; The National Haitian Network for Food Sovereignty and Food Security)
- Santral Komitè Menonit Dezam (KSM: Mennonite Central Committee Dezam)
- Tèt Kole Ti Peyizan (Heads Together Small Peasants)

The second component of the research was conducted with peasant producers living in three areas of the Verrette Commune in the highly productive Artibonite Valley (Haiti’s proverbial ‘rice bowl’): the town of Dezam (n=36); the village of Kristan (n=36); and the mountain hamlet of Biquette (n=36). These study sites were chosen because they represent geographic differences between valley, mid-mountain, and mountaintop locations within the region, and contain different mixes of social classes, with rural-urban differences particularly pertinent. This research involved qualitative semi-structured

interviews (n=108) and food preference surveys (n=216), with two sets of surveys conducted with each participant, guided by the basic goal of investigating how dietary preferences and ‘food hierarchies’ are conceived. And following an assumption that while a hard and fast ranking was impossible, a broad ordering could still be made out. One important aspect of this was to explore the difference between the *tastes of necessity* and the *tastes of luxury* (Bourdieu 1984); in other words, to try to unpack the relative importance of cost incentives, social values, and perceptions in the purchase of foreign foods. Another important line of investigation was to understand how participants associate different foods with various segments of society, and centrally to race and class differences, although participants were encouraged freely to describe these associations without any prompting. I am cognizant that social hierarchies are linked to linguistic differentiation in Haiti and that the lack of access of Haiti’s poor majority to the French language is tied to their denial of social mobility, while Haitian Kreyòl is often an important and unique expression of peasant culture (Valdman 1984). It is for this reason that I use Kreyòl spelling throughout this paper.

The core argument of this paper is that while there are certainly powerful structural dynamics that impede the pursuit of food sovereignty and shape food choices among Haiti’s poor majority (i.e. trade liberalization and the surge of cheaper industrialized and subsidized food imports), dietary aspirations are also heavily influenced by race and class-based social hierarchies that have long, historical roots extending far beyond colonial slavery (Allahar 1993). I argue that ‘food meanings’ and dietary aspirations are important and underappreciated aspects of the severe stratification of Haitian society, and are largely geared towards the consumption practices of the

lighter-skinned urban elite and consequently biased against local production. In more basic terms, there is widespread cultural esteem for ‘elite’, ‘foreign’, and ‘white’ foods, alongside widespread disdain for local, ‘black’ peasant foods, patterns that have been widely internalized by poor people in Haiti, including many farmers themselves. Efforts by TNCs to engineer tastes and transform diets towards processed and packaged food durables have, in effect, been grafted onto deeply rooted social pathologies. Ultimately, I argue that peasant movements and their allies in Haiti must consider how race and class shape perceptions of food, including certain key food staples (e.g. white flour, white rice, and chicken meat) and symbols associated with Western diets (e.g. soda pop, hot dogs, Corn Flakes, and spaghetti), and recognize how this is an inescapable part of struggles to transform the agro-food system, which in turn points to the need to devise strategies to problematize the existing food culture and renew appreciation for Haitian foods.

### **3.3 Internalizing Inferiority: The Complexity of Colour in Haiti’s Social Stratification**

The ideas of the ruling class are in every epoch the ruling ideas...The class which has the means of material production at its disposal, has control at the same time over the means of mental production. The individuals composing the ruling class...rule also as thinkers, as producers of ideas.

-Marx and Engels (1965, 61)

Marxists have long emphasized the importance of false consciousness, which implies that dominant social classes not only control disproportionate shares of material resources and the means of production, but also tend to exert a great deal of influence over the symbolic

systems in social life. Bourdieu's (1984) concept of *habitus* helps us understand the importance of these symbolic systems in reproducing inequality. Habitus, for Bourdieu, implies that human history and memory have durable impacts within individual and collective consciousness, and that these combine with personal histories and positionality (stemming from things like education, upbringing, and social class) to produce social structures that help to guide and constrain behaviour (Bourdieu 1990). Bourdieu (1980) builds on one of Gramsci's (1971) great insights about the nature of hegemony: the idea that many people in poorer social classes tend to internalize, or at least tacitly accept ideologies of social elites that run directly counter to their own class interests, a dynamic that helps to support the continuance of the existing power relations. For Bourdieu, symbolic systems operate as important mechanisms of exploitation and inequality when the economic domination of upper classes is disguised and ultimately becomes widely accepted in non-economic terms, with social superiority instead linked to other attributes (e.g. by race, ethnicity, religion, education, style of dress etc.).

Another way of describing this dynamic is that economic capital can produce symbolic capital that in turn reinforces and braces its power (Bourdieu 1980; 1977). This notion of symbolic capital helps to understand persistent ideologies of racism in many post-colonial states, and how they can foster destructive social conflicts and help to mask class inequalities (Allahar 2005; 2002). One outcome is that instead of thinking in class-conscious terms about systemic inequalities, many individuals with limited economic mobility instead try to attain symbolic capital by mirroring the values, tastes, mannerisms, consumption patterns, and other social codes of the elite classes, as a means to *symbolic mobility*. In this way, elite domination of the symbolic systems in social life

acts as an important mechanism of social control, to the extent that it fosters a fixation with climbing up the social ladder rather than confronting it.

In Haiti, the widespread pursuit of symbolic capital by mirroring elite values includes a tendency to enact racist ideologies. This phenomenon is prevalent throughout the contemporary Caribbean and is rooted in “the internalization – or better, the epidermalization – of inferiority” (Fanon 1967, 313). As Allahar (1993) tells us, negative associations with blackness dates back to the Greco-Roman period when Ethiopians were the first to be viewed as inferior because of their phenotype. This ideology persisted, deepened, and took root concretely in colonial slavery. In the Caribbean region, the ‘mindset of inferiority’ (Allahar 1993) developed over centuries of racial stratification, violent oppression and psychological abuse during slavery, when an important aspect of social control was to entrench racialized ideas of inferiority and foster aspirations to assimilate to the planters’ culture (Schuller and Morales 2012; Prou 2005; Farmer 2003; Trouillot 1990; Beckford 1972; Memmi 1965; Fanon 1963). Although colour prejudice indeed began long before the rise of the Trans-Atlantic slave trade, the slave trade can nevertheless be seen as the central foundation of modern racism (Jordan 1977), and while the biological fallibility of race is clear, it continues to be overshadowed in many places by pervasive perceptions that link race to social status and then influence social behaviour. The enactment of racist ideologies has taken various forms going back to colonial St. Domingue, when mulattos – who along with freed blacks could own property but were excluded from political power and elite social standing (Dupuy 1989) – tended to mimic “white habits,” seek “whiteness in their marriage partners” (Rogozinski 2000, 165), emulate “the style of the whites,” and generally attempt to “drown all traces of their

[African] origin” (James 1964, 39). Today, race- and class-based social hierarchies persist in complex ways. For instance, lighter-skinned elites tend to be prioritized in hospitals, banks, and government offices, lower-class Kreyòl-speaking women tend to face more physical abuse and have less credibility in the eyes of the law than middle-class women (Bell 2013), and development aid tends to privilege the needs of the wealthy and perpetuate existing inequalities and the social order (Katz 2013; Schuller 2012; Schwartz 2008). Pervasive perceptions of *blan* (a Kreyòl word meaning both white people and foreign people, including non-Caucasian foreigners),<sup>27</sup> suggests that perceptions of class in Haiti are seriously complicated and “confused by national and racial difference,” as Wilentz (2013:242) puts it.

The race and class configuration is more complex still. Though social judgments of skin colour are “generally Western dominated,” *blan* are not the exclusive objects of social aspirations. While Haitian society continues to have an “aesthetic in which blackness [is] found at the bottom of the scale,” there is not a direct conversion, as white “is not considered to be the most pleasing color,” nor is it attached to a fixed class position (Trouillot 1995, 112). Rather, colour in Haiti signifies much more than skin colour, and though phenotype is crucial to the social evaluation of colour, it never operates alone. Socio-economic class clearly influences perceptions of colour and yet, as Trouillot (1995) indicates, colour can include many other characteristics, such as skin texture and tone, hair colour and density, and facial features, noting how two people who

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<sup>27</sup> In Haitian Kreyol, *blan* is used as both singular and plural (unlike French, *les blancs*). In English, some writers translate as ‘*blan-s*’ for plural, while others maintain the *blan* for both singular and plural, as I have chosen to do.

share the same skin shade could be classed in different colour categories because of some other feature. Two brief examples help to illustrate the complexity of the ‘colour continuum’ in Haiti. When I lived in Haiti, friends sometimes introduced me by saying “she’s Haitian,” or “This is Marylynn, she’s a *blan nwa* [a black white person, or in a more fluid translation, a white skinned person who is black inside].” These introductions reveal how ‘colour,’ and even nationality are flexible, and also how proficiency in Haitian Kreyòl can be recognized as a sign of solidarity with pro-peasant struggles, which suggests that language is also important to social evaluations of ‘colour,’ and suggesting that ‘colour’ can extend beyond physical features into ideological commitments. A second example of how colour is contingent on other characteristics occurred one day when I was at a spring with my daughter. A woman from the mountains walked by with her young son who was noticeably lighter-skinned than most in the area, people often referred to him as *klé* [*clairs* in French]. When the mother noticed my daughter and me, she teased to her son: “They’re *blan*, the same as you! And you’re not even going to talk to them!” In spite of being a member of a rural peasant family, his unusual colour designation, *klé*, temporarily gave way to a *blan* label, an outcome of both his phenotype and the fact that my daughter and I were in his company.

In short, there is a broad shade continuum that generally corresponds with wealth, “with lighter Haitians being richer and darker ones poorer” (Rogozinski 2000, 216), though there are important exceptions too. Other physical and socio-cultural features (e.g. lips, nose shape, hair, education, dress, and diets) and sometimes even ideological commitments also influence status, and make racial hierarchies far from fixed or clear-cut. Another reflection of this is the fact that even the race-based monikers *blan* and *nwa*

(a Kreyòl word meaning black, from the French noir) are somewhat ambiguous, signifying much more than phenotype. For instance, *blan* can be used as marker of class, to identify a moneyed dark-skinned person, or to mean ‘foreigner’ regardless of phenotype, and it can even be used as an ironic designation for a slightly lighter-skinned peasant. The symbolism with wealth was illustrated in the comment by a member of the community organization ODD, who noted: “when Haitians see a *blan* from *lòt bò* [Kreyòl for ‘the other side’<sup>28</sup>] for him, he symbolize[s] a lot of money.” *Nwa*, on the other hand, is generally associated with poverty and can be used as an insult. A good example of this is how youth in Dezam frequently mock each other by saying “*misye sa tout nwa nèt*” [meaning ‘that guy is completely black’]. Race and class-based prejudice are entwined and difficult to isolate and – however make-believe race is in a biological sense – phenotype matters socially and in distinguishing economic status.

The disastrous 2010 earthquake amplified the already pervasive ‘aid landscape’ and climate of dependency in Haiti, and many have suggested that these dynamics reinforced some of the class-infused racial pathologies described above; in essence, ideologies of racism fed the common tendency to look to the soaring number of *blan* for resources and solutions (Bell 2013; Schuller 2012; Podur 2012; Edmunds 2012). As a leader of the national peasant organization Tèt Kole put it, “you found *blan* all over [following the earthquake] and the peasants believe that when the *blan* comes he will bring a solution. So he hates himself and he gives over to the *blan*.” At the same time it

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<sup>28</sup> This is also short hand for *Lòt bò dlo*, meaning ‘the other side of the water’, and it usually means anywhere overseas but is also sometimes used to refer to the Dominican Republic, so is generally used to mean ‘in foreign lands.’

should be emphasized that the immediate aftermath was also filled with immense solidarity and fortitude, as Bell (2013) details well. According to the coordinator of the advocacy organization KPL, the Haitian masses were standing up and beginning to organize collective rebuilding efforts before the tidal wave of aid, reflecting a Haitian paradox, in that strong views about ‘black’ pride, tenacity, and togetherness can exist alongside powerful stigmas about racial hierarchies.

Since race and class-based social hierarchies are shaped by varying perceptions about economic positioning, socio-cultural characteristics, and physical features, the symbolic means by which poor Haitians attempt to enact a higher social standing takes various and often highly contradictory forms. The president of KOPAV described it this way:

The history of unequal class relations is still following us ... *afranchis* [freedmen],... *esklav* [slaves],... *kolon* [colonists]...those things are still in our spirits. People with means still consider the peasants as slaves. They consider you as savage, as wild. Peasants want to show that they are not those things, so they imitate [Haitian elites] in everything they do. They want to resemble Europeans, the urban people, so they let go of everything natural, in terms of food, religion and how they dress.

The coordinator of the community organization PIOD, a university educated man, said that in order to be respected he must “act in the way that society appreciates. I have to use skin whitening cream and perfume for people not to have a problem with me. Haitians

always believe that *blan* are superior.” Racialized ideologies are also enacted in more subtle social and economic ways. For example, the director of KPL explained that if someone presents them self “as a serious and honest person, people will say [they] are just like a white person.” Similar sentiments echoed over and over during the course of the fieldwork, with people said to be acting “just like a *blan*” when they did something upstanding or trustworthy, like paying back a loan.

In short, social stratification in Haiti is extremely complex, and this paper argues that dietary aspirations are, to a considerable extent, bound up in these historically ingrained ideologies about race and class. To put it another way, food choices are an important means through which many Haitians, including peasants, seek to imitate the behaviours and consumption practices of the country’s mostly urban elites. To develop this argument further, and appreciate how this food culture bears on prospects for food sovereignty, it is important to first clarify the position of the peasantry at the bottom of Haiti’s social hierarchy.

### **3.4 The Disdain for Peasants**

The blurry and sometimes conflicting perceptions of race and class divisions discussed in the previous section have some role in obscuring the gargantuan material gap that exists in Haitian society between the mostly urban elites and the overwhelmingly poor peasant masses. There is an extensive literature on the complexities of the definition of peasantries as a class (Bernstein 2010; Van Der Ploeg 2009; Mintz 1973), and the unique history of peasant agriculture in the Caribbean (Mintz 1989; 1985; Beckford 1985; 1972; Horowitz 1971), discussions that are beyond the scope of this paper. For here it is sufficient to say that *peyizan* [peasant] is how Haitians refer to smallholder farmers, the

great majority of whom control less than 2 acres of land and who combine varying degrees of market-orientation and self-provisioning.

Since colonial times, economic wealth and political power have been heavily concentrated in towns and cities, and both upper and middle classes have “despised the black peasants” (Rogozinsky 2000, 219) and “jealously guarded” their spatial distinction from the rural peasantry” (Dash 2001, 12), a division that has been long recognized.<sup>29</sup> In other words, social hierarchies have always had geographical dimensions, and the urban-rural divide further adds to the complexity of how race and class are perceived. A small class of lighter skinned elites sits decidedly at the top of Haiti’s social and economic order, located in major urban areas, especially the capital of Port-au-Prince but also secondary cities like Jacmel and Cap-Haitien. This elite, which is dominated by five extremely powerful family empires, owns much of Haiti’s industry and trade, including such things as the: major sites of warehousing and shipping (allowing them to benefit disproportionately from both export and import trade); light assembly and textile sweatshops (that arose in the 1980s); food processing factories; cement plants and the construction sector; and luxury hotels and restaurants (Dash 2001; Hallward 2007; Abbott 2011). Haiti’s relatively small middle class occupies administrative and service-sector jobs such as bank clerks, nurses, and bureaucrats in government and NGO offices, and almost all have some capacity in, and gain prestige from using, French, rather than Kreyòl (Valdman 1984). Some of the urban poor in Haiti’s burgeoning *bidonvilles* find a range of relatively precarious work, from hustling as traders and petty merchants in the

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<sup>29</sup> Dash (2001) points out that the social stratification in Haiti in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century was so rigid that James Leyburn (1948) described it as a virtual caste society.

informal sector to work in garment sweatshops, though many suffer from widespread un- and under-employment and rely on networks of family and friends to survive. Yet however distant the poorest slum-dwellers are from Haiti's upper and middle classes, they generally still perceive themselves to be superior to *moun andeyo* – “the people out there” (Smith 1998, 14) or the “people on the outside” (Dash 2001, 35). For urban dwellers, *andeyo* [the countryside] connotes a virtual oblivion.

The urban-rural divide is also reflected in the disdainful way that peasants are conventionally spoken about in Haiti. For instance, a common insult in urban areas is to call someone a *peyizan* or *abitan* [a rural dweller], and a Tét Kole leader made it clear that peasants understand they are “the most despised” social class and “held in contempt” across the country. Another reflection of this derision can be seen in the fact that the former director of ODVA, a governmental agricultural organization in the Artibonite Valley, made the dubious claim that “there is no place on earth where a peasant wants to be a peasant.” This also plays out at the level of the Haitian state, which many peasant leaders pointed out, is largely ignorant of the problems in rural areas.

While *andeyo* carries mostly very negative connotations, perceptions of class in rural areas are still full of racial and spatial complexities. For instance, peasants who live higher in the mountains are typically poorer and perceived as being more *nwa* while wealthier peasant classes live in towns and valleys.<sup>30</sup> Again, derisive language reflects this, as *moun monn* [mountain person] is another insult that is commonly used, and rural people were often witnessed arguing about relative status based on whose family is from

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<sup>30</sup> Based on research in rural Haiti, Schwartz (2008, 32) affirms that the “people of the Village consider themselves better than the peasants who live in the countryside.”

further up the mountain. In basic terms, moving down in elevation broadly translates into moving up in social status. As one peasant leader put it, “There is not one person in central Dezam [in the valley] who considers people in the mountain *bon nonm* [comrades or equals]. In his perception, people who live in the mountains are *vye moun* [archaic or worthless people], people who don’t have much value or importance.”

Key informants recurrently described these deep, culturally ingrained perceptions of peasant inferiority. For instance, the treasurer of ODD noted how “people from the mountain consider themselves inferior to us”; the former ODVA director suggested that peasants themselves often say “that peasants aren’t good”; and the President of ODD said that “if a peasant sees someone wearing nice clothes who works everyday, they know he’s not their comrade. They see him as high and they are low.” The President of PIOD illuminated the dehumanizing prejudice against mountain peasants:

Mountain people stay in the same clothes, with a bad smell, and appear in places where you shouldn’t appear like that. It’s only food that interests them. Sometimes even I say, ‘ughh! Those people from the mountains!’

It’s a way to keep him in his place. It’s a way to psychologically play with his spirit and his confidence.

Some of the villagers who were interviewed went so far as to claim that “mountain people are more Haitian than us,” as a means to discursively distance themselves from their Haitian-ness while connecting perceptions of inferiority, blackness, and mountain peasants with what it means to be Haitian. These perceptions of peasant inferiority

translate into a variety of grotesque social practices, something that was driven home by the story of the treasurer of ODD who described an experience at the hospital where:

...there was a lighter, trendy looking guy looking to get in – they let him in. Then a mountain person came up. His clothes were dirty. He waited for such a long time outside. They gave him so much pressure. They mistreated him. The discrimination is serious, it's in the hospitals, the schools... it's everywhere.

As noted earlier, one of the ways that many poor people in Haiti respond to these cultural prejudices is by enacting behaviours associated with elites, in the hope of gaining some degree of symbolic capital and social prestige. This research suggests that the consumption of prestigious goods, including certain foods is an important way that symbolic capital is pursued.

### **3.5 More than a Structural Problem: Food hierarchies and the disdain for peasant foods**

In large measure, Haiti's growing food import dependence is rooted in the same broader structural dynamics affecting many parts of the Global South, such as competitive pressures from cheap industrial surpluses and trade liberalization (McMichael 2013; Akram-Lodhi 2012; Weis 2007a). For example, in the 1950s and 1960s imported bread and wheat-flour biscuits began to displace *kasav* [locally-produced cassava flat bread] in Haitian markets, spurred by US-sponsored food aid that brought cheap wheat and wheat flour. But it was not until the 1990s that food imports really began to soar, triggered by the conditions of IMF and World Bank-prescribed structural adjustment. One condition of adjustment was that Haiti cut rice tariffs from 35 to 3 percent, which led to a surge of

imported rice that accelerated the displacement of traditional peasant grains, including *pitimi* [a term that denotes both sorghum and millet], cornmeal, and domestically-grown rice. Adjustment-dictated trade liberalization also increased the availability of many other imported food durables and flavourings. For instance, Maggi's MSG-laden bouillon cube began to displace traditional herbs and flavours, including parsley, thyme and sour oranges; imported citrus powder and imported vinegar began to displace limes for cleaning meats and preparing sauces; *Sweety*, an imported powdered drink, began to displace natural fruit juices; and imported peanut butter brands began to displace local varieties. The displacement of local foods by imports has even led to noticeable changes in the meals served during *konbit*, the traditional form of collective agricultural labour in Haiti. Until the 1990s, *konbit* meals typically included sweet coffee and root crops in the morning and a hearty meal of *pitimi* or cornmeal with vegetable and bean sauce in the afternoon, sometimes with a goat or pig slaughtered for a large event (Smith 1998). Today, *sòs makawoni* [a sauce made from imported macaroni noodles] and spaghetti have largely replaced the vegetable and bean sauce served over the main cereal, which is now overwhelmingly imported rice. As a MITPA representative put it, "before in *konbit* we boiled yam, sweet potato, and had cornmeal or *pitimi*. Spaghetti was never here! But now everyone leaves their food culture for spaghetti!"

While political economic dynamics explain how imported foods often sell more cheaply than local products, these are not the only causes of rising food import dependence. As Edelman et al. (2014: 917) suggest,

Dietary changes are often assumed to be primarily a function of cheapness...yet...we must be careful not to underplay the extent to which dietary

aspirations have been affected by long-term trade patterns and corporate branding, and the extent to which consumer preferences now lean towards processed products.

Haiti offers a forbidding example where cultural perceptions of food, including preferences for imported foods, are furthering food import dependence. The president of ODD encapsulates this very well, explaining how “Haitians are proud when they eat food from overseas [because] it has *grandeur*, it gives them prestige.” As with many countries in the Global South, food import dependence in Haiti has been bolstered by the powerful marketing efforts of TNCs together with the penetration of foreign, especially US media. Multiple key informants stressed the influence of corporate advertising and media on food perceptions. For instance, the Secretary of State for the MARNDR described how TNCs have “created desire and new tastes for imported foods in Haitians homes [that make it] difficult for people to return to their traditional foods.” The coordinator of PAPDA went further, insisting that cheap food imports coupled with aggressive marketing constitute a form of neo-colonial violence, which was echoed by a Tét Kole leader who suggested that the *blan* seem intent to “make us hate our own culture.”

Still, it is important to remember that although corporate marketing and foreign media may have bolstered aspirations for Western diets, these aspirations have older cultural roots. Thus, it is better to understand food marketing and media in Haiti as being grafted onto a cultural landscape in which strong pre-existing race-class pathologies already encouraged the cultural tendencies to internalize inferiority and to emulate the elite, including the *blan*.

To deepen this consideration of Haiti's food culture, attention turns now to an examination of food hierarchies. The analysis is based upon a combination of key informant interviews and food preference surveys conducted in the Artibonite Valley, which sought to understand perceptions of specific foods in relation to price, marketing, colour, and class. The food preference surveys were drafted in the field in consultation with various community members and Haitian research assistants. The intention here was to identify traditional and imported foods that commonly make up major meals and snacks rather than to achieve a representative sample of all food choices available in Haiti. The results revealed strong tendencies to devalue *manje peyizan* [peasant foods] on one hand, and to valorize foods that are associated with *blan* and urban elites on the other, including a combination of imported and domestically-produced foods, which indicates that food hierarchies cannot be reduced to a simple foreign/local dichotomy. While this research reveals that social tendencies to revere elite and imported foods are powerful, the intention is not to suggest that these perceptions are *total* – there are important examples that challenge these food hierarchies, and social movements that are struggling against these trends. For example, traditional and peasant foods are often privileged and valued in Haitian folklore and in Voudou religious celebrations, and the national food justice organization *Kore Pwodiksyon Lokal* [Support Local Production] has gained strength in the past five years. Still, the strong tendency, to devalue traditional peasant foods, illustrates clearly that food sovereignty advocacy must take food cultures into account and not assume that dietary preferences will tend to align with local production and support small farmers (Edelman et al. 2014).

A good place to begin is with the ranking of locally grown staple grains, which overwhelmingly followed a rice-corn-*pitimi* hierarchy in the food preference survey. The vast majority of survey respondents ranked *pitimi* as the least preferred staple grain, and strongly associated it with peasants. A leader of Tét Kole summed this finding up well, noting simply: “most people revile *pitimi*.” Among the grains, cornmeal was ranked second by most participants. One reflection of its higher status than *pitimi* is its occasional presence in local eateries, where *pitimi* never appears. Virtually all participants identified rice as the favoured grain, and its consumption was strongly associated with social prestige, *blan*, and urban elites in both surveys and qualitative interviews. According to the director of PAPDA, rice is the “the food of Kings,” and multiple key informants noted how even poor mountain peasants will sometimes sell their *pitimi* to buy rice.

Yet there are also some complexities in how different varieties of rice are valued. For example, the large majority of survey respondents indicated that the most socially prestigious variety of rice is *Diri Sheyla* [Sheyla rice], which is traditionally grown in the Artibonite Valley and is popular throughout the country. This was followed by *Diri blan* [white rice], another traditional variety grown locally in the Artibonite Valley. Both local varieties were widely considered superior to TCS rice, an imported hybrid variety from Taiwan that is grown locally, and ‘Miami Rice’, a general term given for rice imported from the US via the major USDA export terminus in Miami, which held the lowest standing among rice varieties. The clear preference for Artibonite rice stands in contrast to broader preferences for foreign foods, though Miami Rice is still preferred to locally grown cornmeal or *pitimi*.

The general rice-corn-*pitimi* hierarchy is likely influenced by (and influences) price, at least to some degree. In two food price surveys conducted in representative food markets in the Artibonite region during the period of interviews in 2011 and 2012, rice was found to be the most expensive grain per cup (250 ml), selling for between US\$0.17 and US\$0.35 (depending on variety) in comparison to cornmeal (US\$0.10) and *pitimi* (between US\$0.12 and US\$0.15). While the higher cost of rice could both influence and reflect its elevated status, there are indications that cost alone is insufficient to understand grain preferences, including that there was a wide divergence of prices for different rice varieties and that cornmeal was widely preferred to *pitimi* despite being less expensive.

Another factor that could influence how various grains are perceived is the differential labour requirements to prepare and cook them. *Pitimi* and cornmeal are generally seen to require more effort and time to prepare and cook than rice, so that households with relatively higher incomes and time constraints may prefer to purchase rice in order to save time. However, the large majority of survey participants (88 percent) were not employed in waged labour relations, and those who were employed mostly held part-time positions, whereas roughly three-quarters of participants farmed either as smallholders, tenants, or sharecroppers, and most had family members who contributed to farming and cooking chores, which helps explain why participants generally did not link the greater time and effort needed to cook corn and *pitimi* as a reason for their lower status to rice.

Grain preferences in Haiti must also be understood in the context of the old race-class social stratifications discussed earlier. Cornmeal and *pitimi* were, along with root crops, mainstays of slave diets, whereas there was a long historical association of rice

with *blan* and as a luxury food, and a number of key informants believe that this has had an enduring influence on how these foods are perceived. The former director of ODVA suggested that the desire to consume rice was part of a deeper desire to emulate the urban elite and *blan* that has existed for centuries: “What makes everyone *andeyo* want to eat rice everyday [is] to resemble ‘*them*.’ They teach people that they should eat rice to resemble other people.”

By the 1950s, Sebrell (1959, 552) found that rice was more commonly eaten amongst the poor than in the past, though it was largely reserved for the special Sunday meal, and that *pitimi* was “referred to as the ‘poor man’s rice’ by higher classes of Haitians.” Sebrell (1959) also identified that Haitian peasants tended to exaggerate the amount of rice and downplay the amount of *pitimi* that they consumed. Similarly, the survey I conducted revealed a strong association of rice consumption with urban areas and higher social classes: eighty-one percent of survey respondents associated rice with urban populations, nearly half said it was for the rich, and almost 40 percent of respondents said rice was for *blan*. In addition, survey participants regularly made comments like:

- “The rich can choose good things to eat, like rice”;
- “Rural people only eat rice once in a while”;
- “The poor will only eat rice if they happen to have the opportunity”;
- “The poor can only eat *diri kase* [broken rice grains].”

The president of ODD described his sense of how a strong desire to consume rice stretches into the most remote areas of Haiti:

We did a study in the highest mountain villages and found that even though people certainly do eat yams – in fact, most people eat yams and there are even people who don't ever eat rice – they want to seem enlightened, so when we ask what they have eaten they'll say they ate rice!

In the survey, 57 percent of respondents associated cornmeal as a food of the poor, often with very negative associations. One respondent put it simply, “poor people eat food that is bad, like corn.” These associations are becoming so pervasive that, according to the former Mayor of Dezam, “children are now being raised *not* to eat cornmeal”. But as indicated earlier, *pitimi* is perceived even more negatively than cornmeal. In the Artibonite Valley, for example, it is never served in local eateries, or even in more informal market stalls. For some, *pitimi* amounts to a social disgrace, reflected in the common expression that “*pitimi pa monte tab*” [*pitimi* is not fit for the table], and its description in the Dezam market as *chyen jambe* [food that dogs have jumped over]. The signification of *pitimi* with poverty holds in spite of the fact that some kinds of rice were not that much more expensive in rural markets.

Thirty-three percent of survey respondents also said that *pitimi* was only something to be consumed by the poor, and 46 percent said it was for people *andeyo*. Only 4 percent of survey participants associated *pitimi* with urban populations, and no one associated it with the upper classes. Another indication of how *pitimi* is perceived can be seen in social codes of etiquette, which prescribe that *pitimi* is never served to guests; as the Former Deputy of Verrette says, “You must serve guests rice. You cannot cook corn or *pitimi*! People are ashamed of it. *Pitimi* characterizes people in poverty.” In sum, trade liberalization and the influx of subsidized US rice imports since 1986 were central to the

displacement of locally-grown cornmeal and *pitimi*, but there are also older cultural factors – in particular, associations between rice the urban elite and *blan* – that are fortifying the shift towards imported grain staples.

In the case of breakfast snacks, participants were asked to rank locally produced *kasav* and white bread rolls made with imported wheat flour. Both are commonly served with peanut butter and portions sell for US\$0.10 in the local market. Eighty-four percent of survey respondents said white bread rolls were more *chelbe* [cool], with one respondent explaining how it is “*blan* and rich people that eat things made with *pat* [dough made from wheat flour].” The survey also asked participants to rank *kasav* against Corn Flakes, which is another similarly priced breakfast food, and 94 percent of respondents preferred Corn Flakes. Surveys also indicated striking preferences among more substantial breakfast meals, with roughly three-quarters of respondents preferring spaghetti (which in Haiti is sometimes consumed at breakfast, and is composed of entirely imported ingredients) to a traditional breakfast plate of plantains and yams or a plate of traditionally prepared cornmeal. A leader of Tét Kole suggested that people are widely coming to prefer spaghetti because they think it “is a food for *good* people.” Other survey respondents expressed similar views, with one suggesting that “urbanites eat good food that’s preserved and in a box – like spaghetti,” and “poor people eat roots [i.e. root crops].”

Many key informants spoke about the negative connotations that root crops carry, as illustrated in the followed set of comments:

- “Anyone who has means in our society will not eat yams or sweet potato or manioc. People don’t think these are dignified foods”;

- “People are completely humiliated by the sweet potato”;
- “Some people will even hide if they are about to eat sweet potato – so that they can eat it out of sight!”

The common preference for packaged spaghetti over fresh and locally produced foods, like root crops and cornmeal, has a doubly negative effect,<sup>31</sup> simultaneously undermining peasant agriculture and perhaps the nutritional quality of diets.<sup>32</sup>

The surveys also indicated strong preferences for imported and packaged snack foods in relation to comparable locally-produced items. For instance, *bonbon sèl* [cream coloured imported salt crackers] were ranked as the most *chelbe* by 58 percent of participants, and *chiko* [an imported cheesy snack] was widely regarded as the second favoured snack food, whereas *bonbon siwo* [a deep brown coloured, locally made molasses sweetbread] was identified as the least preferred snack food by the vast majority. The former Mayor of Verrette suggested that *bonbon sèl* “appears sophisticated” while *bonbon siwo* is seen to have lower social prestige because “it is made by hand,” adding that while “*bonbon sèl* was once something you only saw at a rich person’s house, now [poorer] people eat it” in efforts to show “their higher social standing.” Another illustration of the elevated status of *bonbon sèl* and *chiko* is the

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<sup>31</sup> James Scott (1976:17) found a similar tendency in Malaysia, where despite the fact that cheaper and nutritionally superior diets could replace more expensive ones, only the desperately poor would accept this “cost in taste.”

<sup>32</sup> The quality of food import-dependent diets has been a growing debate among the donor, NGO and civil society communities in Haiti, many of which claim that traditional diets are more nutritionally sound than food imports (For an overview of these debates see The Economist 2013).

increasingly common tendency among mothers to feed these snacks to their children. The former Deputy of Verrette suggests that preferences for imported packaged snacks is such that most bakeries today “no longer sell *bonbon siwo*. They say it’s a *vye bagay* [an old, useless thing].” A Tét Kole leader suggests that the denigration of *bonbon siwo* is so severe that “people must hide to eat” it, reflected in the fact that it is widely referred to as *kaka chwal* [horse shit].

Another way that the strong social preferences for foods associated with the urban elite and *blan* are manifested is in the elevated social values attached to various meats. Common views were reflected in comments like *blan* and wealthy people “eat good food like fried meat,” and “The rich always eat better. They eat beautiful meat, and a lot of it.” One indication of these preferences is that imported chicken is regularly chosen for celebrations and important gatherings, and respondents regularly associated it with urbanites and *blan*. A leader of Tét Kole connected these attitudes to the challenges facing peasant movements, noting with frustration how:

When someone is eating a chicken thigh from *lòt bò*, a meat that comes in bags, that passes so much misery – he is proud! Especially if someone sees him eating it! He would rather eat the meat that comes in bags than the chicken from his own yard!

It is also noteworthy that there are different preferences for various types of chicken. When participants were asked to compare the social value of imported and locally sourced chicken nearly 2/3rds of participants said imported chicken was more prestigious. Although many participants asserted that *poul peyi* [literally national

chicken] was of higher quality, was more nutritious and was better-tasting – and while *poul peyi* was the clear preference for Voudou celebrations and to celebrate Independence Day - imported chicken was associated with the elite and was the preference for many public gatherings and celebrations, and was more likely to be served at street side restaurants. Participant comments also indicated associations between chicken preferences and class and race social hierarchies. One respondent described how: “On Sundays people here love to make beautiful food. When they do that, they cook chicken, white chicken [literally meaning chicken with white feathers].” Other survey respondents affirmed this saying “*blan* eat white chicken,” and “rich people eat white chicken.”

The colour of food and its social value also reared up in preferences for various beans and sugars, which further illustrate the complex ways that perceptions of race influence food choices. Participants were asked to rank white sugar, brown sugar, and *rapadou* [a coarse dark brown sugar, sold in cakes]. Though white and brown sugar ranged in price from US\$0.25-\$0.30 per cup in the Dezam market, 87 percent of participants ranked white sugar as the most prestigious. Indeed, it is the sugar of choice for weddings and community events and is proudly served to guests. *Rapadou*, was overwhelmingly ranked last, and is scoffed at as a peasant food and never consumed in public or served to guests. Decades ago, Mintz (1985) noted how Haitians associated *rapadou* with the poor, an observation that was echoed both by key informants and that rang out in the survey, as 96 percent of participants associated *rapadou* consumption with the poor majority in Haiti.

These subtle links between the valuation of the colour of foods is further suggested in the hierarchy of beans that was evident in the food preference survey data. Although

many participants expressed that black beans were more nutritious, the overwhelming majority (90 percent) of participants identified butter beans as the most prestigious, with a large majority (75 percent) ranking *pwa miyami* [literally ‘Miami beans,’ the common term for imported red beans] ahead of black beans. This bean hierarchy was reinforced by observations that butter beans are preferred for community celebrations, including marriages and funerals, and are the favourite bean for gifts. It is interesting to consider how this bean hierarchy largely mimics the colour prejudice in Haiti, particularly in light of the fact that in addition to the common social labels ‘*blan*’ and ‘*nwa*’, sun-tanned Caucasians, *milat* [mullatto], and Dominicans are often labelled ‘*wouj*’ [red]. Some key informants also speculated on the valuation of beans based on colours. A KSM community development worker noted that:

At a wedding, everything is completely *manje chelbe* [cool food]. There is always rice and beans, but it’s not just any bean – it must be butter beans! People would not make rice with black beans and put it on the table! That’s because black beans are lower! On the social level, they’re lower.

Their perceived inferiority of black beans:

Firstly it’s because of people’s mentalities. Sometimes black beans are less expensive, yes. But one of the things people say is that black beans make food dirty. That means they make the food black – completely. And it seems, I suppose, that black is a dirty colour. And butter beans leave a colour that’s more or less beautiful.

The bean hierarchies, as with other food hierarchies discussed, reveal that Haitian dietary aspirations cannot be reduced to price or to preferences for imported foods, but are also complicated by long-standing social hierarchies and colour prejudice.

### **3.6 Conclusion**

Food choices often mark identity and legitimize social differences (Appadurai 1988; Bourdieu 1984), and in Haiti this is entwined with common beliefs that “things made in Haiti are inferior” and “what foreigners bring is always better,” as leaders of KPL and Tèt Kòle put it. The pervasive cultural preferences towards imported foods in Haiti, together with the disdain for local peasant-produced foods, reflects a process that Mehta (2009, 118) describes as “culinary colonization,” whereby conflicting Caribbean and Western cultural values warp food cultures in ways that tend to “inspire hatred” and “feelings of shame for belonging to an ‘inferior’ culture.” In Haiti, there are strong associations between elite and *blan* populations with imported foods, whereas many traditional foods associated with the rural black peasantry are strongly and widely disparaged. Long-standing colour-coded class hierarchies continue to reinforce preferences for foreign foods, and constitute a formidable problem for peasant movements. This illustrates that food cultures can bear considerably on prospects for food sovereignty.

In Haiti, this research represents a call to action for peasant movements and food justice advocacy, which must move food justice conversations beyond trade policies and land reform, and find ways to address the fact that deep social inequalities and colour prejudices also impede the prospect of reinvigorating local production. For international aid workers and scholars in Haiti, the fact that persistent race-class hierarchies are

intertwined with local food cultures in ways that perpetuate inequality demands action on two counts. First, there must be greater efforts to support agricultural projects that respond to peasant visions for agriculture and support traditional diets, and this must be combined with careful investigation of how creditor and donor-led agricultural programming is perceived on the ground (for example projects geared towards the production of roots crops and *pitimi* might have to overcome considerable cultural barriers). Second, this research demands recognition that the dietary choices of foreigners and elite class groups can serve to perpetuate race-class hierarchies and undermine peasant livelihoods. This presents opportunity for foreign organizations to support peasant movements and peasant agriculture through dietary solidarity – a powerful tool that must not be underestimated. Any prospect of valorizing local food in Haiti will demand valorizing peasants themselves, and the key creditor and donor institutions have a significant role to play here.

Beyond Haiti, this research calls on international food sovereignty movements and scholars to explore how food cultures and dietary aspirations compound structural political economic challenges and bear heavily on prospects for food sovereignty in other contexts. Although the influence of Haiti's race-class social hierarchies on the country's food culture may be extreme, strong cultural preferences for foreign foods are pervasive in many parts of the world (Orlove 1997), from the Trinidadian penchant for Coca-Cola (Miller 2005) to the consumption of KFC fast food in Beijing (Lozada 2005), and moving towards the core goals of food sovereignty will most certainly demand attention to how food cultures can exacerbate social inequality, along with strategies for confronting them where they exist.

## **4. Manufacturing Corporate Landscapes: The case of agrarian displacement and food (in)security in Haiti**

### **Abstract**

*This paper explores the historical and contemporary sources of food insecurity in Haiti. It begins by detailing the impact of colonial legacies on the Caribbean region as a whole and Haiti in particular. The adverse consequences associated with this period include, deforestation, soil infertility and food import dependence. The paper then turns to more contemporary trends, namely the influence of thirty years of neoliberal ideology. It argues that the belief that Haiti can best achieve food security through the pursuit of comparative advantage, a notion advanced and supported by powerful international and domestic actors, has served to reinforce harmful historic trends. We support this argument with recent fieldwork findings that highlight how the construction of a new export processing zone (EPZ), following the 2010 earthquake, has generated troubling environmental and food security concerns.*

### **4.1 Introduction**

Haiti is the most environmentally degraded and food insecure nation in the Western Hemisphere (Shapouri 2010). Less than 1 percent of Haiti's landscape is under dense forest coverage, food imports account for 60 percent of total food consumption, and the country's Hunger Index is 11<sup>th</sup> worst in the world - the only country in the Western Hemisphere with 'alarming' levels of hunger (IFPRI 2013; IFAD 2010). This paper explores food insecurity and environmental decline in Haiti providing evidence for two arguments. First, we contend that the subordination of domestic food security to agro-export production has had enormous environmental and social consequences, including

deforestation, soil infertility and food import dependence. Second, we believe that the renewed privileging of export manufacturing in the wake of the 2010 earthquake, a project which is being advanced by powerful domestic and international actors (Haiti's merchant class, corporate actors, and select members of the NGO community), is generating food systems that clash with the long-term food security interests of Haiti's poor.

There are sound reasons for spotlighting Haiti. While it is extremely food insecure, and severely environmentally degraded (UNEP 2010), in some important ways it is poised to adopt alternatives to corporate agriculture and market-driven food security, and to engage with the current global food system on its own terms: fertilizer use is among the lowest in the world (NAIP 2010), and the country has a longstanding and persistent peasant class, relatively low land inequality (Mintz 1989; Zuvekas 1978) and 90 percent of farmers have access to land (Wiens and Sobrado 1998). This makes the current drive to transform its natural and agrarian landscapes into corporate-industrial ones worthy of close examination.

We begin by exploring briefly the 'food security through trade' paradigm, which underpins the policy prescriptions of Haiti's largest international creditors and donors. We then zoom out to historicize Haiti's food insecurity and environmental vulnerability within a broader regional context. We argue that contemporary Caribbean food insecurity is rooted foremost in Caribbean subordination within the capitalist system (Best and Levitt 2009), manifest first in the colonial plantation system, and then through the persistent subservience of Caribbean environments and people on the world scale. The paper then provides an examination of how food insecurity and environmental conditions

have fared since normative principles of neoliberalism began to take hold in the 1980s. We conclude with a snapshot of the ‘food security through trade’ logic that currently underpins the post-earthquake funding of international creditors and donors.

#### **4.2 Islands of Neoliberalism: Haiti in the world’s outer-periphery**

This paper proceeds from the premise that Haiti’s approach to food security is nestled within a broader neo-liberal model of development. There is agreement among officialdom that the development potential of the world’s post-colonial states hinges on an ability to attract foreign investment.<sup>33</sup> For instance, economist Dani Rodrik has observed that, “Global integration has become, for all practical purposes, a substitute for a development strategy” (Rodrik 2001, 55). Robert Wade concurs, arguing that the prescribed route to economic development today amounts quite simply to “liberalization and unmediated integration into the world economy, supplemented by domestic institutional reforms to make deep integration viable” (Wade 2003, 630). In Haiti too, post-earthquake recovery and the pursuit of development have been framed in terms of continued integration into the world trading system.

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<sup>33</sup> In Haiti, post-disaster reconstruction and development plans to boost foreign direct investment are supported by a broad range of multi-lateral institutions: The Action Plan for National Recovery and Development (APNRD) 2010, the cornerstone document that guided both short- and long-term disaster response programming, was supported by the World Bank (WB) and the InterAmerican Development Bank (IDB), the Post-Disaster Needs Assessment 2010, the foundational analysis of the damages and losses incurred in the earthquake was supported by the Government of Haiti (GoH), the World Bank (WB) The Inter-American Development Bank (IDB), the United Nations (UN), the European Commission (EC,) and the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), and the National Agriculture Investment Plan 2011-2016 (NAIP) was created with assistance from the IDB, WB, the U.S. State Department, the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), and was later edited to include results of the PDNA.

This unwavering faith in export-led growth informs how Haiti's creditors and donors have pursued food security. The official understanding of food security is described by the United Nations Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO) as a "situation 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" (FAO 2001a). Self-sufficiency is not mentioned. Rather, this widespread conception is outward-oriented drawing heavily on neoliberal principles such as "keeping the markets free of government intervention, further liberalizing food and agriculture, and increasing productivity through high-tech approaches (e.g., the adoption of genetically modified seeds)" (Otero et al 2013, 269). The ensuing policy prescriptions focus on generating income opportunities (so that people can buy imported or local food) and adopting free trade policies, given that food imports are key to achieving food security (Otero et al 2013, 268). As Otero et al. (2013) perceptively note, this prescription not only alienates food security from self-sufficiency but it rests on the assumption that achieving the former through the latter is "costly and inefficient" (Otero et al. 2013, 268). In Haiti, the powerful domestic and foreign interests have converged to support this approach to food security.

On another plane, Haiti's approach to food security is conditioned by its place in the world, or more specifically, its links to the global economy and its relations with outsiders. The concept of 'outer-periphery', developed by Haiti scholar Robert Fatton, is particularly useful for understanding how integration with the neoliberal global economy has affected Haiti and its prickly and complex relations with international creditors and donors. Drawing on the work of Immanuel Wallerstein and world-system's analysis,

Fatton argues that thirty years of neoliberalism have created a new zone in the world system – the outer-periphery. Countries in this zone are extremely poor, politically unstable, and thoroughly dependent on the international community. For decades, they have been compelled to adopt neoliberal policies in order to secure loans, aid, foreign investment, and debt relief.

These countries are positioned “at the extreme lower end of the production process with wages that barely assure the biological reproduction of the individual worker, let alone of his or her household” (Fatton 2014, 26). This leads to an important observation. While outer-periphery zones are ‘open for business’, foreign capital is nevertheless scarce. When foreign investment does arrive, it settles in discreet micro spaces within these zones, for instance, industrial parks or mining operations. One could say that capital is very confined, transitory, and sparse in its coverage (Fatton 2014, 28). Indeed, the last section of our paper focuses on one such micro space - the newly built Caracol Industrial Park (CIP) - where farmland has been transformed into an export-manufacturing facility.

In addition to these points, Fatton (2014) argues that what makes Haiti a paradigmatic case of the outer-periphery is the almost total lack of control over its own affairs. To be sure, the policies of all states in the Global South must conform to the exigencies of transnational and global markets. However, the degree of dependence exhibited by those in the ‘outer-periphery’ is profound. Fatton (2014) describes this zone (and Haiti in particular) as “a de facto occupied territory under the surveillance of foreign peacekeepers and under the control of international financial institutions and nongovernmental organizations” (Fatton 2013, 14).

### 4.3 Regional Context

The shared historical legacies and similar ecological features of Caribbean nations crucially influence contemporary regional food security. Ecologically, Caribbean susceptibility to hurricanes has meant flooding and wind destruction of crops has been a persistent threat across the region, chronic lack of access to water has always been a huge constraint, and thin levels of tropical topsoils are perilously vulnerable to exposure (Thomas 1988). Before the Triangular Trade, these environmental restrictions were largely mitigated. Indigenous Arawaks practiced cropping patterns known as '*conuco*,' a system of raising root crops that was not vulnerable to hurricanes and made very minimal landscape modifications (Richardson 1992). The impetus for Caribbean food insecurity and environmental degradation - the embodiment of Caribbean disenfranchisement as we know it today - was colonial conquest. The globalization of Western capitalism, marked first by the Columbian exchange, and manifest concretely through the plantation system, utterly transformed Caribbean landscapes to fulfill the intensification of European hegemony over the next four centuries (Mintz 1989).

From the start, the plantation system clashed harshly with Caribbean ecologies, imposing tropical commodity production, principally sugar, on large estates, with devastating environmental consequences (Best and Levitt 2009). The vast clearing of virgin forests, along with the introduction of crops and livestock, were huge environmental overhauls carried out to fulfill European 'tastes of luxury' (Bourdieu 1984). Massive deforestation in the 18<sup>th</sup> century, known as 'the Great Clearing,' represented "a sharp ecological discontinuity with the past" (Richardson 1992, 30). For example, on the island of St. Croix, French colonizers burned the entire island of all

forests and bush covering (Dirks 1987), and already by 1665 in Barbados only small pockets of forest remained (Watts 1987). Soil infertility and the inability for forest regeneration was exacerbated by the introduction of livestock: cattle, pigs, chickens, goats, donkeys, and horses, which continue to destroy and consume the brush that would otherwise develop in regenerative cycles, transforming large land areas to savannah (Weis 2007; Murray 1984).

Various export crops were introduced to the islands, cotton, indigo, cacao, but most important was King Sugar. Plantation sugar and environmental decline have always gone hand in hand. Across the Caribbean, sugar plantations monopolized interior valleys and coastal plains and led swiftly to soil exhaustion and increased vulnerability to pests and disease, which were magnified by a capitalist drive that brought “every part of the soil into use” (Franklin 1828, 14). Since low-lying areas were monopolized by sugar, hillside agriculture was the only choice for slave subsistence plots (Sauer 1954), which incited the beginning of a long history of unsustainable mountain agriculture, and corresponding soil erosion.

By the mid-1700s, soil depletion in traditional sugar colonies was extensive and was raising the cost of the colonial enterprise: the search for new territories to exploit began (Thomas 1988). Cuban sugar gained momentum in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century (as a direct result of the Haitian Revolution) and by the mid 1800s, West-Indian colonies were economically anachronistic (Williams 1944). Soil exhaustion and the accompanying declining importance of British colonies in the sugar trade motivated British preference for free trade and abolition (Williams 1944). After four centuries, and the movement of

4.6 million people from West Africa to the Caribbean, the economic inefficiencies of the slavery-based plantation system led to emancipation.

The end of mercantilism and emergence of free trade spurred a reorganization of agriculture, geared towards economies of scale. Yet, Caribbean agrarian landscapes were still shaped largely by capricious foreign powers. For example: the 1874 British abolition of sugar duties marked the beginning of the end of St. Vincent's sugar industry, and the transition to cotton as the primary agro-export, which massively propelled soil erosion (Grossman 1998); in the early 1900s, the surge of Jamaican banana production was driven by the British desire to prevent U.S. corporate monopoly of the banana industry (Striffler 2003); and, also in the 1900s, Cuban and Dominican landscapes, monopolized by the U.S. Boston Fruit Company for banana production, were overhauled and reverted back to sugar production when American preference for banana production shifted towards Central America (Richardson 1992).

Throughout the early 20<sup>th</sup> century and into the Fordist era, Caribbean subordination continued, though by no means did it lose its status as an important peripheral region. Weakening British hegemony and rising U.S. imperialism meant the Caribbean became an economic appendage to the U.S, with significant agrarian consequences. Mimicking U.S. agricultural objectives, Caribbean islands sought economies of scale: large-scale American operated estates became widespread and small agricultural holdings disappeared (Gumbs 1981). American capital transformed Puerto Rico, Cuba and the Dominican Republic into huge sugar factories, sparking the collapse of the small hacienda between 1873 and 1948, (Mintz 1989; Richardson 1992) and

intensifying food insecurity. By the 1930s, “the systemic divorce of domestic output from consumption became more accentuated than ever” (Thomas 1988, 40).

The precarious reliance on large-scale mono-crop export-oriented agriculture became even more palpable during the Great Depression as markets for Caribbean tropical commodities plummeted (Thomas 1988; Grosfoguel 1995). During the WWII period, tropical commodity substitutes (like the sugar beet and high fructose corn syrup) reinforced the redundancy of traditional tropical commodities, and Caribbean landscapes experienced another wave of transformation. Traditional agro-export crops were abandoned (an exception is Cuba, which remained the main supplier of sugar to the Soviet Union until 1989), with some nations focusing on agro-production oriented toward domestic need (Trinidad and Tobago, for example), though most focused on industrialization, tourism and mining (Mintz 1989; Thomas 1988).

In 1945, the *Moyne Report* (also known as the Report of West India Royal Commission) cautioned that if mono-cropping and soil depletion continued, ‘it [would] be impossible for agricultural production to provide even the essentials of life for the growing population.’ Chronic environmental neglect had led to huge biodiversity losses and growing food import reliance, but agrarian decline worsened still in the 1950s and 1960s. As Caribbean nations gained independence, domestic governments adhered to the hegemonic post-war logic that developing states should pursue industrialization and rely on food imports (that would be paid for with profits from export manufacturing, mining and tourism). Expansion in tourism and mining led to decreases in total farmland, (Levitt 1996) and never lived up to expectations in terms of national development.

Throughout the 1970s, Caribbean industrialization was financed through World Bank loans. Agriculture, though low on national agendas, replicated the intensive American model embedded in the logic that food security could best be achieved through modernization, including increasing agro-chemical use and mechanization. This locked producers in an input treadmill that created dependence on agro-chemical manufacturers and necessitated the agro-export orientation<sup>34</sup> that was worsening soil fertility: by 1985, soil erosion was the most serious threat to loss of Caribbean agricultural land (Thomas 1988). In the same period, cheap food dumping from the US severely undermined prices for domestic goods, displaced traditional diets (Araghi 2009; McMichael 2009; Friedmann and McMichael 1989), and intensified food import dependence (Winders 2008) - an important foundation for contemporary food insecurity. As a percentage of food imports, Caribbean imports of cereals increased from 6 percent in 1955-60, to 46 percent in 1965-1970, and then to 60 percent in 1971-1975 (Gumbs 1981).

The neoliberal restructuring of agriculture, which hinged on the implementation of Structural Adjustment Programs (SAPs), (Bernstein 2001) was a final blow to Caribbean food systems. SAPs enforced state cut backs, market and trade liberalization, land privatization, and currency devaluation, with the reasoning that increased export revenues would service debt, that market liberalization would enable the cheaper production and the global flows of goods, and that these would maximize productivity and reduce poverty and food security (Teubal 2009). Instead, neoliberal globalization has

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<sup>34</sup> Lappé et al (1977) demonstrate how imports, such as pesticides, create a need to focus on export crop production to earn the foreign exchange to pay for them.

entailed chronic declining terms of trade, depeasantization, greater rural poverty, increased unemployment, and an inability to diversify economically or agriculturally (Bello 2009). Across the region, food import dependence has worsened: from 1975-1989, food imports rose from 8 to 16 percent in Trinidad, from 11 to 40 percent in Guyana, and from 21 to 36 percent in Haiti (Grosfoguel 1995). The Caribbean is now the most food import dependent region in the world and most Caribbean nations have a food deficit (Weis 2007). Haiti, for example, imports 60 percent of the food it needs, including as much as 80 percent of the rice it consumes (IFAD 2010; FAOSTAT 2001a).

#### **4.4 Historicizing Food Insecurity in Haiti**

As noted, Haiti is the most environmentally degraded and food insecure nation in the Western Hemisphere: only 1 percent of the nation is under dense forest coverage (IFPRI 2013; IFAD 2012), the daily per capita caloric deficit is 430 kcal, and 58 percent of the population (87 percent of the rural population) is undernourished (FAOSTAT 2009; Taft-Morales and Drummer 2007). Haiti is also the only country in the Western Hemisphere with ‘alarming’ levels of hunger (IFPRI 2013). Given these statistics, it is worrisome that current land appropriations for industrial purposes are eliminating farmland and damaging environmental spaces. Yet, these contemporary land struggles have historical roots. In the following section, we historicize food security and environmental decline in Haiti. We argue that contemporary hunger and ecological fragility have evolved due to the prolonged exploitation of Haiti’s rural landscapes and communities by foreign powers, the Haitian state, and the country’s export-oriented elites, whose high lifestyles are subsidized by the working masses.

In the 18th century, St. Domingue was the Jewel of the Antilles: “Its plains and

valleys presented the most inviting scenes from the richness of the pastures and the verdure with which they eternally abounded... and produce timber admirably adapted for every useful or ornamental purpose. Nothing could exceed the extreme salubrity in the whole country” (Franklin 1828, 14). But virgin forests were fast displaced by plantations. By 1701, 35 sugar mills were already at work and deforestation of the vast part of the Western half of Hispaniola (now Haiti) had “set in motion destabilizing ecological processes that ultimately would lead to some of the most severe environmental problems in the world” (Richardson 1992, 31). By the later half of the 18th century, French Saint Domingue was the richest of all the sugar islands. But shortly after the Haitian Revolution (1791-1804), Alexandre Pétion initiated a land redistribution program, and since 1818 Haiti has been one of the only Caribbean nations to maintain a majority peasant population, engaged in small-parcel poly-cropping traditions (Dash 2001).

Despite the domination of peasant agriculture, Haiti has never been a predominantly subsistence economy (Alvarez and Murray 1981; Smith 2001): the Haitian peasantry has always been “fully integrated into the Haitian economy, which itself [has been] fully integrated into the larger capitalist world-economy” (Dupuy 1989, 103). Throughout the 19<sup>th</sup> century, peasant food security, and socioeconomic mobility was chronically undermined through the surplus extracting of profits from agro-exports, principally coffee. Haitian peasants were crippled from the beginning: incapable of total self-sufficiency in agriculture, since they relied on cash crops (coffee) to finance other needs, yet simultaneously exploited through onerous coffee taxes (Trouillot 1990).

In the 20<sup>th</sup> century, small-scale agricultural production came under more direct attack. Haiti was a geographical lynchpin for America to protect its control of Panama,

and U.S. necessity to control Haiti was the key incentive for dismantling French and German hegemony in Haitian finance and politics (Trouillot 1990; Bellegarde-Smith 1984). To start, the U.S. quickly secured the Haitian market for its exports. Indeed, Haitian consumption of U.S. products doubled between 1903 and 1911 (Plummer 1981) – a point worth highlighting given the impact it would have on food-import dependence later on. In 1915, under the pretence of protecting a failing state, the U.S. occupied Haiti until 1935. During this time, U.S. influence over Haitian agriculture increased markedly. For instance, Washington sponsored a re-writing of the Haitian constitution to enable ‘alien landownership’- a policy change that had huge ecological consequences. The environmental harm that occurred during colonialism paled in comparison to this era: ‘the greatest attack on the balance in the ecosystem happened under the American occupation ... under the policy of concentrating landownership’ (*our translation, original in French*) (Michel 2005).

Before the occupation, forest coverage represented 60 percent of Haiti’s total land area - forest coverage fell to 21 percent by 1945, and to 12 percent by 1954 (Béliard and Norris 1996). High deforestation rates were largely due to various large-scale U.S.-financed agricultural projects, which led to American control of 22 percent of cultivatable land - over 120,000 hectares. They included: The Haitian American Sugar Company HASCO (1910); the Haitian-American Development Corporation (1927), which produced sisal in the North Department; and the Standard Fruit Company contract for banana production in the Artibonite Valley (1937). The monopolization of land had a huge “negative impact upon food production...the immediate impact upon the peasantry...was scarcity of land and food” (Bellegarde-Smith 1984, 275). For instance,

SHADA (Société Haitiano-Américaine de Développement Agricole) (1941), a US\$5 million U.S.-financed project geared to produce rubber, resulted in the clearing of 133,000 hectares of prime fertile land, including the felling of nearly a million fruit trees and the forceful removal of 40,000 peasants from their land (Smith 2009; Bellegarde-Smith 1984).

In 1956, President François Duvalier (Papa Doc) inherited an environment in severe decline, a massive external debt (US\$61 million), an economy based on declining competitiveness of its main export, coffee (Trouillot 1990), and a burgeoning and increasingly poor population - between 1930-1950, Haiti's rural population grew by more than a third (Trouillot 1990). But in almost every category, the Duvalier dictatorship institutionalized these crises. The twin pillars of the Duvalier economic model were manufacturing and agriculture, which were largely financed by loans from International Financial Institutions (IFIs). But the regime was also financed by the persistent exploitation and siphoning of resources from the peasantry. In his seminal work *State Against Nation*, Trouillot chronicles how surplus extraction from the peasantry was systematized under Duvalierism (Trouillot 1990). Taxes on coffee, for example rose from 16 percent in 1953 to 27 percent in 1957, and taxes on household essentials like flour, petroleum, and sugar, accounted for 25 percent of government revenue in 1985 (Trouillot 1990; Hooper 1987). While meager peasant cash resources were being siphoned off by the state, US aid (from 1954-1984) encouraged small peasants to produce cash rather than subsistence crops, which undermined subsistence security.

In manufacturing, François Duvalier promoted Haiti as a corporate paradise of docile labour, low wages, and non-existent taxes. In the 1950s, Haiti's first sub-

contracting firms were U.S. enterprises. In the end however, U.S. and Haitian bourgeois skepticism of Duvalier restricted investment, and growth in manufacturing was slow. When Duvalier died (1971), his son, Jean-Claude Duvalier took over with the goal of luring more US firms to Haiti. U.S.-financed manufacturing in Haiti soared: by 1972 there were 150 (mostly U.S.) firms in Haiti, centered in Port-au-Prince. That number nearly doubled by 1977 (McGowan 1997). By the end of the 1970s, the net value of exports in assembly industries was increasing by 10 percent a year and in the 1980s Haiti was “ninth in the world in the assembly of U.S. goods for consumption” (McGowan 1997, 6).

But the assembly industry never provided the economic uplift that was anticipated, producing only 40,000-60,000 jobs (Rogozinski 2000). Moreover, wages were so low they failed to create a domestic market that could spark growth in other sectors of the economy (Dupuy 2012). Still, the prospect of urban jobs ignited a rural exodus. The news of urban work hit impoverished rural communities just as tropical commodities prices were declining on the world market and burgeoning rural populations were putting pressure on familial lands and resources. Port-au-Prince grew from a city of 15,000 people in 1950 to 732,000 in the early 1980s and *boudainvilles* on steep hillsides mushroomed.<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> Urban overpopulation, motivated by exploitation and poverty of the peasantry, was the impetus for the massive *slumification* of Port-au-Prince in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. By the time of the 2010 earthquake, 80 percent of the people in Port-au-Prince resided on 20 percent of the land (Etienne 2012). The exploitation and neglect of Haiti’s poor classes (both rural and urban) were embodied in these urban slums, and culminated in the earthquake’s tragic death toll - over 220,000.

At the same time, peasant food security was being squeezed from pressures at multiple scales: predatory section chiefs expropriated peasant land (Dash 2001); the siphoning of peasant surplus left peasants ill-equipped to purchase market staples; and declining terms of trade made cash crops unviable. Those still maintaining a meager existence based on agriculture received another major setback when a hurricane in 1980 destroyed 60 percent of the coffee crop, increasing reliance on food aid. By 1981, imported food accounted for 23 percent of national consumption (Girault 1984). Haitian food security was dealt a final blow when the Kreyòl Pig population was destroyed, an act that Smith compares to the Great Stock Market Crash (Smith 2001). The Kreyòl Pig was a virtual savings account for peasant families: they fattened up on kitchen scraps, by scavenging, and were a basis of financing children's school fees. In 1979, pigs infected with African Swine Fever were found in the Artibonite Valley and though the disease was far from widespread, the Organization of American States (OAS) sponsored a massive eradication program - 1.3 million pigs were killed between 1981-1984 (Smith 2001). The eradication of Kreyòl pigs changed diets, but it also increased dependency on American imports, and heightened deforestation, as peasants turned to charcoal production for cash income (Smith 2001).

By the mid-1980s, Haiti's food situation was bleak: over reliance on coffee and declining world coffee prices eliminated possibilities of making even a meager cash income; and stagnant agrarian production caused major food-price increases - the average price of food more than doubled between 1975 and 1985 (Trouillot 1990). The decreased subsistence threshold led to declining food security, including food shortages in many regions. In 1984, the first protests against Jean-Claude Duvalier's regime were food riots.

Duvalier fled Haiti in 1986.

While it would be difficult to overstate the contribution of Duvalierism to agrarian decline and contemporary food insecurity in Haiti, in some important ways environments and food systems were marginally preserved under the Duvaliers. Indeed, interviewees in the Artibonite Valley were nostalgic for the tree coverage and diverse wildlife the area boasted until 1986. Duvalier's section chiefs were ruthless, but part of this brutality was directed against those who felled trees without permission. Under the Duvalier dictatorship local section chiefs enforced strict rules against free grazing, preventing the disastrous environmental consequences of free-roaming goats. Additionally, Duvalier refused to reduce tariffs on imported goods, largely protecting domestic markets and peasant producers from the competition of lower priced imports. This is not to suggest that the Haitian peasantry was subsistence-based under Duvalier (in the 1980s, for example, food imports accounted for 19 percent of the country's food needs (Dupuy 2012), but there has certainly been qualitative deterioration of the subsistence threshold since 1986.

#### **4.5 Haiti in the Neoliberal World Order**

In the post-Duvalier period (1991 forward), we see the persistence and intensification of earlier trends related to food security. The logic of pursuing food security through trade continues to guide policy and the country's reliance on food imports persists – causing food riots in 2008 when world food prices spiked due to the financial crisis. Serious consideration for how economic development plans could affect the natural environment is still lacking.

The election of Jean-Bertrand Aristide in 1991 ended 29 years of dictatorship, but the country faced an arduous journey forward – particularly on the economic front. Because of its enormous external debt obligations, the government was once again forced to accept loan packages from the IMF and the World Bank conditioned on the acceptance of structural adjustment. As noted earlier, Structural Adjustment Programs (SAPs) seek to make a country's exports more competitive on world markets by removing tariffs on imports, taxes on exports and barriers to foreign investment. The government was also forced to cut its spending and privatize state-owned enterprises. These policies made it almost impossible for the Aristide administration to carry out his pro-poor agenda to tax the wealthy and increase domestic food security (though early intervention resulted in declines in food prices and malnutrition) (Podur 2012). Instead SAPs enforced a policy set that liberalized agriculture and removed subsidies that benefited the sector. Although Aristide's 1990 policy agenda (which remained later in 1994) had a strong rural component, the substantial and consistent financial support that an integrated approach to rural development would have required clashed with the structural adjustment policies creditors believed were indispensable (Dupuy 2012).

The general point to take away from this period (1990-2010) is that the ascendancy of the neoliberal model of market-led development undermined the country's agricultural sector (Dupuy 2007). Adherence to structural adjustment conditionality during the 1980s and 1990s forced the government to cut what few subsidies there were to staple foods, agricultural credit, fertilizer, and water and to remove tariffs, fully exposing Haiti's food markets to global production. This reduction in support to farmers led to a sharp drop in agricultural exports while free trade policies encouraged a massive

surge in cheaper subsidized food imports from the US. Food imports increased from about US\$80 million per year during the mid-1980s to the early 1990s to more than US\$350 million by 2007 (Damais 2008). It is not surprising that, against this unfavourable background, many farmers were forced off the land.

#### **4.6 Post Earthquake: Manufacturing trump's *machèt***<sup>36</sup>

Post-disaster development plans have barely diverged from past formulas. Indeed, although many viewed the earthquake as a potential 'game changer', the thinking on food security – that it should be realized through trade - has remained remarkably unaffected (Shamsie 2012). More resources have been directed to agriculture, by both the government and international donors, but the priority has been to support agricultural exports rather than self-sufficiency. For instance, Haiti's Ministry of Agriculture (MARNDR), USAID, the IDB and the private sector prioritize export-oriented mango production, and the *Haitian National Agricultural Plan NAIP* (2010) suggests mango exports constitute a huge potential source of capital for domestic exporters. And yet, from a food security perspective, peasants view fruit trees as extremely risky: high dependence on external markets jeopardizes local food security, and the actual economic gains from agro-export sales for peasants are usually meager (Murray 1984).

Alongside agro-export promotion, international creditor and donor institutions and the Haitian state are placing more faith and resources into the export-manufacturing sector. This post-earthquake statement by the influential Rand Corporation reflects their thinking.

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<sup>36</sup> A *machèt* (machete) remains an important agricultural tool in rural Haiti.

Some of Haiti's best prospects for growth are to attract foreign and domestic investment to the garment industry. Haiti has too many people engaged in agriculture. The country is heavily populated, and more land is cultivated than is ecologically sustainable. In contrast, labor-intensive industries, such as garment manufacturing, provide an attractive source of jobs and income, especially given Haiti's competitive, low-cost labor force (Crane et al, 84 cited in Fatton 2011, 175).

As the statement asserts, the export-manufacturing model of development, supported by US trade preferences, is still viewed as the most likely vehicle for improving living standards and, consequently, food security. Indeed, immediately after the earthquake, the US Congress passed a new preferential trade agreement for Haiti. The Haiti Economic Lift Program (HELP) Act of 2010 extended the trade benefits of the 2006 Haitian Hemispheric Opportunity through Partnership Encouragement (HOPE) Act, which was the first trade preference mechanism Washington devised to boost Haiti's apparel exports. Though HOPE proved unremarkable, the 2010 HELP Act extended the trade benefits until 2020, increased tariff preference levels, and expanded duty-free treatment to additional textile and apparel products. Because HELP's trade benefits are better than those granted to its regional competitors, the Government of Haiti (GoH), international creditors and donors expect Haiti to become an even more appealing offshore export platform to the US market (Shamsie 2010). This explains why the post-earthquake plan to build an industrial park in Haiti's North East region received such strong support from creditor and donor institutions. Quite simply, for those who subscribe to the 'food security through trade' approach, the industrial park will create jobs, providing workers

with food security through their wages. What is absent from this line of logic is that the displacement of peasants as a result of the construction of an industrial park is likely to produce a surplus population that puts a downward pressure on wages (Shamsie 2010). This should be of concern since decreasing the purchasing power of workers would inevitably make them less food secure.

#### **4.7 The CIP: Land appropriations for industrial purposes**

The peasant gardens surrounding Caracol, a community whose 15,000 inhabitants rely on fishing, agriculture and salt making, were chosen by the government of Haiti as the site for the new 246-acre Caracol Industrial Park (CIP). The CIP is a US\$300 million project jointly funded by the IDB (initially providing US\$105 million and recently promising an additional US\$40.5 million), the U.S. State Department (US\$124 million), the Clinton Foundation, and the Korean apparel manufacturer Sae-A Trading Co. Ltd. (US\$78 million). In addition, USAID has allocated US\$268 million to build a power plant and a deep-water port to support the CIP (GAO 2013). But alongside capital, the CIP required land, so the government forcefully evicted over 400 peasants from 251 hectares of agricultural land.

The site chosen for the CIP reveals how rural food security is being undermined through land conversions associated with pushes to deepen and extend export manufacturing in this post-earthquake period. Our research, conducted between January and July 2012, is based on focus groups with: peasant groups, smallholders who were evicted from their land to make room for the Caracol Industrial Park, community leaders,

workers in the Caracol Industrial Park, and local government leaders<sup>37</sup>; and semi-structured qualitative in-depth interviews with peasant leaders, municipal officials, and leaders of civil society organizations. Interviewees were purposively sampled. Interviews were coded and analysis led to the emergence of key themes. In this paper we highlight the themes of environment and food security.

Community responses to the CIP highlight the links between the project and local food security. In fact, one of the strongest themes that emerged during content analysis was the expression of land appropriation as an abuse to peasant autonomy, food security and well-being. Respondents consistently lamented that fertile land, which had been passed down for generations, had been seized, making comments like:

- “Where the CIP is, that’s the most fertile land, the best land in Caracol” (Priest);
- “This land had all sorts of fruits and there were plantains, corn, and sugarcane...that was how everyone lived” (CASEC);
- “It gives the country food” (CASEC).

Another peasant said: “I’m 65, for me, at my age... my land had mangoes, *chadek* (a cross between a grapefruit and an orange), I had 37 trees of *bwa chenn* (a hardwood tree). Now I’ve lost it all.” Since they were displaced “the peasants are saying they can’t feed their kids or send them to school” (CASEC). The Interim Mayor expressed: “we are

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<sup>37</sup> Local government in Haiti comprises a CASEC (*Conseil d’Administration de Section Communale*, CASEC), which is a Municipal District Governing Board and an (*Assembles des Sections Communales*, ASEC), which is a Municipal District Assembly.

already starting to lack food” (Interim Mayor): “There has been increased hunger in the area because of the park” (CASEC).

Respondents also expressed concerns about the CIP’s environmental impact as well as how environmental damage could impact their food supply (mainly fish). The industrial plant is located in the middle of the Trou du Nord watershed, which empties into Caracol Bay, a fragile and ecologically important marine ecosystem. Caracol Bay, located 5 kilometers from the CIP, is part of the Caribbean Biological Corridor (CBC)- a United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and European Commission supported framework established in 2009 and aimed at protecting ecological systems and reducing biodiversity losses in areas in Haiti, the Dominican Republic, and Cuba. The Bay is also first on the list to be included in the National System of Protected Areas (SNAP) that was initiated by the UN Development Program and Haitian Ministry of the Environment (MOE) in 2010. The bay is home to one of Haiti’s last remaining mangrove forests and coral reefs, which are valued at US\$109,733,000 annually (OAS/IABIN 2009), and provides habitat for multiple species that support the local fishing industry (including lobster, prawn, pike, and mollusks).

In a 2011 environmental impact assessment, U.S. consulting firm Koios found that the CIP “will affect critical natural habitats” and poses “significant adverse environmental impacts” to Caracol Bay (Koios 2011, 126). Wastewater drainage from the CIP has been identified as one of the most serious threats to the Bay. For example, the textile industry requires vast amounts of water for dyeing and manufacturing, which creates significant wastewaters requiring multiple treatments (HGW 2011). Although the IDB has committed to financing wastewater treatment facilities, there is skepticism that

this will adequately ameliorate the environmental consequences of wastewater drainage into Caracol Bay. For example, Findley and Côté (2011) suggest that the increased runoff and drainage from power plant operations will unavoidably cause soil and water pollution. Furthermore, the Koios report suggests that whether or not the water is treated other threats related to the industrial park put ecosystems at risk. For example, when the water used to cool the CIP electrical plant leaves the building it is hot and unless it is cooled to less than 3 degrees Celsius, it is likely to have negative ecological consequences.

Alongside direct consequences of drainage from the CIP, the expected influx of between 100,000-400,000 people to Caracol will also magnify pressure on the Trou de Nord watershed and Caracol Bay. In a landscape that lacks landfills and sewage treatment plants, increased solid sewage and trash waste, if not properly managed, will threaten downstream marine and mangrove ecosystems (Findley and Côté 2011). In addition, the vegetative clearing that has fostered wastewater drainage, as well as potential poor disposal of toxic waste and petroleum products, may hamper normal vegetation growth, and increase soil erosion and sedimentation in the watershed and Caracol Bay (Findley and Côté 2011).

Though it is theoretically possible to diminish the environmental costs of the CIP (Koios 2011), the costs are onerous. Haiti Grassroots Watch argues that sufficient environmental assessments and environmental mitigation efforts would cost US\$54.5 million, and since Sae-A Trading is exempt from paying taxes for the first 15 years of operation, extracting sufficient tax revenues to fund environmental management seems doubtful (HGW 2011). This has led to concern that the formidable financial cost of

environmental protection will entail their neglect (HGW 2011). It is worth pointing out that the Koios consultants concluded that to avoid impacts on sensitive environments like the Caracol Bay, another site would be a better solution, but the CIP is now in operation (Koios 2011).

Interviewees voiced their environmental concerns, often connecting them to the harsher erosion of food security. The Catholic Priest said: “The industrial Park has a paint company, and a textile company, they produce waste. The paint waste is running into the water table, which feeds into the ocean and is killing all the fish.” Community members agreed: “the industrial park is making huge amounts of waste and dumping it into the water. It is pushing the fish further from the shore and threatening the fishers” (Community Leader). Peasant producers and labourers in the CIP also expressed nervousness for the environment: ‘We doubt they are treating the waste before they dump it in the ocean’ (Peasant): “We think the waste goes into the sea” (Worker); “Now there are no fish in the sea” (Worker). The Interim Mayor expressed the urgent need for environmental protection:

With the environmental damage from the park we have to include some kind of protection here...we have to have a means to protect the environment. I asked them about the ocean’s ecosystem – the waste is toxic – if it is dumped in the ocean won’t it kill the fish? Won’t it harm the people? And that is the biggest livelihood for people – fishing. So if you throw waste in the ocean people will lose their livelihoods.

But in the same breath the Mayor expressed feelings of powerlessness: “But, we don’t have any role in decisions about how companies manage the land or the natural resources” (Interim Mayor).

#### **4.8 Conclusion**

Haiti’s ecological inheritance and food insecurity are the result of a centuries old preoccupation with export-expansion (in agriculture and since the 1970s, in manufacturing). Associated with this export orientation is a commitment to the pursuit of comparative advantage and a faith in its ability to provide sufficient revenue gains from exports to produce food security. We believe this approach to be misguided. Abandoning the goal of self-sufficiency, as suggested by international creditors, is a risky proposition – particularly in an era of unpredictable and volatile price fluctuations in food (Clapp 2009). Given the extreme vulnerability of Haiti’s poor, and that unexpected price hikes harm lower-income groups most, a maximum degree of self-sufficiency should be the goal (Otero et al., 276).

On a related note, the lack of attention to trade policy reform by the multilateral development finance agencies and their bilateral allies the players Easterly (2009) has aptly called the ‘aid cartel’ – is problematic, particularly given their unequivocal commitment to food security. The absence of references to trade in post-earthquake policy documents indicates a continued belief in the benefits of full trade liberalization (Shamsie 2010). Despite the admission by United Nations Special Envoy to Haiti, Bill Clinton, that US trade policy during the 1990s gravely undermined rural livelihoods, creditor and donor institutions have little to say about how this policy set might be re-shaped. This is difficult to understand given that trade liberalization, and the resulting

decreases in national production have intensified the country's dependency and its vulnerability to speculation, supply disruptions, and food price fluctuations (Rights and Democracy 2008). If there was evidence that food imports did not adversely affect Haiti's marginalized masses, one could be more generous regarding these obstructions. This, though, is clearly not the case.

The growing disparity between rich and poor worldwide and the prevailing political environment (neoliberal precepts) would seem to offer little hope for change. And yet, the persistent disjuncture between the intents and outcomes of the current 'food security through trade' paradigm might be shaking things up. Otero et al. (2013) note that some creditor and donor institutions are questioning this approach to food security. The Netherlands, for instance, has acknowledged that trade liberalization "benefited countries competitive in the export market, but discouraged farmers where agriculture was not competitive. They now rely even more on food imports than before and are more susceptible to food price increases on the global market" (POED, 7 cited in Otero et al 2013, 285). Still, words must be accompanied by deeds. Donor policies need to support small-scale farmers that produce for local markets, ensure they can remain on the land and enhance their livelihoods. Trade rules in agriculture require major reform. Policy sovereignty must be respected, particularly when it concerns those countries trapped on the outer periphery. Haiti and its local communities must be allowed to determine and carry out their own approach to food security, free from the dictates of external agencies.

At the same time, an important part of the food security puzzle is domestic in nature. It requires political action aimed at dismantling authoritarian orders and entrenched social hierarchies within Haiti. Moreover, past experience has shown that the

poor are more likely to be treated equitably when they manage to organize themselves into a powerful political movement. It is, therefore, significant that Haiti's peasant producers are well organized. They are asking for access to land, and autonomy over what they produce and what they consume, which includes calls for lower food import dependence. They are calling for 'food sovereignty,' a concept that entails not only access to adequate food, but is also the recognition of the socio-political dimensions of food and food systems, to give people control over what they consume and produce, and to democratize the food system (Patel 2009). Indeed, it is a concept that resonated strongly with the ideas articulated by the peasant producers we spoke with in the Caracol area.

## **5. Peasant balances, Neoliberalism, and the Stunted Growth of Non-Traditional Agro-Exports in Haiti**

### **Abstract**

*This paper examines divergent peasant responses to the various models of export mango production that have been promoted in post-earthquake Haiti. These responses range from outright rejection on one side to hesitant participation in new marketing arrangements along with increased production on the other, and a spectrum in between. The field research that forms the empirical basis of this paper was conducted between November 2010 and July 2013 and included: qualitative interviews with leaders of peasant organizations, Haitian advocacy and community organizations, and officials in the Haitian government and in multilateral institutions; focus groups with peasant farmers; and extensive participant observation. Our analysis of peasant responses to the promotion of mango exporting is informed by a Chayanovian framework, and focuses on the dynamic tension in peasant-capital relations and how this is simultaneously influencing both peasant production and the ways that capital is attempting to organize production.*

*While critical agrarian studies tends to focus more on the ways that capital shapes conditions facing peasant producers, and how peasants resist or are transformed into petty commodity producers, there has been much less attention to the ways that peasant land use decision-making and marketing strategies can restrict how capital operates and limit its pursuit of growth and accumulation. This paper argues that peasants are seeking to balance a range of considerations that do not align with the ambitions of the country's political and economic elites, serving to limit the agro-export expansion in Haiti, which in turn highlights some of the ways that peasant producers can*

*push back against exploitative arrangements and maintain a degree of autonomy over their cropping systems.*

### **5.1 Introduction: The stunted growth of mango exporting in Haiti**

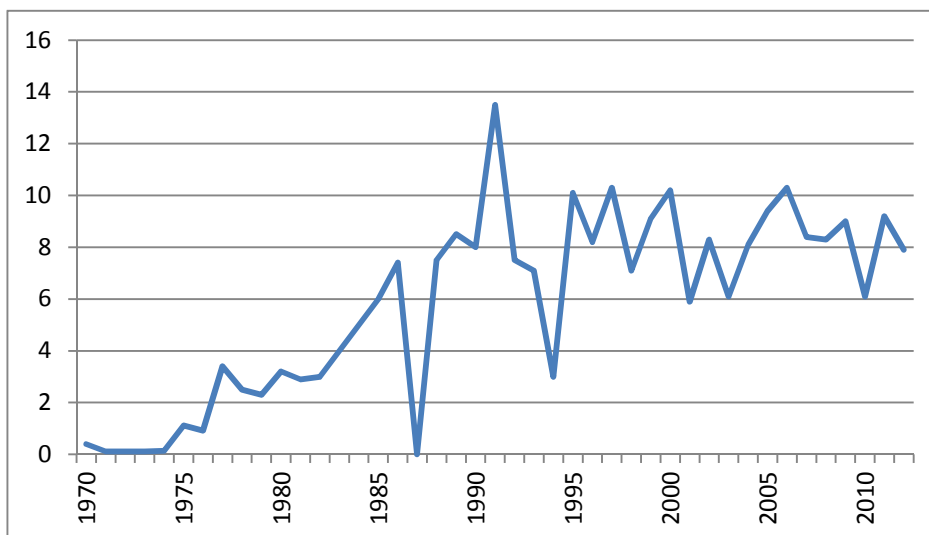
As in many developing countries, neoliberal policy restructuring in Haiti has compounded many of the historic burdens facing peasant farmers and served to make their production and reproduction increasingly difficult.<sup>38</sup> The core aspects of this include: trade liberalization, which enabled cheap food imports to flood domestic markets and undermine prices; austerity, which cut the already meager agricultural supports to peasants; and a focus on export-led growth, which for roughly three decades has been the overwhelming priority for all agricultural investment from the state, foreign creditors and donors, and NGOs. It is widely recognized that structural adjustment pushed both traditional and ‘non-traditional’ agro-export growth in many countries with detrimental effects, deflating earnings and export capacities for various countries seeking to expand production of tropical agricultural commodities (Weis 2007; Robbins 2003; Thrupp 1998).

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<sup>38</sup> Throughout the paper we use the term ‘peasant’ principally because *peyizan* [peasant] is how Haitians refer to smallholder farmers, and it is how producers self-identify, including within representative organizations. In these organizations, and in Haitian civil society more generally, peasants are understood as rural dwellers who provide for themselves and their families by working the land, raising animals, or doing artisanal work and who also sell their products and purchases items to fulfill household needs. Although scholarly debates around the complexities and contradictions of what constitutes a ‘peasant’ (Edelman 2013; Bernstein 2001; Shanin 1973; Wolf 1966) and the particular dynamics and characteristics of Caribbean peasantries (Beckford 1985; Mintz 1989; 1985; Horowitz 1971) are beyond the scope of this paper, we recognize the term ‘peasant’ to include a wide variety of heterogeneous social groups, and agree with scholars who conceptualize the peasantry as a process (Shanin 1973), peasant agriculture as shifting activity (Ploeg 2009), and peasant producers as groups engaged in *pluriactivity* and who are often partially engaged in markets (Kay 2008).

From the colonial period into the 20<sup>th</sup> century Haiti's agro-exports were dominated by a few crops, mainly coffee and sugar. However, unlike most of Latin America and the Caribbean, few large-holdings survived the colonial period, and instead a patchwork of small farms prevails over most of the Haitian landscape. The land tenure system in Haiti is extremely complex, as peasant holdings have been historically subdivided among family members over many generations, resulting in a system where many farmers possess multiple small fragments of land. Making matters more complicated still, there has never been a national land registry and most peasants have no formal title to land (Smucker 2000; Wiens and Sobrado 1998; Trouillot 1990; Zuvekas 1978).

As elsewhere, the onset of structural adjustment in 1986 in Haiti called for an increased focus on non-traditional crops to foster agro-export growth. The primary source of non-traditional export growth in Haiti was mangos, which first emerged as a minor export crop in the 1970s and skyrocketed in the late 1980s, dominated by a single variety, Mango Fransique. Yet while mangos remain Haiti's leading agro-export by value, the annual volume of Haiti's mango exports has been roughly stagnant since the initial export boom, fluctuating but never achieving the volume of 1991 (see Figure 10).

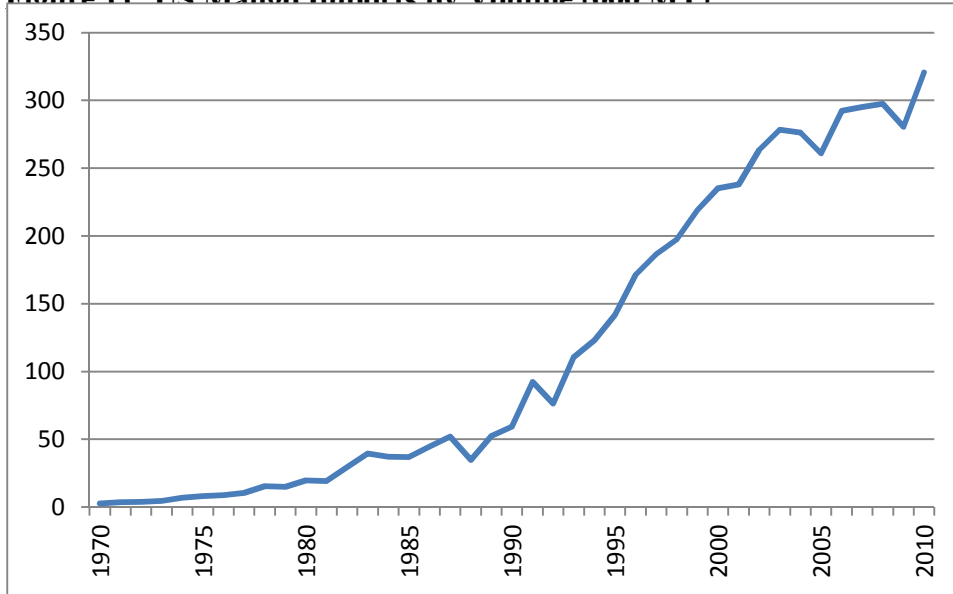
**Figure 10: Haiti's Mango Exports by Volume (000 MT)**

Source for data: FAOSTATS

The initial boom in mango exporting reflected the fact that many peasants were willing to participate in mango production and exporting to an extent, selling the product of already established trees to exporters. At a basic level, the stagnation since the initial boom in the 1980s reflects the fact that peasants have been unwilling to fundamentally reorganize their cropping patterns to favour mangoes, as further growth would have demanded. Another complicating factor has been the surge of mango exporting to US markets, where Haitian exports are mainly oriented, by a few other countries in Latin America and the Caribbean. This competition is central to the dominant narrative put forth by various government bodies, creditors and donor institutions, and merchant elites in Haiti, which focuses blame for Haiti's stunted export growth on the failure to scale-up production in cost-efficient orchards. The vast majority of mango production in Haiti occurs on peasant farms of 1 hectare of land or smaller, with mango trees planted at low densities within poly-cropped systems, and there are only a handful of commercial

mango plantations in the country (the largest of which is only about 160 acres). This stands in marked contrast to the large modern orchards in countries such as Brazil and Mexico, and relates to disparities in infrastructure such as irrigation, transportation, and processing plants that affects all stages from production to packing to shipping (IDB 2013f; Pierreval 2012; Lundahl 2004; Abbott 1995).

The US has always been the primary destination for Haiti's mango exports, though in the past decade Haitian exports have also been increasingly oriented towards Europe (FTF 2011). One of the clearest reflections that Haiti has failed to capitalize on possible growth can be seen in the fact that its mango exports have stagnated over precisely the same time that US mango imports have soared, as evident in Figure 11. Whereas Haiti supplied roughly 50 percent of US mango imports in the late 1980s, this had fallen to 16 percent by 2005 and a mere 4 percent of by 2013 (Hyppolite 2013; Smucker et al. 2005). Yet while the superior cost-efficiencies of large modern orchards elsewhere are undoubtedly a powerful force shaping the competition for markets in the US and other industrialized countries, there continues to be a strong belief among the government, influential development organizations (many of them dominated by multilateral assistance), and agro-exporting interests (principally the country's merchant elites) that Haiti's agricultural sector can and should be reorganized to increase mango production and exports.

**Figure 11: US Mango Imports by Volume (000 MT)**

Source for data: FAOSTATS

The belief that there continues to be considerable unrealized potential for export growth has been a central part of the reconstruction and development planning for the agricultural sector that has followed the disastrous earthquake that hit in 2010. Indeed, the post-earthquake outpouring of development assistance can be largely seen as a reinvigoration of the decades-old neoliberal prescription for agrarian restructuring, with mangos again targeted as a key crop for agro-export growth. While Haiti obviously does not have the scale or infrastructure of countries like Brazil and Mexico, it is understood to have one decided competitive advantage: cheap labour, a product of the fact that it is by far the poorest country in the Western Hemisphere. For those interests seeking to foster export growth, Haiti would be much better poised to leverage this cheap labour advantage if either peasants could be convinced to plant mango trees in greater densities or else if smallholdings could be consolidated in order to expand orchard-style production on larger estates.

This research sought to explore the relations between peasant farmers and the various actors pushing to expand the scale of mango production and exporting in Haiti, which are marked by increasing tensions and conflicts, including violent land seizures. The discussion starts by introducing the core concerns of a Chayanovian approach and its value in the Haitian context. Attention then turns to an examination of the constellation of forces that have been propelling mango export growth in Haiti for some time and the key strategies for accomplishing this. The empirical analysis focuses on the dynamic relationships between capital and peasant producers, in particular how peasants are actively resisting various attempts to expand mango production and struggling to maintain a degree of autonomy over their cropping systems. The core argument is that peasants are primarily concerned with achieving certain balances that are antithetical to orchard-style production, and as a result they are actively constraining the class forces to expand mango exports. This, in turn, highlights some of the ways that peasant producers can push back against exploitative arrangements that would integrate them further into global markets.

## **5.2 Exploring Peasant Balances**

Neoliberal restructuring in agriculture has repeatedly paved the way towards highly centralized and externally controlled food chains that have re-organized land and labour relations, spurring both large-scale capitalist farming and contract relations with smallholders (Watts 2009; Kay 2008; Bernstein 2005; Wiggins 2000), which obviously poses different threats to smallholders. Whereas the expansion of large-scale capitalist farms often leads to complete dispossession, the expansion of contract relations can reduce smallholder autonomy, sometimes with highly exploitative terms but not always in entirely negative ways. In some instances, peasants can gain certain advantages from

the expansion of agro-export production, making use of new markets and supply networks to increase earnings (Ploeg 2013, Bernstein 2010, Watts 2009, Kay 2008). In short, the expansion of capitalist relations in agriculture is complex and dynamic, and peasant responses to this expansion can vary and shift over time.

A Chayanovian approach helps to understand peasant responses to expanding capitalist relations in agriculture. From this perspective, peasants are fundamentally guided by goals of sufficiency and stability, prioritizing a spectrum of household needs and seeking to optimize production accordingly, rather than simply trying to maximize production and profit (Ploeg 2013; Bryceson 2000; Shanin 1986; Chayanov 1966). A basic assumption is that peasant household decision-making includes (though is not entirely dependent upon) an economic calculus, weighing a wider range of material and non-material considerations on an ongoing basis. One of Chayanov's (1966) core arguments was that peasant decision-making is fundamentally motivated by a desire to balance household consumption and labour outputs, in the belief that peasant producers will tend to increase the overall labour expenditure and intensity of farming in order to fulfill household consumption needs, but once these needs are met the utility of additional labour goes down and is instead viewed in a more negative light, as drudgery. This implies that peasant decisions are based on varying assessments of the specific contexts and resources of individual households and involve the negotiation of balances that include but are much broader than market incentives (Ploeg 2013; Thorner 1986).

Ploeg (2013) highlights and extends the modern utility of the Chayanovian approach, suggesting that the advance of capitalist relations in agriculture everywhere means that contemporary peasants juggle a much broader array of balances than in the

past. At the core of this are: the social and natural realms of life; production and reproduction; internal and external resource sources; the scale and intensity of farming; and autonomy and dependence. In many instances, peasants navigate these balances in order to maximize their autonomy and limit or diversify their dependency on markets. Two key ways this can be accomplished are by increasing self-provisioning of food and shifting towards low-input farming methods (Ploeg 2010; Holt-Giménez 2006). Another key tenet in a Chayanovian approach is that peasant responses to the expansion of capitalist relations in agriculture are not only heterogeneous but are regularly shifting in response to changing external conditions. For instance, peasants assess various incentives provided by purchasers, agro-input suppliers, NGOs, and the state, and resist some while accepting others based on how they relate to household balances. Here, it is also important to understand that capital likewise shifts in order to find new mechanisms for accumulation and peasant cooptation, establishing continuously changing relations (Ploeg 2013). The capacity of peasants to shift their production decisions has the potential to both enhance their ability to cope with unfavourable market conditions and to fortify their ability to resist as a class (Araghi 2009; Chayanov 1966).

A Chayanovian approach is well suited to Haiti, as there has been a remarkable persistence of very smallholdings and a stilted, complex expansion of capitalist relations in agriculture. In stark contrast to the rest of Latin America and the Caribbean, large capitalist farmers are extremely rare in Haiti while small peasant farmers still possess the vast majority of all agricultural land, having long encountered exploitative relationships with merchants while maintaining varying degrees of market orientation. Attention to the balances that peasants pursue sheds insights into their responses to the concerted efforts

to expand export-oriented mango production, and how they have constrained the growth sought by Haitian elites.

But before the contemporary dynamics and struggles mango exporting can be explored, they must first be set in a longer-term policy context.

### **5.3 The Forces Propelling Mango Export Growth**

#### *5.3.1 From Baby Doc to Structural Adjustment*

Haiti's mango exports first began to rise during the Jean-Claude Duvalier ('Baby Doc') dictatorship (1971-1985), increasing from roughly 3000 to 6000 MT between 1980 and 1985 (see Figure 12). The growth in mango exporting was somewhat anomalous, as agricultural production was largely neglected under Baby Doc and continued a long-term decline while the light-manufacturing sector – which had been promoted as the most promising vector of development in the 1970s and 1980s – experienced only modest growth. During this period, U.S. development assistance and various forms of lending to the Haitian government were linked to Baby Doc's commitment to ensuring a friendly investment climate for U.S. companies pursuing light-manufacturing, which included suppressing minimum wage levels and labour unions and removing barriers to the repatriation of profits (Hallward 2007; McGowan 1997). However, partly because exports from the light-manufacturing sector never grew to the extent that was anticipated, Haiti's annual trade deficit climbed from US\$12.4 million in 1970 to US\$183 million in 1980 (Trouillot 1990). This chronic trade deficit was a major factor in the steady rise of Haiti's national debt, from just over US\$50 million in the early 1970s to over US\$300 million in 1980 – double the rate of external debt growth in Latin America (McGowan 1997).

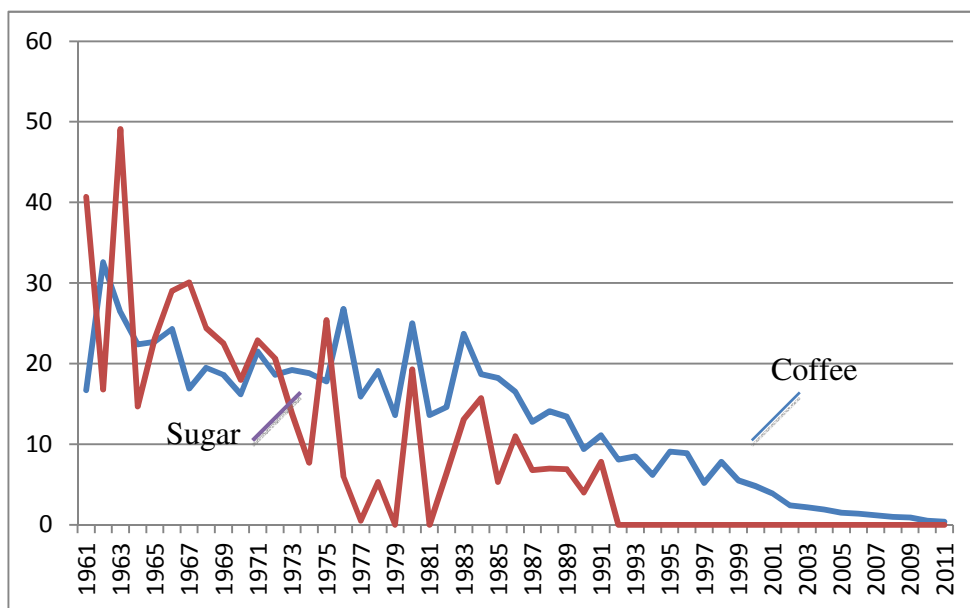
By the early 1980s, Haiti had one of the lowest per capita GDPs in the world, around US\$300, and the reality for most was even worse since 1 percent of the population controlled 45 percent of the GDP while the state forcibly protected their interests (Trouillot 1990; Haggerty 1989). Eventually, the combination of economic inequality and political repression led to rising popular resistance to Baby Doc, which succeeded in toppling him in 1985. Following this, the US created the National Governing Council to rule Haiti, controlled by the Haitian army, which promptly turned to the International Monetary Fund, the World Bank, and the Inter-American Development Bank for a series of loans that brought the standard package of policy reforms known as structural adjustment (Podur 2012; Weisbrot 1997).

### *5.3.2 From Structural Adjustment to the 2010 Earthquake*

Two of the central pillars of structural adjustment in agriculture were the liberalization of domestic markets and the pursuit of export-led growth in order to generate foreign exchange and service debts (Akram-Lodhi and Kay 2010; Watts 2009; Kay 2008; Weis 2007; Bernstein 2001). In Haiti, trade liberalization, beginning in 1986, triggered an enormous wave of food imports, which rose by roughly US\$80 million per year between 1985 and 1989, placing downward pressure on prices in domestic market and contributing to a negative annual growth rate (-0.5 percent) over this period (Shamsie, 2010; Abbott 1995). In particular, imports of rice, Haiti's most important food staple severely undermining peasant farmers in Haiti's Artibonite Valley. The pursuit of agro-export growth included a plan to reorient 30 percent of Haiti's arable land from domestic to export-oriented production in a context where Haiti's traditional agro-exports, coffee and sugar, had been in long-term decline and the prospect of reinvigorating them in the

face of competition elsewhere was unlikely (Trouillot 1990; Dupuy 1989). As Figure 12 indicates, Haiti's coffee and sugar exports have utterly collapsed since the onset of adjustment in 1986.

**Figure 12: Haiti's Traditional Agro-Exports by Volume (000 MT)**



Hopes for agro-export expansion were tied in considerable measure to the promotion of non-traditional exports, as indicated earlier, with mangoes at the forefront. Initial indications seemed promising, as mangos exports more than doubled between 1985 and 1991, from roughly 6000 MT to 13500 MT (FAOSTAT 2013). This burst in exports spurred investment in mango packing and shipping, and by 1989 there were 10 firms in Haiti who formed Haiti's Association of Mango Exporters (ANEM).

The implementation of adjustment was briefly interrupted by the election of Jean Bertrand Aristide as President in 1990 and the ensuing political chaos. Aristide symbolized the best hope for a pro-peasant agenda, and won an overwhelming popular mandate with promises to challenge neoliberal policies, but Aristide was overthrown only

days after his inauguration in a military coup that was supported informally – though unequivocally – by the U.S. government and the Haitian elite (Hallward 2007; Weisbrot 1997). Nevertheless, both the U.S. and the Organization of American States subsequently imposed a crippling economic embargo on Haiti that lasted until 1994: Haiti's GDP declined by roughly 25 percent over the space of just a few years (Abbott 1995) and the country's debt burden rose from US\$850 million in 1990 to US\$940 million in 1993 (Farmer 2003; IMF 2001). The embargo caused Haiti's mango exports to fall almost five-fold from 1990 to 1994, which pushed the fledgling merchant interests in mangos, dominated by ANEM, to the brink of collapse. Recognizing this, the U.S. helped keep Haiti's mango exporters afloat by amending the embargo for the six-week peak of the mango season in 1993.

In 1994, the U.S. lifted the embargo and reinstated Aristide for the final few months of his presidency with the condition that his administration comply with the further implementation of structural adjustment reforms. A central part of this was the slashing of import tariffs to an extent that made Haiti one of the most open economies in the Western Hemisphere (Abbott 1995), a radical liberalization that had immediate negative impacts on agricultural production for domestic markets (Dupuy 2012; Shamsie 2010; Oxfam 2010; Bello, 2009; Weisbrot 2007). Imports of rice from the U.S. is an especially stark illustration as another wave of subsidized rice imports from the U.S. swiftly followed the slashing of rice tariffs from 50 to 3 percent in 1995 (McGuinan 2006). From 1989 to 2004, the annual volume of rice produced in the Artibonite Valley, Haiti's most important rice-producing region, fell by one-half (Lundahl 2004).

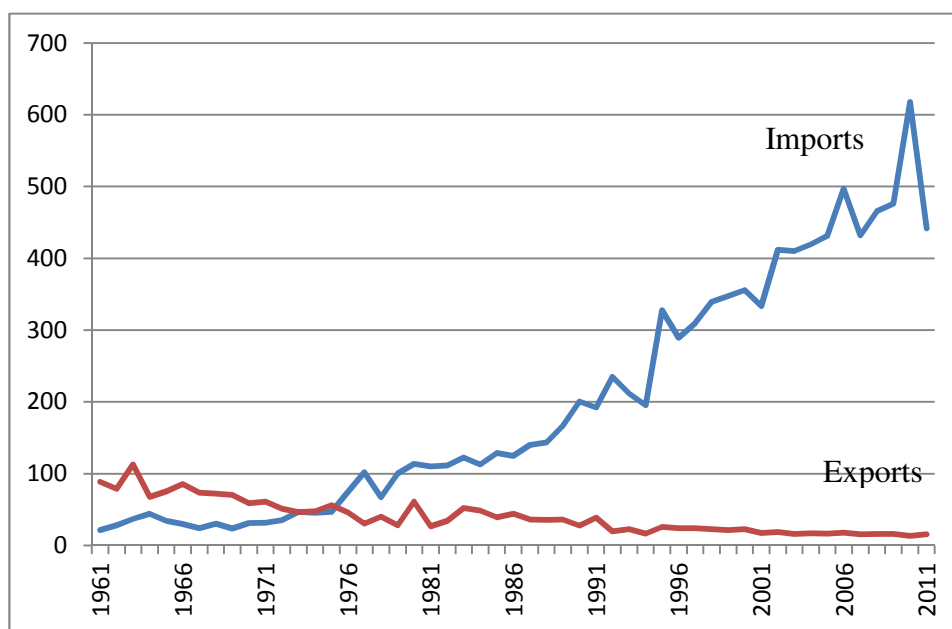
The renewal of structural adjustment led to the deepening control of external actors over Haiti's agricultural policies. One clear indication of this is that the *Agricultural Policy Analysis Project* (APAP), which was conducted in 1995 to guide the agenda for Haiti's agricultural sector, was heavily influenced by USAID, the IDB, Chemonics International (a U.S.-based development company that partners with bilateral donors and the private sector to carry out a range of development projects), US agribusiness consultants (e.g. International Fertilizer Development Centre, the Citizens Network for Foreign Affairs<sup>39</sup>), and the UN FAO. As with initial adjustment prescriptions, the APAP again prescribed an export-led strategy for Haiti's agricultural sector, focusing centrally on mango production (as well as highlighting the hope of reinvigorating coffee) rather than food for domestic markets. Other core recommendations of the APAP included: promoting enhanced trade and marketing relations with the US; extending export tariff reductions; increasing agricultural credits to agribusinesses and mango exporters; publicly financing infrastructure to support export-oriented commodity chains; and establishing a formal land registry to enable a more active market for land transfers (APAP 1995). The desire to build a national cadaster and encourage land sales is entwined with the belief that Haiti's land tenure system of highly subdivided small farms is a major barrier to scale efficiencies and increased export production, and though no serious action has since been taken this has been repeatedly flagged as a priority ever since.

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<sup>39</sup> The Citizens Network promotes agribusiness alliances between the US and Haiti.

Yet in spite of Haiti's adherence to neoliberal policy restructuring, the agro-export growth it promised has never materialized while, as noted, liberalization has transformed domestic markets. As a result, rather than helping resolve Haiti's balance of payments problems, the period of neoliberal restructuring involved a spiraling trade deficit and worsening debt problems; from 1995 to 1999 alone, Haiti's external debt soared from US\$780 million to US\$1.3 billion (Farmer 2003). The trade balance in agriculture was especially bleak. Over the first decade and a half of Haiti's neoliberal restructuring, from 1986 to 2000, Haiti's agro-exports fell by nearly half, from US\$44 to US\$23 million, while agro-imports roughly tripled, shooting up from US\$125 to US\$356 million (see Figure 13).

**Figure 13: Haiti's Total Agro-Trade Balance by Value (US\$M base price)**



Source for data: FAOSTATS

However, despite this gaping and growing imbalance, seen clearly in Figure 13, the dominant neoliberal narrative continued its grip on agricultural policy, with the central goal being to enhance the competitiveness of Haitian exports. This was

augmented by a US trade agreement in 2000, *The Caribbean Basin Economic Recovery Act 2000-2020* (CBERA), which granted Haiti duty-free access to US markets for various products, though whatever incentives CBERA established for Haitian exporters were quickly undermined by a US-led economic and aid embargo that followed the reelection of Aristide in 2000 and triggered a massive decline in mango exports in the ensuing years.<sup>40</sup> The crippling U.S.-led embargo lasted until 2004, when Aristide was overthrown in a coup that the U.S. had a central hand in, along with Canada and France (Dubois 2012; Podur 2012; Hallward 2007). By this point, Haiti's chronic trade imbalance had reached staggering proportions – the cost of imports was more than 6 times greater than export earnings in 2004, a gap that was partially plugged by more borrowing – and it is notable that loan disbursements from international financial institutions were promptly restarted following the overthrow of a democratically-elected President. In this context, it was hardly surprising that the call to increase agro-exports rang out yet again from various creditor and donor institutions, as well as being embraced by the internationally-backed coup leaders. Again, mangos were identified as a commodity where Haiti could achieve export growth (ICF 2004).

Mango exports did recover to pre-embargo levels quickly but the generalized decline of Haiti's agriculture sector otherwise continued, as other agro-exports kept falling while dependence on imported food kept intensifying. In assessing this problem, dominant actors cast considerable blame on the small average farm sizes and the

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<sup>40</sup> In addition to the US cutting off aid, the IMF, World Bank, and Inter-American Development Bank froze loan disbursements, and foreign direct investment decreased by 56 percent almost immediately (Edmonds 2012; UNCTAD 2002).

complexity of land titling in Haiti, arguing that these must be changed in order to attain competitive efficiencies (CDB 2006). In the *2007 Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper*, agriculture was highlighted as one of four key growth pillars for the Haitian economy, with key priorities identified as: modernization, including increased investments in fertilizers and capital inputs; regulated credit for agribusinesses; improved infrastructure to meet the agro-export standards and phyto-sanitary controls (as mandated by the WTO); and the establishment of a formal land registry (Shamsie 2010; PRSP 2007). However, these objectives were accompanied with little resources, and it took a catastrophe to bring greater donor funding to bear on Haiti's agricultural sector.<sup>41</sup> The earthquake sparked an enormous influx of foreign assistance and new optimism that agriculture would be a key pillar of Haiti's recover and development, with mango-exports again envisioned as an important vector of growth. In the next section we examine the post-disaster policy push for mango-export expansion and the initiatives that have developed as a result.

The field research that informs the following analysis was conducted from November 2010-July 2013, including 2 focus groups with peasant producers (n=15-20) who are directly involved in a land conflict with Haiti's largest agribusiness; and qualitative interviews with key informants, including government officials (n=7), representatives of *AgroTechnique* (n=2), Technoserve officers (n=2), representatives from bilateral organizations (n=4), legal representatives for the peasant group that has

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<sup>41</sup> The international response to the earthquake was a clear example of Klein's (2007) disaster capitalism: with much of donor funding going towards security and policing and open-door encouragement of foreign corporate investment geared towards modernizing agriculture and investing in export-processing zones driven by the logic that Haiti could recover and expand in its global economic niche as a seller of cheap labour.

suffered the land seizure (n=1), and leaders of Haitian peasant and civil society organizations (n=10). Throughout the discussion, participants are referred to by the acronym or short name of their affiliations, as identified in Figure 14, but in some cases anonymity is protected by referring to informants as ‘local leaders.’

**Figure 14: Organizational Affiliations of Key Enformants (English in brackets)**

- MITPA: *Mouvman Inite Ti Peyizan Latibonit* (The United Movement of Small Peasants in the Artibonite)
- CASEC: *Le Conseil d'Administration de la Section Communale* (Council for the Administration of the Communal Section)
- KOPAV: *Kooperative Prodikte Agrikol Vigilant* (The Cooperative of Vigilant Agricultural Producers)
- MARNDR: Secretary of State for Re-launching Agriculture of the *Ministère de l'Agriculture des Ressources Naturelles et du Développement Rural* (The Ministry of Agriculture, Natural Resources and Rural Development)
- MPP: *Mouvman Peyizan Papaye* (The Peasant Movement of Papaye)
- GASA: *Groupe d'Accord Solidarité Action* (Group of Agreement for Solidarity Action)
- IDB: Inter-American Development Bank Haiti
- ODD: *Oganizasyon Devlopman Dezam* (ODD the Development Organization of Dezam)
- ODVA: Former Director of *L'Organisation de Développement de l'Artibonite* (The Organization for the Development of the Artibonite Valley)
- PAPDA: Coordinator of *La Plateforme Haïtienne de plaidoyer pour un développement alternatif* (The Haitian Platform to Advocate Alternative Development)
- PLD: *Partenariat pour le Développement Local* (Partnership for Local Development)
- *Tét Kole Ti Peyizan* (Heads Together Small Peasants)
- TNS: Technoserve
- USAID: United States Agency for International Development Haiti Office

#### **5.4 Post-Earthquake Reconstruction: Old wine in better funded bottles**

The 2010 earthquake disaster was in many ways a reflection of the intersecting rural and urban development problems in Haiti, as the large majority of the roughly 220,000 people killed lived in very poor quality housing stock on the margins of Port-au-Prince, which has proven unable to absorb the level of rural-urban migration generated by the countryside. As a result of both the nature of the earthquake itself and the flows foreign aid that followed, a new wave of external intervention in development planning was

unleashed, along with renewed assessments of what was wrong with Haiti's agricultural system and how to fix it. While there was much continuity with the decades-old neoliberal development prescriptions, the great difference is that post-disaster development schemes have been met with financial support. There was a huge influx of post-earthquake financing, with nearly US\$9 billion in foreign aid dispersed between 2010 and 2013 (Ramachandran and Walz 2013), and while only a modest share (less than one-tenth) was pledged for agricultural development this still constituted a enormous increase in funding for the sector.<sup>42</sup> The *2010 Haitian National Agricultural Plan* (NAIP 2010) was the cornerstone document laying out the priorities of leading donors, lenders, NGOs, and the Haitian government for agricultural development and yet again mangos feature prominently, identified as an underdeveloped source of foreign exchange generation.

In April 2010, just a few months after the earthquake, the National Mango Forum was convened in Port-au-Prince to identify strategies for mango export growth. The forum was attended by key domestic stakeholders including Haiti's Association of Mango Exporters (ANEM), as well as the US National Mango Board and foreign organizations with an influence over agricultural development planning, including representatives from the USAID and the USDA. The conclusions of the forum were synthesized in a report drafted by the USAID, which identified barriers to increased

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<sup>42</sup> The *Action Plan for National Recovery and Development* (2010), the chief post-disaster plan that has guided both short and long-term disaster response programming, budgeted an initial US\$40 million for agriculture for the first 18 months following the disaster, and the NAIP (2010) budgeted nearly US\$800 million to agriculture from 2011-2016.

production and ways of overcoming them, and set the ambitious goal of doubling mango exports between 2010 and 2015, to 22,500 MT, roughly two-thirds greater than the record level (USAID 2010). Two other reports from this same period attempted to specify the extent of unrealized growth, estimating that there is sufficient international demand for Haiti's mango exports to increase five-fold if production could be ramped up (CFI 2010; IDB 2010).

One of the central barriers to increased production identified in the *Mango Forum Report* was land tenure insecurity and, in an echo of past plans (PRSP 2007; ICF 2004; APAP 1995), the report urged the Haitian government to establish a formal land registry in order to enable the development of larger-scale orchards. The *Action Plan for National Recovery and Development* (2010) and the *Haitian National Agriculture Plan 2010* also laid out the goal of establishing a national land registry in order to formalize land tenure, enable a land market, and increase possibilities for large-scale agriculture, though by 2015 there are still no palpable signs that any of this has materialized. The continuing absence of a land registry two decades after it was flagged as a major priority (APAP 1995) reflects not only budgetary limitations but also enduring fears among the Haitian government and the donor community that peasants would resist it. This was expressed clearly by key informants from the USAID and IDB, with one USAID Office Chief commenting that renewed plans for a land cadaster likely meant little because “in reality we don't think the government will touch this issue.”

Two approaches to expanding mango production have predominated in practice in the post-earthquake period, which partly reflect different responses to the still unfulfilled calls for a land registry. The first is a development project called *Haiti Hope*, jointly

financed by the USAID, the IDB, the Clinton Bush Haiti Fund and The Coca-Cola Company,<sup>43</sup> which was designed to transition some peasant farmers into entrepreneurs and stands at odds with the orchard model for agro-export production put forth in post-disaster plans. The second is a new push to expand large-scale orchard production being made by Haiti's largest agribusiness, *AgroTechnique*, which reflects a belief that large-scale orchards are still possible in spite of informal land tenure arrangements.

Both the attempt to commercialize some peasants in *Haiti Hope* and the effort of *AgroTechnique* to scale-up mango production are rife with tensions, which are the focus of the remainder of the paper. In both cases, as will be seen, the goals of agricultural development butt up against strong peasant aspirations to maximize autonomy and balance market earnings (and risks) with cultivation geared to meeting household consumption needs.

## **5.5 Peasant Responses to the Post-Earthquake Push for Mango Exports**

### *5.5.1 Peasant Responses to Contract Relations*

The core goals of the *Haiti Hope* project are to contribute to mango export growth, double the mango incomes of 25,000 small farmers, and strengthen the productive base from which ANEM members can draw from (TNS 2015; MIF 2013; IDB 2010). In addition to their expectation that peasant would resist a land registry, key informants in the IDB and USAID also indicated related beliefs that future attempts to scale-up production would almost certainly be met with peasant resistance, and gave this as an important reason for the approach of *Haiti Hope*. For example, an IDB official stated that

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<sup>43</sup> The initial funding was modest, just US\$9.5 million over 5 years, but concentrated in a small area and in a context of almost no state support for agriculture.

“the high potential for land conflict entails that it is easier to get results by working with the small peasants,” while a USAID representative said that his agency “recognize[s] that the strategy of the Haitian peasantry is to mitigate risk, and donors have learned that we have to go to farmers on their terms”. A different USAID representative went further in his explanation of how peasants have conditioned the USAID agricultural development initiatives:

Peasant risk-aversion is a barrier to USAID programming. We’re grappling in agriculture, and it will be hard to be transformational in mangoes if a farmer only has 3 trees in his backyard. But, if only small holders are willing to participate in our program, we can only work with small holders.

On the ground, *Haiti Hope* has been largely implemented by TechnoServe (TNS), a US-based, non-profit development organization that works in over 30 low-income countries with a strategy to offer “business solutions to poverty” (TNS 2015). Technoserve receives donor support from multilateral development institutions, the U.S. government, individual donors and private enterprises, and in 2007, the *Financial Times* rated TNS among the top five development NGOs based on corporate partnerships. In various contexts TNS has partnered with Cargill, Goldman Sachs, J.P. Morgan, Google Nestlé, Peet’s Coffee & Tea and Unilever, among others (Bjerga 2011; TNS 2007). In Haiti, TNS recruits growers who have relative land security, and facilitates connections between producer groups and an exporter in Port-au-Prince. To incentivize peasant participation, TNS offers credit (which otherwise few peasants would have access to) and grants to support labour and supply costs to fence mango plots, subsidies on mango

seedlings, and a range of production supports (e.g. cases and bags for packing, basins for washing, and large drums for collecting water).

The approach of *Haiti Hope* has arguably succeeded in deterring peasant resistance but peasant reactions to *Haiti Hope* have still been decidedly mixed. The contract arrangement that TNS offers has certain features that are advantageous to peasants including an assured market (capable of receiving bulk sales), guaranteed prices, and access to credit before the harvest so that cash-starved peasants are not forced to harvest and sell mangos early. However, there are also significant disadvantages as peasants lose the freedom to switch contracts to pursue better terms and forfeit the ability to negotiate prices or, crucially, use production to meet household needs. One peasant leader put it this way:

Peasants won't accept mango export orientation because the income he receives will never give him what his garden gives him. When a peasant plants sweet potato, he can take a bit of that sweet potato every time he goes to his garden – he can eat it any time. He can't do that with contract mangoes!

Although a TNS representative claimed that, “peasants really appreciate the program,” he also admitted that TNS has had considerable difficulty recruiting producers. By the end of 2013, TNS had recruited fewer than 30 producers in the Verette region, and in an effort to boost uptake they halved the land requirement for participation from roughly 1.5 acres to 0.75 acres. Another TNS representative, a former recruitment officer, explained that peasants were unwilling to join *Haiti Hope* because the price (which included a fair trade premium) was little different than what was provided by other purchasers. In 2013, for example, peasants selling through *Haiti Hope* earned

approximately US\$0.45 per dozen mangoes and an additional US\$0.15, specified as fair trade premium, for mangoes that passed US certification, whereas peasants could typically sell for more than US\$0.45 per dozen mangoes through other outlets, sometimes for as high as US\$0.65.<sup>44</sup> In short, there was limited price incentive to sell through *Haiti Hope*. Tied to this was the belief that the high rejection rates of the processing plant that partners with *Haiti Hope* further eroded peasant earnings to an extent that deterred peasant engagement in Haiti Hope (with peasants lacking confidence in the quality standards used). One *gwo planté* [a term given to a peasant with relatively large land holdings, in this case roughly 20 acres] expressed frustration both with the TNS contract arrangements and with the rejection rates at the TNS-affiliated mango processing plant in Port-au-Prince:

The terms that [TNS] described when they explained the mango contract, that's not what the peasants find! That's not how it really is! I told TNS that I have mangoes to sell. But the problem is that they accept mangoes only if they're perfect. Even if they have a little black mark they reject them. And they'll only take the huge ones. When I went to sell at the TNS processor I gave 124 dozen mangoes and they said only 50 dozen were good! And what's more, they said I had to sell the rejected ones to them anyways, and that they would only pay US\$0.30 per dozen. No! This project is not good for me!

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<sup>44</sup> Hypollite (2013) corroborates this, finding that in 2013, export-oriented mangoes produced in the Artibonite Valley sold on the conventional market for approximately US\$0.55 per dozen.

While many described their aversion to *Haiti Hope* in terms of the prices paid through the program, it is also important to consider that this was only one component of peasant decision-making (Ploeg 2009). One peasant leader explained how the widespread frustration about prices was rooted in a fear of becoming too dependent on markets:

The money they are giving peasants for the mangos isn't real money – it can't even begin to support his/her life or family. The strategy [of *Haiti Hope*] is to get peasants to abandon their own production – the production that supports their lives – to plant mangoes to sell!?! No way! The peasants might get some money, but he'll soon be in a position where in spite of that money, he won't have food!

Related to this, a number of key informants suggested that peasant reluctance to join *Haiti Hope* runs deeper than the prices offered, noting how many peasants strive to maintain autonomy, do not want to be accountable to an institution, and are suspicious of TNS, believing the terms of the contract arrangement to be exploitative, with those growing mangos reaping too little of the ultimate profits. A peasant who served as a former TNS recruiter illustrates this view clearly, expressing his belief that: “[TNS] takes advantage of peasants ... and they make huge profits off of the peasants.” Another peasant echoed this view, insisting that “in this set-up, peasants sell mangoes for next to nothing and other people make a lot of money off of us.” Other interviews with peasants revealed similar responses:

- “Projects to get peasants to sell mangoes will always have a tendency to exploit the peasants.”
- “The interests of the peasants are not the first thing being considered with these mangos that they are pushing. It's the international community! And with political

support, judicial support, with state support, they are dismissing what the peasants want to plant and choose crops for the international market.”

- “In this set-up, we peasants sell mangoes for next to nothing and other people make a lot of money off of us.”

The Chayanovian approach also contends that peasants’ decisions are influenced by natural and ecological realities, by peasant assessments of balances between autonomy and dependency, and between the scale and intensity of production, and this was true of peasant evaluations of *Haiti Hope*. For example, peasant leaders and key informants regularly described that peasants were hesitant to join *Haiti Hope* because of general risks associated with mango production. That is, fruit trees are seen as being extremely risky from year-to-year while unit prices are usually meager. This general reluctance was also recognized by an official from USAID, who explained his sense that peasants are wary of jeopardizing food security by relying too heavily on unreliable markets, especially with production that is seen to contain inherent risks (e.g. disease, hurricanes). Peasants repeatedly affirmed this in interviews and focus groups, making comments like:

- “We can only harvest mangoes once a year, and so if a strong wind comes, and it knocks off all the mango buds, our harvest is lost.”
- “The peasants know that if the mango has a bad year, if the flies come to the mangoes, they will lose out.”
- “In [*Haiti Hope*’s] arrangement all the risk is on the peasants. Because the mango business doesn’t want to hear about it if the harvest is low, if the flies get the mangoes! He doesn’t want to know if the workers are sick! He doesn’t want to

know about those things. He's only interested in the mangoes when they're ready for harvest."

- "We're not against mango production for export. Naturally I would like for the Haitian peasants to find more ways to access earnings. But if you're going to only plant mangoes you'll only have mangoes. If the U.S. decides they're not going to buy Mango Fransique again – we're dead, we're finished. That's why we have to diversify production."

Peasants are hesitant to join *Haiti Hope* for various reasons: apprehension about affiliating with an institution and forfeiting autonomy, unwillingness to accept the terms of TNS contracts, or broader aversion to the risk associated with fruit trees, and their reluctance to join *Haiti Hope* has constrained the project's success. A TNS representative described plainly that in 2012, the quantity of mangoes exported from the Artibonite Valley was much less than anticipated because peasants were nervous to join *Haiti Hope*. In addition, a 2013 evaluation of *Haiti Hope* determined that there was "low probability" of project completion, and emphasized that a major barrier to mango export growth and the success of *Haiti Hope* was a lack of peasant enrollment in the project and that without the buy-in of peasant farmers the sustainability of the program was in jeopardy (MIF 2014). One peasant leader described the widespread refusal of other peasants to participate in *Haiti Hope* as "a form of resistance" against foreign intervention in agriculture. Yet it is also important to remember that while many peasants have abstained from participation in *Haiti Hope* (enough to threaten the project), some peasants have engaged with in *Haiti Hope*. As Ploeg (2009) suggests, peasant households facing similar structural challenges might assess their material realities in different ways, or prioritize

different things, like household consumption over the risks of increasing dependence upon markets. In this case, a few peasants have perceived sufficient benefits from *Haiti Hope* to join, for the majority the rewards have been too modest in relation to risks of reduced cultivation for household needs, and the fact that this balance weighs heavily for peasants has severely constrained the project.

### 5.5.2 *Peasant Responses to Large-Scale Mango Production*

Haiti's largest agribusiness, *AgroTechnique*, controls 2 of Haiti's 5 commercial mango orchards and claims ownership over the largest mango orchard in the country, a roughly 160-acre estate located in the Artibonite Valley. *AgroTechnique* has made multiple attempts to expand its mango orchard in the Artibonite Valley in the face of resistance from local peasants, who have been farming a large portion of that land for decades. Representatives of *AgroTechnique* expressed strong views that insecure land tenure and peasant resistance are barriers to mango-export growth, along with a conviction that large-scale production is the most efficient and lucrative option for Haiti.

Since the 2010 earthquake, the simmering land dispute surrounding this 160-acre estate has escalated into a violent conflict. Part of the complexity of tenure here extends back to 1952, when peasants in the region collectively donated the land for a term of 50 years to an American couple who established a hospital in the area. In 2002, recognizing the expiration of this land deal, peasant inheritors of the land reclaimed and began cultivating a portion of it that had been fallow. However, that same year, the hospital directory board rented out parcels of the land to various tenants, frustrating peasants and complicating the question of who had rights to the land. One tenant was *Fruits et Legumes* (F&L), a subsidiary of *AgroTechnique*, which established a mango orchard.

Peasants allege that threats from the coordinator of *AgroTechnique* began almost immediately and that forceful evictions ensued, with one focus group participant commenting that:

[He] started to threaten the population. [He] killed animals – even animals that were pregnant. The peasants suffered many threats. Then [he] kicked all of us off the land! The peasants didn't have other means. We don't have a government that gives any support. We don't have any other recourse to eat, to pay for school, to go to the hospital. Our hope depends on the land. [He] arranged to have all the peasants kicked out, to take the land and to produce mangoes to export!

In 2006, the hospital directory board met with key stakeholders in an attempt to resolve the conflict, presenting a letter that outlined a continued tenancy agreement for 220 acres of land, of which *F&L* would occupy 130 acres. A former legal representative of the peasant group explained that peasants were furious, and described that many peasants had deeds linked to portions of the land and felt that the contract with their forefathers was not respected. The peasants started a legal case against *AgroTechnique*, but allege that the *AgroTechnique* coordinator bribed the judges and threatened peasant lawyers. One local leader explained that “the owner of *AgroTechnique* has enormous financial and political power,” and another insisted that “with his *Makout* money,<sup>45</sup> he bribed the courts and in

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<sup>45</sup> This comment reflects a common allegation that the coordinator of *AgroTechnique* was a former member of the feared and despised *Tonton Macoute*, and that he used the wealth he gained from brutalizing peasants to bribe the judiciary to support his land claims. The *Tonton Macoutes* were personal security forces for the Duvalier's who were formally called the Volunteers for National Security.

return they gave him justice.” One peasant involved in the land dispute described that it was the corrupt judicial system that motivated peasants to take direct action:

[He] has old military people who will kill people *en masse* at his direction. He will terrorize the population, and our corrupt courts will never stop him. So we swelled our power. First we reacted peacefully, but we could see our voice was blocked.

In September 2007, as the likelihood of regaining their land legally grew dimmer, more than 300 peasants invaded and reclaimed over 150 acres of the land. Over the next three years tensions brewed, before conflict escalated in 2010, to an extent that the former legal representative for the peasant group stepped down from the case in fear his life was threatened. In interviews, local leaders described the hostility of *AgroTechnique* representatives towards peasants, making comments like: “the director is arrogant and uses the logic of guns,” and “He intends to put those peasants out – off their land!” Several key informants emphasized the severity of *AgroTechnique*’s disdain for peasants by recounting an incident where the coordinator proclaimed that, “one of my mangoes has more value than one of you Haitians!” In an interview in June 2011, the manager of *AgroTechnique*’s mango processing plant described the situation in this way:

Haitian peasants are like a load of bricks weighing us down. They are either trying to take advantage of us or sabotage us. Everywhere we go people don’t like us.

Now it’s a land conflict.

Throughout 2011, peasant protests and roadblocks were frequent, and some dug trenches in feeder roads to prevent access to the orchard. The coordinator of *AgroTechnique* responded harshly to these actions, engaging in a range of violent acts designed to

intimidate and seize peasant landholdings, the multiple stories recounted in interviews and focus groups. According to one local leader, the coordinator of *AgroTechnique*:

Cut down plantain trees and used his tractor to bulldoze the peasant's sweet potatoes. [He] cut down so many huge mango trees because he only wants the Mango Fransique variety. He cut down those other mango trees that peasants used to eat from. The peasants lost that food.

Another respondent noted that:

Our animals would go by and he'd shoot them. Even children couldn't pass near him. We yelled *Amwe* [Help us]! Enough! He bulldozed our sweet potatoes with his tractor, and our plantain trees. He cut them all down and burned them.

In addition to shooting at peasant-owned horses, bulldozing sweet potato harvests, cutting down and burning plantain trees, others noted how he poisoned animals and even shot at peasants themselves.

In September 2011, the coordinator of *AgroTechnique* orchestrated the illegal arrest of four peasants from their homes after midnight. One of the victims described how his: "daughter came out and asked what they were doing with me. They pointed their guns at her and told her to go in the house and be quiet. This was a kidnapping!" While these men were in prison, others continued to struggle to protect the land, and in May 2013, after 20 months in prison, the four men were released when a new judge presided over their case and dismissed it as unlawful.

The ways that peasant households strive to balance an array of considerations, while seeking to enhance autonomy and household consumption, can contribute to

numerous forms of resistance (Ploeg 2009; Long 2007; Scott 1985), and a Chayanovian lens helps to understand the escalating peasant resistance to *AgroTechnique*. Peasants are aware that the threats to the balances they are pursuing are dynamic and constantly shifting, and in this case it seems clear that when *AgroTechnique* first planted a mango orchard in 2002, though many peasants objected, they did not feel their livelihoods were sufficiently threatened to overtly resist. Rather, the land that they maintained was perceived as sufficient to provide for their families. It was only when the degree of the threat to peasant land and food security grew to an intolerable extent that peasants began to actively resist the mango plantation.

In focus groups, peasants repeatedly described how reclaiming their land and resisting mango orchard expansion was necessary to protect both immediate food security and long-term ability to reproduce themselves. As one put it:

Mangos can't do anything for us. They are only harvested once a year and are a small dessert for a brief moment. We don't need mangos to plant in this land, and we don't agree for *AgroTechnique* to come here and plant mangos. This land needs corn, sweet potatoes, plantains, pigeon peas, and sorghum. It's these foods that we need, nothing else.

Others were similarly adamant that they will never accept orchard-style mango production, making comments like:

- “Only *AgroTechnique* profits from profits from mangoes, the peasants don't see any advantages! For us peasants it's better to produce our own food.”

- “Planting all this land with Mango Fransique is like tying up all of us peasants and throwing us in the river. There would be no other means for us to live anymore!”
- “This land is the last gasp of breath for the peasants of the area. It’s the source of life for all peasants. Because we have taken back our land we can feed ourselves.”
- “For us, whether we turn to blood or to dust, we’re not going to let go. We’re never going to let go! Even if we die, our children will fight and die before we would permit [*AgroTechnique*] to have our land!”

While it is impossible to assess the impact of peasant resistance to *AgroTechnique*’s overall mango exports, there is reason to believe that peasant resistance has constrained mango production in this area of the Artibonite region. In July 2013, peasants continued to occupy the land – over 150 acres – and harvested the mango crop on the orchard themselves. The extent of peasant mobilization was such that local leaders scoffed at the question of whether *AgroTechnique* would ever successfully develop a mango orchard in the area, reflected in comments such as:

- “The peasants will always occupy that land! Ha! Even if people die, peasants will stay on their land. Even when the peasants were in prison [*AgroTechnique*] couldn’t take that land – the other peasants continued to occupy it, and continued to cultivate it!”
- “I know *AgroTechnique* will never be able to go on that farm again. The peasants will never let him.”
- “The peasants will never cede that land. In Haiti the voice of the peasants is the voice of God.”

An IDB representative with expertise in the area conceded that this orchard was likely bound to fail too, suggesting that, “*AgroTechnique’s* approach will create a lot of problems with burglary and conflict. I don’t think they will succeed,” as did the former Director of the ODVA who insisted that:

“Mango orchards will never work [in Haiti]. Even if you offer employment in a mango orchard people will not accept it because it’s only for a season. You haven’t provided a way for them to live. They will not accept it. They will rise up in protest!”

Peasant responses to *AgroTechnique* have clearly been influenced by their goals to maintain autonomy and adequate household consumption, as they have had to re-assess the degree of threat that *AgroTechnique* poses over time. As these assessments have shifted, so too has the range of responses: first to begin to occupy fallow land; then to seek justice through the judicial system; and finally to engage in direct actions against *AgroTechnique* and land occupation. Yet it is also important to recognize that peasants are not inherently opposed to mango exports, reflected in the fact that peasants in the area have been engaged in exporting mangoes for decades and tacitly accepted *AgroTechnique’s* mango production on a portion of the land for years. They are willing to grow and sell mangoes on certain terms, producing them when they do not adversely affect the cultivation of other (mostly) household-oriented food crops, as part of their desire for autonomy, and selling them to export markets when margins are sufficient. In this case, peasants began to resist the expansion of mangoes as the threats to household provisioning became too great.

## 5.6 Conclusion

Despite the persistent stagnation of mango exports, the perceived potential for agrowth with mangos has been a major part of Haiti's agricultural policy agenda throughout the neoliberal era, including post-disaster development planning, echoed again in 2013 by the Ministry of Agriculture and Natural Resources (MARNDR) alongside many foreign donors and NGOs. However, while there have been enormous increases in agricultural investment since the 2010 earthquake, the continued push for mango export production seems bound to meet widespread peasant resistance.

Thousands of peasants are involved in the mango supply chain, which suggests that they will engage in mango export initiatives when they are advantageous. However, peasants resist agro-export promotion where expected earnings do not compensate for the threats to household food provisioning. This resistance was seen in different ways in peasant responses to the predominant post-earthquake initiatives to boost mango exports, both the encouragement of small-scale production proffered by *Haiti Hope*, and the large-scale orchard production pushed by *AgroTechnique*. According to one peasant leader, whether the powerful agents are seeking to commercialize or displace peasants, both are to be feared:

The strategy of [Haiti Hope] is still an imperialist one, and imperialists won't always fight directly. There are places where they will fight with force, like *AgroTechnique*, and other places where they'll be cunning, where they will give an appearance of peasant participation. But both will make peasants give up their land and their food security to plant mangoes to sell.

The importance of land and the strong desire to reduce risk and maximize autonomy are well-established aspects of the culture of Haitian peasants (Dubois 2012; Smith 2001; Trouillot 1990; Dupuy 1989). Haitian peasants also have a long history of retreating from agro-export production “as a gesture of resistance” (Trouillot 190, 122), though they will engage with export markets when sales and cash earnings are perceived as necessary or advantageous, as evident in the participation in mango supply chains at small levels. In the post-disaster period of intensified development expenditure, some peasants are selectively engaging with markets and schemes bent on enhancing their export orientation while others are actively resisting them. In both cases, decisions to engage or resist reflect household-level assessments of the balances between increasing sales and market orientation (and associated risks) and meeting consumption needs. So while domestic elites and foreign development organizations may continue to push mango export schemes, either by seeking to commercialize peasants or promoting larger-scale production, the responses to *Haiti Hope* and *AgroTechnique* in the Artibonite Valley suggests that peasants will resist initiatives that reduce their autonomy or increase their risk to intolerable levels.

This raises serious questions about the trajectory of agricultural development planning in Haiti and the continuing prioritization of agro-exports, and whether peasants – and national food security at large – would not be much better served if state and donor resources (including investments in research, extension, infrastructure, credit, and appropriate technologies) were reoriented to support production geared towards household consumption and local markets.

## **6. Conclusion: Research reflections, contributions and future directions**

When I first set out to explore the struggles of the Haitian peasantry as a doctoral student I had just completed a term as a Policy Analyst and Advocacy Worker with the Mennonite Central Committee in Port-au-Prince, during which time I also sought to contribute to a number of Haitian advocacy organizations concerned with broad issues surrounding food justice and peasant livelihoods. I was privileged to have been in a position where I learned from leaders of organizations who were deeply engaged in issues I believe in and struggles to which I wanted to contribute. Some of these leaders became mentors over time, and taught me about how the colonial plantation economy, recurrent foreign interventions in Haitian politics, and the country's parasitic merchant elite and predatory state have together impoverished the masses, undermined democracy, and denied the rural citizenry access to most basic services, from potable water to electricity to decent education and health care facilities. But, equally importantly, these leaders also emphasized the enormous historical fortitude of social movements and the long legacy of peasant resistance to injustice, pointing to such things as the persistent pride in the Haitian Revolution, the struggles of the *caco-s*, and the rise of the *Lavalas* movement from the late 1980s onwards. One core belief that resounded among these organizations was that agriculture is fundamental to Haiti's development prospects and that any meaningful pro-peasant change to Haiti's agriculture and food systems must involve the revalorization of traditional diets. This dissertation was motivated both by the lessons I learned from these Haitian mentors, and by a strong desire to contribute to peasant movements in some way.

The 2010 earthquake magnified the urgency and magnitude of challenges facing peasant agriculture in Haiti. It was a tragedy of enormous proportions, and the influx of reconstruction funding and policy intervention marked a watershed for the country: for some, it was an opportunity to continue liberalizing Haiti's economy and intensifying a particular development trajectory, but for others, it represented an opportunity for change, for different sorts of broadly pro-poor development priorities. My friends and former co-workers described the immense human suffering that enveloped Port-au-Prince in the first 24 hours after the quake, the piercing fear that returned with every tremor, and the grief and deep sense of loss that have lingered ever since. Yet many also emphasized an overwhelming spirit of solidarity and collaboration in the immediate aftermath of the disaster, sharing stories of earthquake victims crying, praying, and singing together, of the poor and the wealthy sleeping side by side in open quarters, and of strangers sharing food and shelter. One of my most inspirational and visionary mentors, Ari Nikola, described the energy this way:

The bond of people was something that hit me with great force. It was reminiscent of *konbit*! Haitians stood up – strong! Before this, there were always trucks bringing food to the provinces, but now, peasants were coming in with food to give Port-au-Prince! This was so powerful. It was moving. And I reacted emotionally, I saw that Haitians can! This was a season where the planting season was approaching; I had enormous hope that Haiti would change because people were working together. It was there in the eyes of everyone that – We Can! We can!

In the days and months following the earthquake some of this energy dissipated, with peasant and Haitian advocacy organizations becoming increasingly critical of responses being led by the state and by an array of international actors. The more I dug into my research, the clearer it became to me that the disaster marked somewhat of a crossroads for development policy. On one hand, there were immediate efforts by local elites and foreign contractors to capitalize on the disaster, using reconstruction-related funding to support things like light manufacturing and commercial agriculture. On the other hand, the tragedy was the impetus for a powerful resurgence of optimism and hope among Haitian advocacy and peasant organizations that alternative methods of development and a pro-poor agenda were possible. Agrarian landscapes have been a key battlefield of this struggle, and while the future of Haitian peasants is being influenced by decisions coming down from above, they are also very active in fighting for their future.

Ploeg's (2013, 16) description of peasants beautifully summarizes my sense of the Haitian peasantry: at once "downtrodden and misunderstood... [yet also] indispensable and proud. The peasantry both suffers and resists: sometimes at different moments, sometimes simultaneously." A core objective of this dissertation has been to explore this tension and examine the prospects for Haiti's agriculture and food system in this post-earthquake crossroads, and how peasants and peasant movements are responding to the obstacles and opportunities associated with increasing funding and intervention.

## **6.1 Contributions and Future Research**

The manuscripts that comprise this dissertation are united by a concern about the injustices faced by Haitian peasants, an understanding that these have deep historical roots, and a sense of solidarity with the struggles of peasant producers for autonomy and

dignity. In some ways, this harkens back to my first conversation with Ari Nikola in 2007, which is engrained in my memory:

To understand Haiti, you first must recognize that for 300 years we were forced to believe that we were inferior and these ideas have not gone away. Although we haven't been physically enslaved for over 200 years, these ideas persist – the reference point of what is good is what is white, what is Western. The enduring mentality of enslaved people today is the consequence of slavery. To understand Haiti, you need to understand this history.

One aim of Chapter 2 was to respond to Ari's call for an historical approach to understanding the contemporary struggles of the Haitian peasantry, and examine how widespread food insecurity and rural poverty (which is entwined with excessive urbanization and the devastation wrought on Port-au-Prince) are rooted in a long history of peasant marginalization and exploitation. Chapter 2 focuses on the long history of surplus extraction from the peasantry by the Haitian state (which relates partly to the onerous debt burden that began shortly after independence), the bourgeoisie who have dominated the wealth of Haiti's international trade, and the debilitating history of foreign political and economic intervention, with particular attention to how neoliberal economic reforms have shaped rural development. Chapter 2 also explores the divergent visions for agriculture and rural development outlined in post-disaster plans and those offered by leaders of peasant organizations. While others have critically analyzed post-disaster development plans (Shamsie 2012) and urban-based demands of civil society organizations (e.g. reconstruction of poor neighbourhoods; supports for under-serviced refugee camps; and attention to the harrowing vulnerabilities of female disaster victims)

(Polyné 2014; Schuller 2012a, 2012b; Edmonds 2012), there has been a striking lack of attention to how rural development projects are being pursued in the post-disaster period and how peasant movements are responding to the influx of foreign loans, grants, and ‘experts’, and this chapter aims to fill this void.

As my relationship with Ari grew stronger, we often shared meals – *pitimi*, *viv*, and *mayi moulen* – foods that I noticed were never served at roadside restaurants, at other peoples homes, or even at the office where I worked, which were more inclined to serve white rice, pea soup, and white-flour based French baguettes. When I first asked the women who worked in the office kitchen if we could cook *pitimi* together they initially laughed but then in seriousness told me that *pitimi* was a peasant food and refused to serve it. In Chapter 3, I try to unpack the complex relationship between race and class hierarchies and peasant dietary aspirations in an effort to understand how enduring racist ideologies impede prospects for food sovereignty. While it would be impossible to quantify the influence of dietary aspirations on total food consumption, and in turn the threat they pose to peasant producers, this paper illustrates that there is striking symbolic alignment between peasant and elite values with respect to food preferences. A central argument is that peasants often seek to escape their social position by mimicking the consumption patterns of the dominant class groups, including the urban elite and foreign segments of society. This suggests that, at least at some level, the Haitian peasantry accepts the prevailing social order and identifies with the oppressing class (Scott 1976), which indicates an enduring ideological control that the Haitian elite exerts over the masses. Negative attitudes towards the peasantry and towards peasant diets raise serious questions about the role that food cultures can have in limiting the sorts of localization

and pro-peasant aspirations associated with food sovereignty. In the process, it also opens up some new directions for future research on what food sovereignty might entail, and why it is necessary to consider food culture in Haiti in discussions of agrarian change. Yet while my research indicates that dietary aspirations tend to be geared towards the consumption practices of the elite, some countervailing food values do exist. For example, some Haitians believe local chicken is more nutrient dense and better tasting than imported chicken, and there are other examples such as *soup joumou* [pumpkin soup], which was not explored in Chapter 3. In the colonial era, *soup joumou* was reserved only for *blan* colonizers, but following independence peasants Haitians of all class groups came to celebrate the revolution and emancipation from slavery by feasting with *soup joumou* every independence day. Such non-elitist food values demand further attention and could provide the basis of greater solidarity among the poor and between urban and rural areas. As it is, the main advocates of traditional diets are *Voudizan* groups *Rasin* movements<sup>46</sup> and a number of peasant movements, and I believe they need to work more consciously (and cohesively) to devise strategies geared towards reorienting diets towards locally grown foods, and I hope that my research can have some applied contribution in this regard.

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<sup>46</sup> The *Rasin* [roots] movement is largely associated with a musical style in Haiti that has embraced *Voudou* beats, but also is strongly supportive of peasant clothing, the Kréyol language, and peasant foods. This movement is most popular among some urban intellectuals, musicians and activists. *Voudou* practitioners and *lwa*-s [gods/spirits] also embrace traditional peasants foods in ceremonies, with many telling me that *lwa*-s do not eat foreign foods. Although I did not explore these countervailing food movements in this dissertation, I conducted interviews with *Bòkò*-s [*Voudou* priests] and an *Oungan* [a *Voudou* priestess] and have attended *Voudou* ceremonies, and I have a strong impression that the *Voudou* religion is an important site of pro-peasant food values.

I am confident that this research speaks to a central aspect of Haiti's food culture that bears heavily on its agricultural system, but it also left me with a number of questions. Some of these relate to insights from Scott's (1976) classic study of the Malaysian peasantry, in which he suggests that peasants engage in various forms of 'pragmatic compliance' whereby their adherence to dominant ideologies is not fixed and is rather more of a continuum. Is it possible that Haitian peasants do not wholly submit to dominant food values even as they articulate them? Are peasant preferences for elite and *blan* foods only 'skin-deep'? (by which I mean, is it possible that food preferences change depending on company or environment?). I have some suspicion and indeed hope that dietary preferences for elite and *blan* foods among Haiti's poor are more prominent in various public settings and that such hierarchies might carry less weight in private life. The coordinator of PAPDA points to the complexity of Haitian food values and how food choices may change depending on setting and also on who is present, suggesting that "If a Haitian receives a visitor for dinner, he'll strategically align himself with the values of his guest. But that doesn't mean he *adopts* those values [sic]." Perhaps it is more that peasants have been *resigned* to dominant food ideologies rather than having entirely *embraced* them as legitimate, and further research is necessary to better understand the social contexts and physical spaces in which the dominant food values are challenged in Haiti.

Chapters 4 and 5 critically examine two prominent post-earthquake rural development schemes: an industrial park in Haiti's North Department and mango-exporting initiatives in the Artibonite Valley. Both papers consider the powerful interests propelling these projects, and argue that while they face enormous infrastructural costs

and other barriers, peasant resistance has been pivotal in their limited success to this point.

A central contribution of Chapter 4 is to provide a critique of the persistent efforts of bilateral donors, multilateral organizations, NGOs, and the Haitian state to establish competitive export platforms in such things as light manufacturing and mango production, which rest upon Haiti's comparative advantage in low wages and are oriented largely towards the US market. An extension of this has been to pursue 'food security through trade' which, it is argued, is bound to exacerbate food insecurity in Caracol as the project further degrades agrarian landscapes and fisheries in the area. This paper also sheds light on undemocratic nature of development planning, as the decision-making surrounding the CIP occurred without any consultation of local leaders or attention to peasant perspectives, and the social discontent with the project stems from the interwoven frustration over the displacement, the nature of the jobs created, and the exclusionary political process. An overarching argument of this paper is that the development through trade paradigm needs to be challenged. Rather than assuming that increased exports are bound to create jobs and reduce poverty, poverty reduction in Caracol, as elsewhere in rural Haiti, should start from listening to peasant perspectives and visions for rural development and consider the broad aspirations of food sovereignty in development policy (Edelman et al. 2014).

Chapter 5 reveals how development schemes geared towards boosting mango-exports have threatened peasant livelihoods (and with it, local food security) in the Artibonite Valley, while also emphasizing how peasant responses have constrained the expansion of mango production. While the forced and attempted evictions in both

Caracol and the Artibonite Valley illustrate the enormous risks that peasants face in resisting displacement, they also illuminate the enduring power of the Haitian peasantry to rise up in the face of injustice. Indeed, one of the overarching messages from this dissertation is that there is nothing inevitable about the decline of the peasantry, the mobilization evident in these cases are among many signs of hope that Haitian peasants are going to continue to fight for their autonomy long into the future.

Chapters 4 and 5 also draw attention to the growing threat of land grabbing and peasant dispossession in the post-earthquake period, as the huge influx of reconstruction funding has helped spur new commercial land deals. For example, in addition to the land seizures in Caracol and the Artibonite Valley, the Haitian state recently appropriated the entire island of Île à Vache (almost 13,000 acres with 20,000 inhabitants), declared that local land ownership is no longer recognized, and designated it for the development of tourism (Schuller 2014). Another notable case is along Haiti's Massif du Nord Metallogenic Belt, where the state has granted nearly 600,000 acres of land to domestic subsidiaries of Canadian and US mining companies. This land deal has been met with resistance from peasants who have long lived and worked in the region, leading to some violent conflicts (Ives 2014). These and other cases of increasing dispossession demand urgent attention, and future research on land grabbing in Haiti should consider the political and economic dynamics and social implications, including forms of resistance and risks of violent repression.

## **6.2 Concluding remarks: Pathways forward**

### *6.2.1 Belonging, Exclusion and Solidarity*

My PhD journey seems like it exists in two different universes. The disparities between my life in Dezam and London are cavernous. My son described this plainly one morning when he was contemplating the contrasting bathroom he has in London in relation to the latrine his dear friend Maylov has back in Haiti:

Mummy, Maylov has a toilet too! Well... hers doesn't have this white lid on it, so that's different. And hers doesn't have a place to sit, so that's different. And it doesn't have a house for it, so that's different too.

When I asked him what Maylov's latrine does have, his reply was that "it has sticks and a curtain."

Acknowledging the gaping inequalities between Dezam and London can be overwhelming, and grappling with how best to confront these has sometimes been paralyzing for me. My memories of Dezam generally come with a flood of emotion, sometimes with an overwhelming sense of loss and longing, though more often with feelings of angst deep in my gut. They are memories that for the most part simmer just below the surface of my consciousness and it would be dishonest not to admit that most days I prefer to forget that the suffering and struggles of my former neighbors and friends are ultimately related to my privilege. But when my kids ask of their former playmates, when a friend calls, or when I happen upon a calabash bowl that once held my rice and beans, I'm forced to confront the chronic, silent injustice of the luxuries that I enjoy (or take for granted) in Canada. It is both painful and humiliating to at once be sipping fair trade coffee in my sunlit kitchen and also remembering the circumstances of those dear to

me in Haiti – holding these two realities in my mind forces recognition that those of us in the ‘developed’ world owe our comforts, privileges, and status to those suffering in the underbelly of the global economy. I continue to struggle for answers about my role, and how to confront this injustice in some sort of meaningful way.

As I set out to conduct this research, I was driven by a strong desire to contribute to Haitian advocacy and food justice organizations by exploring the struggles and ambitions of peasant groups. When my family returned to Haiti in November 2010, one of my most cherished friends, a brilliant Haitian activist and scholar, told us that we wouldn’t last a year in Dezam. He told us plainly that the peasantry would devour us, that our difference would be impenetrable, and that our ability to tolerate rural Haiti would erode quickly. I was admittedly hostile to this prediction, though now I realize there was more truth to that than I was willing to hear at the time. I am fairly confident that I was not naïve about the deep race and class fractions in the country; but I may have been overly hopeful, starting out, that with patience and perseverance I could make more meaningful connections in Dezam than I was able to in the end. As I reflect on some of my social struggles in Dezam, to build the sort of camaraderie I had previously imagined possible, Orwell’s question following his ethnographic experience in mining communities in early 20<sup>th</sup> century England rings out loudly: “Is it ever possible to be really intimate with the working class?” (Orwell 2013 [1937], 55). He concludes, and I am loath to agree, that:

However much you like them, however interesting you find their conversation, there is always that accursed itch of class-difference, like the pea under the

princess's mattress. It is not a question of dislike or distaste, only of difference, but it is enough to make real intimacy impossible (Orwell 2013 [1937], 73).

Living in Dezam often felt like I was an onlooker of a social clique of which I could never be considered a member. I wanted to understand the struggle and be part of it. But the reality is that I was never invited.

Although the broad suspicion of and hostility towards *blan* may have been painful for me personally, it also gives me hope. I believe it was an expression of community glue and resistance to the enduring injustices people faced. This kind of 'othering', of aversion to difference, may act as a buffer against cultural incursion at the community level and perhaps as a tool to ensure solidarity in the face of further incursions and uprooting of land and livelihoods.

### 6.2.2 *Future Steps*

A core goal of this dissertation was to explore the contemporary problems facing Haiti's peasantry, and the prospects for the sorts of development policies that could improve their circumstances. As critical scholars so often wrestle with, the matter of praxis has weighed heavily on me: *what is to be done?*

I firmly believe that Haiti has the potential to reduce dramatically the extent of rural poverty and improve the state of food security if peasant farmers are better supported by a range of public policies, a stance that is aligned with many other activists, scholars, and Haitian advocacy organizations (Bell 2013; Dubois 2013; POHDH 2006). The social and environmental advantages of many small-scale farming systems are well recognized in the field of agroecology (Bello 2009; Altieri and Nicholls 2008; Weis

2007), as well as by UN agencies (UNCTAD 2013; FAO 2001b; UN 2010), global peasant organizations (Via Campesina 2000), and Haitian civil society and peasant organizations (PAPDA 2010; Claxton 2010). I have no doubts that the broad set of possibilities associated with food sovereignty offer the greatest potential to enhance stable and dignified livelihoods, food security, and poverty reduction in Haiti. This includes the need for: agrarian reform to establish a more equitable distribution of land; substantial investment in rural infrastructure and agricultural production (with a focus on improving domestically-oriented crops); policies to protect domestic agricultural markets; and the democratization and decentralization both of state power and public services. Where light manufacturing and commercial estates are pursued, there is a need for new tax and labour laws to ensure that businesses contribute meaningfully to government revenues and provide dignified wages.

But centuries of exploitation and marginalization suggest that these kinds of changes will not happen without Haitian peasants struggling for them. My encounters with many visionary and passionate peasant leaders and resolute peasants in the Artibonite Valley give me hope that peasants will continue to refuse exploitative conditions. Building a more just agro-food system in Haiti will also require action at other scales. There is a need for a fundamental overhaul of the way that international actors understand and interact with Haiti. Haiti is utterly beholden to multilateral agencies, bilateral donors, foreign investors, and an army of NGOs, and while aid, loans, and investment are all needed, the arrogance that often accompanies it must change. As has been stressed throughout this thesis, development policies and projects are typically determined from above without any local dialogue, which involves the complicity of

Haitian elites who have eagerly exploited their fellow citizens. This may sound revolutionary, but I think the path could be much more pragmatic and incremental.

At a personal level, I continue to struggle with how best to utilize my written and research contributions to assist peasant struggles, and I intend to present my published papers to the leaders of peasant movements who have so supported me through the course of my research and who can read English. I am also debating how I might summarize and translate some key findings in ways that could have a wider circulation among peasant groups in Haiti. My deep emotional, intellectual, and personal ties to Haiti remind me that I'm in a relationship with everything else on this planet, and this is something that will continue to affect my life, scholarship, and activism. I hope that through future writing, teaching, organizing, and small daily actions, I might make some contribution to repositioning people's consciousness to acknowledge their connections with others and their role in perpetuating inequality.

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(MARNDR) Online:

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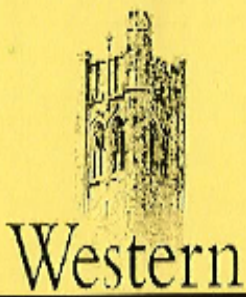
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## Appendices

## Appendix 1: Ethics Approval



**Western**

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**Use of Human Subjects - Ethics Approval Notice**

**Principal Investigator:** Dr. T. Weis

**Review Number:** 17578S

**Review Date:** November 05, 2010

**Protocol Title:** Peasant Prospects and Food Politics in Post-Earthquake Haiti

**Department and Institution:** Geography, University of Western Ontario

**Sponsor:** SSHRC-SOCIAL SCIENCE HUMANITIES RESEARCH COUNCIL

**Ethics Approval Date:** December 09, 2010

**Review Level:** Full Board

**Approved Local # of Participants:** 0

**Expiry Date:** November 30, 2012

**Documents Reviewed and Approved:** UWO Protocol, Letter of Information.

**Documents Received for Information:**

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This is to notify you that The University of Western Ontario Research Ethics Board for Non-Medical Research Involving Human Subjects (NMREB) which is organized and operates according to the Tri-Council Policy Statement: Ethical Conduct of Research Involving Humans and the applicable laws and regulations of Ontario has granted approval to the above named research study on the approval date noted above.

This approval shall remain valid until the expiry date noted above assuming timely and acceptable responses to the NMREB's periodic requests for surveillance and monitoring information. If you require an updated approval notice prior to that time you must request it using the UWO Updated Approval Request Form.

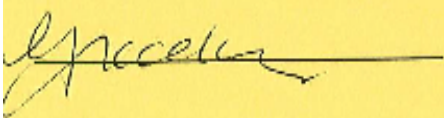
During the course of the research, no deviations from, or changes to, the study or consent form may be initiated without prior written approval from the NMREB except when necessary to eliminate immediate hazards to the subject or when the change(s) involve only logistical or administrative aspects of the study (e.g. change of monitor, telephone number). Expedited review of minor change(s) in ongoing studies will be considered. Subjects must receive a copy of the signed information/consent documentation.

Investigators must promptly also report to the NMREB:

- a) changes increasing the risk to the participant(s) and/or affecting significantly the conduct of the study;
- b) all adverse and unexpected experiences or events that are both serious and unexpected;
- c) new information that may adversely affect the safety of the subjects or the conduct of the study.

If these changes/adverse events require a change to the information/consent documentation, and/or recruitment advertisement, the newly revised information/consent documentation, and/or advertisement, must be submitted to this office for approval.

Members of the NMREB who are named as investigators in research studies, or declare a conflict of interest, do not participate in discussion related to, nor vote on, such studies when they are presented to the NMREB.



Chair of NMREB: Dr. Riley Hinson  
 FDA Ref. #: IRB 0000941

## Appendix 2: Key Informant Interview Guide

Name:

Gender:

Place of Residence:

### Questions for Political Leaders:

1. Length of time in office?
2. Were you formally elected or selected? What was this process?
3. Description your role and responsibilities.
4. Do you or have you had parents or relatives in office?
5. What are your core goals for agriculture and rural Development in the area?

### Community Leaders and Organizations

1. Number of Members?
2. Who are the key members and what are their affiliations?
3. What is the reporting structure?
4. Organizational schedule (meetings, shared resources or labour)
5. What sources of funding does your organization rely on?
6. Describe your organizational philosophy?
7. a) Describe some limitations and successes of your organization.  
b) With these in mind, how might you shape your program differently to address limitations or enhance successes?
8. What is your role in agriculture and lives of the peasantry? Describe the agricultural techniques that you promote. (Some prompts: fertilizer use, multi-cropping, crop rotation).

### Post-Earthquake and Agriculture/Food

1. Broadly speaking, discuss whether you believe agricultural plans developed post-earthquake have been appropriate. (Try to give specific examples).
2. How has the earthquake influenced agricultural landscapes and the rural poor in Haiti (or in the area)?
3. Do you feel there are divergent approaches to agricultural development in Haiti (or in the area)? Explain.
4. What was the expectation of local leaders post-earthquake? Expectation? Trepidation?
5. How has the Action Plan for National Recovery and Reconstruction 2010 been implemented in the Verette Commune?
6. Did your organization/office receive funding/aid after the earthquake? Describe what type.
7. Is there funding competition between organizations? How is this expressed?
8. Is there a pecking order among local institutions? How is this expressed?
9. Is there funding competition between zones/communes? How is this expressed?
10. Can you identify and describe some post earthquake initiatives or projects in the area:
  - a. Initiatives by Government?
  - b. Initiatives by NGOs?
  - c. Initiatives by local organizations?
11. Who are the key decision makers in projects (local institutions, CASEC/ASECs, population, NGOs? Is there local participation?

12. Describe how you envision a positive and appropriate agricultural development for rural Haiti.
13. What are the barriers to the vision you just outlined?
14. What has been the role of neoliberal reform on agriculture in Haiti?
15. How might a farmer respond to the above question?

### **Land and Community Resources**

1. Are there taxes on harvests? Customhouses? What other fees do peasants pay to the government?
2. How are water resources governed?
3. Who owns the mills, are they taxed?
4. Describe landlord/ tenant relations in the area. Are there expectations of the landlord beyond rent? (gifts? charity? celebrations? School costs?)
  - a. Has there been a decreasing tendency of the provision of mid-day meals with the commodification of agricultural labour?
5. What are the ratios of tenants to wage labourers to share tenants?
  - a. Which of these has more social prestige?
6. Has landlessness increased, stayed the same? Over what time period?
7. Describe food insecurity in the area.
  - a. How does this reveal itself? Is there malnutrition?
8. a) Does this area export any crops? Specify regions and growers.
9. Who is responsible for facilitating export agreements (wage rates, harvesting regulations)
10. What are your core goals and aspirations for agriculture in Dezam?
11. In tenancy and sharecropping relations who decides what is planted? How are the harvests and profits divided?

### **Community Culture**

1. What are the community traditions/glue that binds communities?
2. Are the internal divisions among communities sharp or few?
  - a. What are the key divisions and how are they expressed? (investigate: class/race divisions and land ownership).
  - b. What are the major conflicts in the area?
    - i. How are these expressed? (community, familial, class)
3. Are there dietary and/or agricultural links to racial/class divisions?
4. Is there a communitarian logic that is shared around certain resources i.e.) communal water, fruit -trees, outsidings of vehicles, attitudes of '*moun pa m*' (my people)?
5. How are community policies established, who are key decision makers and what are their affiliations?

### **Food Culture**

1. What are (or perhaps: can you rank) the most important factors that influence what Haitian's eat? (some prompts: socio-economic level, location, age, gender, "race")
2. Describe a typical Haitian diet.
  - a. Explain if/how this diet differs from a century ago.

3. Can you identify any linkages between Haiti's history and consumption patterns? (some prompts: the influence of slavery and colonialism, the U.S. occupation, or the neoliberal reform on the production of certain crops i.e. sugar, coffee). Explain.
4. Describe any connections between Haiti's history and social perceptions of food (prompt: social perceptions of sugar).
5. Are there any foods that are considered 'taboo' by certain population sub-groups?
6. Are there any foods that are considered superior or inferior to others? Explain.
7. Are there any dietary and agricultural preferences linked to class divisions? Are there any foods that are not 'cool' to eat in public? Are these associated with peasants?

### **Questions on Class and Inequality for Intellectuals and Peasant Leaders**

1. What are some of the predominant means by which the Haitian state and elite acquire their wealth?
2. What is the potential for a class struggle in Haiti?
3. Is the exploitation of the peasantry inherent in the capitalist system?
4. Is the average Haitian peasant class conscious?
5. What is the character of the alliance between the Haitian national bourgeoisie and the international bourgeoisie? (competition or compatibility?)
6. What is the trajectory for the Haitian peasantry? (i.e. disappearing peasantry or repeasantization?)
7. What is the status of left-leaning civil society organizations in Haiti? Is there conflict among and/or solidarity between organizations.
8. Is there funding competition between national peasant organizations? How is this expressed?
9. Are there cultural aspirations towards Westernization? What is the weight/strength of this?
10. How does Haiti's high food import dependence and aspirations to assimilate to Western culture, relate to goals of food sovereignty?

### **Community Level Questions on Peasants and Politics**

1. Are peasants in Dezam exploited? Describe. If so, by whom?
2. Are peasants discriminated against (in gest or in real instances)?
3. Is there any pride in being a peasant?
4. Can you describe some the history of peasant resistance and protest in the area? What prompts this? Examples?
5. What was the tenor of the Lavalas movement in the area before the 1st coup? 2
  - a. 2nd coup?
  - b. Was there large public support? How was this manifest?
  - c. Was the Lavalas rhetoric popular or criticized by the peasants here, and/or were rural peasants largely absent from these debates?
  - d. Is Aristide were to run for presidency again, what do you think his level of support would be in this area?

### Appendix 3: Inter-American Development Bank Key Informant Interview Guide

Name:

Gender:

Place of Residence:

Position with IDB:

Roles and Responsibilities:

**Introduction:** Some questions I have been exploring in my research are:

- The global trend towards a shrinking peasantry and ‘slumification’ in urban centers.  
Ask about:
  1. Clashes between large-scale agricultural enterprises and small holding peasants or farmers
  2. Changed and homogenized global diets, displaced traditional diets
  3. Privatization of land and market based land reforms and the advantages they provide to moneyed peasants (*gwo planté*), and agro-enterprises
  4. Trend of new agricultural export commodities (i.e. mangoes)
  5. Has the IDB brainstormed about these trends as they relate to Haiti?

**Question Lead-up:** Land tenure has been suggested as a major barrier to agricultural development in the MARNDR’s *Politique de Développement Agricole* (2010-2015, p. 15). And in IDB’s Country Strategy Paper it outlines goals to “facilitate rural land tenure regularization.” In an article in the Caribbean Journal (June 19<sup>th</sup> 2013), it mentions the recent 15 million USD grant from the IDB to Haiti’s agriculture sector, includes financing for “land tenure clarification.”

1. What does this entail?
2. Is land consolidation something on your radar? Is it something they are concerned about?
3. Do they work in the area of peasant land conflicts?
4. BID has a 20 million USD Water Management Program in the Artibonite Basin: have you thought about the impact of more valuable (irrigated) land on land conflicts?
5. Where does the IDB sit regarding debates on the future of the peasantry in general? How does this position influence its development efforts?

**Question Lead-Up:** The IDB has helped finance rural value chains by: collaborating with Coca-Cola and Technoserve in the Haiti Hope Lime-Aid project (US\$3 million); and MIF is backing a project with French development agency AFD, Nestle, Agronomists and Veterinarians without Borders and the Colombian coffee growers’ federation to restore Haiti as a premium producer and exporter.

1. What have been the successes and challenges of these projects?
2. When you worked for the CNSA you said “Ankouraje pwodiksyon dives kalite danre, se youn: men se youn gwo danje pou peyizan Ayisyen rantre nan pwodwi danre pou ekspòtasyon sèlman” (p. 13) [to encourage a diverse range of agricultural production is one thing, but it would be dangerous to encourage peasants to produce only for export]. What is your perspective on export-oriented agricultural development and the balance with providing for domestic markets?

**Question Lead Up:** When you worked for the CNSA you said “*Pa ka gen sekirite alimantè nan peyi Dayiti si pa gen ogmantasyon nan pwodiksyon manje...premye objektif*”

*la ta dwe vize pou ogmante pwodiksyon manje...mete plis manje disponib, dezyem n ap ogmante rantrè lajan ann men peyizàn yo.*” [There will not be food security in Haiti if there is not an increase in food production. The first objectives there should be a vision to increase food production...make more food available, then we’ll increase the earnings of the peasants].

1. Do you still agree?
2. This logic seems to adhere to the IDB country strategy paper which aims has a goal for agriculture in the Artibonite and the North to develop export crops for export to the Dominican and to CARICOM countries.
3. To clarify- does this mean production for competitive advantage will enable enough capital to spend on other products?
4. Is the inevitable gas price increase and depleting global petrol reserves on IDB’s radar? (in terms of influencing export market feasibility?)
5. In Dezam, peasants have been reluctant to form cells for Technoserve. What model of production for export does IDB advocate?

**Question Lead-Up:** In the IDB Haiti Country Strategy Paper it says: “NSG interventions are planned with SCF supporting agribusiness projects with new production technologies” (p21) and IIC focusing on agricultural export promotion. In addition, IDB has a US\$17.25 million program towards micro, small and medium-sized enterprises: to include use of a business incubator and the creation of "micro-parks" that foster micro, small, and medium-size enterprises linked to industry, tourism, and agribusiness value chain. The IDB says it will “include small-farmers”- how?

1. Can you provide an example of an agri-business that you support?
2. How do you balance supporting agri-business vs. peasants? Is peasant differentiation and class conflict on your radar at the IDB?
3. Do you work with Agro-Service

**Question Lead-Up:** In the past, Haitian exports have met the needs of international markets (predominantly the U.S., Canada and Europe), and the results have been mixed (i.e. post WWI decrease in sisal market, floundering rubber plantations under SHADA, plummeting world coffee prices in the late 1980s).

1. Currently the NAIP (2010) hopes to focus on mangoes, does IDB support this idea?
2. IDB-financed Agriculture Intensification Program aims to increase: improved seeds, fertilization, pest control, and other technologies. (in the Artibonite, Petite Rivye)
3. Is the potential dependency of Haitian farmers on agro-inputs on IDB’s radar?

**Question Lead-Up:** As with most of the Caribbean region, the cultural effects of slavery in Haiti are persistent and complex, as the racial stratification and accompanying violent oppression and psychological abuse produced deeply-rooted ideas of inferiority along with aspirations to assimilate to the planters culture. However, for most social mobility has proved elusive, I suspect one of results of this has been that the consumption of ‘prestigious goods’ has come to be seen, for many, as a means to symbolic mobility. I suspect ideas of cultural inferiority have not only infused consumption patterns, but have also devalued agricultural work and peasant livelihoods. Ie. “*Pitimi pa monte tab*”

1. Are there ‘racialized’ hierarchies of food in Haiti?
2. Is there (to some degree) ‘culinary colonialism’?

3. Do Haiti's food hierarchies, and consumption patterns interfere with the core goals of food sovereignty?
  - Prompts: Food hierarchies: spaghetti vs. Mayi Moulén, Rice-mayi-pitimi hierarchy, bonbon siwo vs. bonbon sél).

#### Appendix 4: MARNDR Additional Questions To Interview Guide

**Question Lead-Up:** The *Politique de Developpement Agricole* PNA (2010-2025) mentions a phenomenon of “*disparition de produits traditionnels*” (p. 11). This is a phenomenon that is consistent with other Latin American and Caribbean countries. As with most other LA/Caribbean country policies, the PDA (2010-2015) discusses the influence of free markets policies (including *d’Ajustement Structurel Renforcé*), decrease of preferential agreements (*l’Organisation mondiale du Commerce- OMC*) as depleting domestic production.

1. Has the MARNDR discussed the possibility of cultural aspirations towards the consumption of imported goods? Is this something on their radar?

**Question Lead-up:** Land tenure is presented in the PDNA (2010-2025) as a key limitation to realizing Haiti’s agro-productive capacity. Likewise, in the Haitian National Agricultural Investment Plan (p. 3),<sup>47</sup> The PARDN suggests land tenure regulations will aim to protect private property and to “facilitate the advancement of large farms” (PARDN) and enterprises (with a focus on commercial orchard-style mango production (NAIP).

1. What will the implications of this policy be for *ti peyizan*?
2. Have you witnessed land consolidation for large-scale agriculture?
3. What is MARDNR’s role in managing land conflict?

**Question Lead-up:** The PDNA suggests that the national production of Haiti is insufficient to meet the countries demand (p. 7) and goes so far as to say there is a threat of “*nettement dependant des importations de produits alimentaires.*”

1. Is it possible for Haiti to feed itself (in the future)? (increased irrigation, changed diets, tariffs on imports?)

**Question Lead-Up:** The PDNA (2010-2025) mentions agricultural initiatives should include exportation of: mangoes, plantains, avocados, coffee, cacao, and fruits (p. 20).

1. How will export-oriented agricultural programs influence total import dependence?
2. What style/model would this adopt? (i.e. large farms, small-scale).
3. Has the MARNDR thought about which type of agriculturalists would benefit from this?
4. Is the potential dependency of Haitian farmers on agro-inputs or petrol on MARNDR’s radar?

**Question Lead-Up:** The PDNA (2010-2025) mentions food sovereignty: *La réduction de la dépendance alimentaire dans une perspective de souveraineté alimentaire* (p. 16).

1. How does MARNDR understand food sovereignty?
2. How does this relate to the objectives of increasing: modern agricultural system based on *l’efficacité et l’efficience et la promotion des entreprises agricoles*”? (p. 17).

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<sup>47</sup> L’insécurité foncière constitue un blocage important à l’aménagement des exploitations agricoles. (HNAIP p. 3).



## Appendix 5: USAID Additional Questions to Interview Guide

**Question Lead-Up:** The USAID project WINNER, “brings together farmers, NGOs, agribusinesses, and government actors to increase productivity and post-harvest efficiency”. “WINNER uses a value chain approach for focus crops in the productive plains.” Goals to -increase market driven access to inputs (seeds, fertilizers, technologies), post-harvest operations, establishes public-private-producer partnerships (PPPPs). Agriculture Intensification Program aims to increase: improved seeds, fertilization, pest control, and other technologies (in the Artibonite, Petite Rivye).

1. Has WINNER now transitioned into Feed the Future North/West?
2. Which value chains? Mangoes only? Is this project (WINNER) linked to Haiti Hope?
3. What have been the farmers’ perspectives? (FTFW reached more than 30,000 farmers in Cul-de-sac and St. Mark areas.)
4. Cooperates with which agribusinesses?
5. Is the potential dependency of Haitian farmers on agro-inputs on the IDB radar?
6. Where are the seeds sourced?

**Question Lead-Up:** Haiti Hope: U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), today announced that USAID will provide an initial contribution of \$1 million to the Haiti Hope Project, a public-private initiative that aims to develop a sustainable mango industry in Haiti.

1. What have been the challenges/successes of Haiti Hope Project?
2. Who is meant to benefit from this project?

**Question Lead-Up:** Land tenure has been suggested as a major barrier to agricultural development in the MARNDR’s *Politique de Développement Agricole* (2010-2015, p. 15). And in the IDB Country Strategy Paper it will “facilitating rural land tenure regularization.” In an article in the Caribbean Journal (June 19<sup>th</sup> 2013), it mentions the recent 15 million USD grant from the IDB to Haiti’ agriculture sector, includes financing for “land tenure clarification.”

1. Is land consolidation something on your radar? Is it something the USAID is concerned about?

**Question Lead-Up:** The USAID works with MARNDR The new Feed the Future North is a five-year, US\$88 million project that will focus on expanding farmers’ yields of primarily five key crops—corn, beans, rice, plantains and cocoa.

1. Are these for domestic consumption or for export?
2. What is your perspective on export-oriented agricultural development and the balance with providing for domestic markets?
3. A World Food Programme representative mentioned that they are trying to transition to local purchasing. Is USAID doing this too?
4. What is the USAID long-term commitment to Haiti? What will be the trajectory of programming in agriculture and rural development?

## Appendix 6: Food Survey Participant Sample

<b>Name of Abitasyon</b>			
Age 18-29			
Men	PM	Participant Name	Participant Name
	PwM	Participant Name	Participant Name
	M	Participant Name	Participant Name
Women	PM	Participant Name	Participant Name
	PwM	Participant Name	Participant Name
	M	Participant Name	Participant Name
Age 30-49			
Men	PM	Participant Name	Participant Name
	PwM	Participant Name	Participant Name
	M	Participant Name	Participant Name
Women	PM	Participant Name	Participant Name
	PwM	Participant Name	Participant Name
	M	Participant Name	Participant Name
Age 50+			
Men	PM	Participant Name	Participant Name
	PwM	Participant Name	Participant Name
	M	Participant Name	Participant Name
Women	PM	Participant Name	Participant Name
	PwM	Participant Name	Participant Name
	M	Participant Name	Participant Name

\*Categories: *Plis Mwayen*- PM (an individual of some means); *Plis w mwens* – PwM (an individual who gets by); *Malere* – M (Very Poor)

### **Appendix 7: Study #1 Community Member Survey**

**A. Baseline Information:**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Place of Residence: \_\_\_\_\_

Age: \_\_\_\_\_

Activity/Occupation: \_\_\_\_\_ Parents: Occupation: \_\_\_\_\_

Level achieved in school? \_\_\_\_\_ Literate? Yes / No

How many pieces of land: \_\_\_\_\_ Land quantity *nan kawo* [carreaux]? \_\_\_\_\_

Do you own animals? Yes / No

Which animals and how many? \_\_\_\_\_

Where do you access water? Tiyo Piblik [Public Pipe]  Tiyo Lakay [Pipe to lakou] Achte [purchased]  Rivyè/ Sous [from a river or spring] 

Do you have any medical conditions that influence what you eat? Yes / No

Marital status? Yes / No How many people live at your home?: \_\_\_\_\_

Is your courtyard for your family alone or shared? \_\_\_\_\_

Description of your roof: Tòl [Corrugated Tin]  Dal [Cement]  Pay [leaves/vines] 

Lòt [Other] \_\_\_\_\_

Description of your house: Wòch ak tè [Mud and Rock]  Blòk [Concrete Bricks] 

Lòt [Other] \_\_\_\_\_

**B. Food Recall Survey** [see attached food recall survey]

-Participants list on a separate sheet the foods and locations they ate in the 24 hour period previous to interview

### C. Food Frequency Survey

	Frequency Consumed: 1=Always 2=Often 3=Sometimes 4=Never	Where does it come from: 1)Land/home 2)Street restaurant 3) Market 4) Supermarket		Frequency Consumed: 1=Always 2=Often 3=Sometimes 4=Never	Where does it come from: 1)Land/home 2)Street restaurant 3) Market 4)Supermarket
TSC Rice			Milk from can		
Miami Rice			Powdered Milk		
Corn flour			Cows milk		
Cornmeal			Coffee		
Sorghum					
Noodle casserole			Black Beans		
Spaghetti			Butter Beans		
Wheat flour porridge					
Plantain porridge			Local Chicken		
Cornflakes			Imported Chicken		
Bread			Local eggs		
Stew			Imported Eggs		
Oatmeal			Goat		
Cornmeal Porridge			Beef		
Cassava			Fish		
Boiled Plantain			Salted fish		
Breadfruit			Hotdog		
Sweet Potato			Sausage		
Sweet bread			Magi		
Cheezy			Mayonnaise		
Cracker			Tomato Paste		
Fried snacks			Ketchup		
Cheese			Margarine		
Bottled juice			White Sugar		
Pop			Brown Sugar		
Natural Juice			Rapadou		
Sweety			Canned Foods		

**D. Other Questions:**

1. Yesterday did you consume more or less than usual? \_\_\_\_\_

2. Do you associate any foods with *blan*? Describe.  
\_\_\_\_\_

3. Do you associate any foods with the rich? Describe.  
\_\_\_\_\_

4. Do you associate any foods with rural dwellers? Describe.  
\_\_\_\_\_

5. Do you associate any foods with the poor? Describe.  
\_\_\_\_\_

6. Do you associate any foods with urbanites? Describe.  
\_\_\_\_\_

**D.2 Class the following foods, which is “cooler”.**

a) Cornmeal _____	b) Butter Beans _____	c) Oatmeal _____
Rice _____	Black Beans _____	Cornflour porridge _____
Sorghum _____	Red Beans _____	Plantain porridge _____
Corn _____		Wheat flour porridge _____

d) Cornflakes _____	e) Cassava & P/B _____	f) Natural Juice _____	g) Crackers _____
Cassava & P/B _____	Bread & PB _____	Pop _____	Sweet Bread _____
Egg Sandwich _____	Fine Sorghum _____	Sweety _____	Cheezie _____
Fried snacks _____			

h) Cornmeal porridge _____	i) Yellow rice _____	j) Plantain/sweet potato _____
Corn flour porridge _____	Miami rice _____	Cornmeal _____
Oatmeal _____	White Rice _____	Spaghetti _____

## Appendix 8: Study #2 Community Member Survey

### A. Baseline Information

1. Number of people in house? \_\_\_\_\_ 2. Number of rooms in house? \_\_\_\_\_
3. Are you housing/caring for children other than your own?      Wi                      No
4. Have you sent your children to live with others?      Wi                      No
5. What is your primary source of revenue? Land       Business            Salary
6. Do you own a: Motorcycle       Bicycle       Vehicle

### B. Land and work situation

1. How many pieces of land do you own? \_\_\_\_\_ 2. How much (carreaux)?: \_\_\_\_\_
2. How long does it take to get to each piece of land (hours)? 1 \_\_\_\_\_ 2 \_\_\_\_\_ 3 \_\_\_\_\_
3. Do you rent out/lease your land seasonally?      Yes                      No
  - If yes,
    - a. How long is the contract? \_\_\_\_\_
    - b. How much land (in carreaux)? \_\_\_\_\_
    - c. What is the leasing price? \_\_\_\_\_
    - d. Is it a fixed price?      Yes                      No
    - e. Does the price change if the harvest wasn't good?
      - Yes                      No
    - f. Do you lend money to the tenant or give food if they need it before the harvest?
4. Do you rent (buy a season of land) from anyone?      Yes                      No
  - If yes,
    - a. How long is your contract? \_\_\_\_\_
    - b. How much land? \_\_\_\_\_
    - c. What is the price? \_\_\_\_\_
    - d. Is the price fixed?      Yes                      No
    - e. Does the price change or alter if it is a bad harvest?      Yes                      No
    - f. Does the landlord lend you food or money if the harvest is bad or late? \_\_\_\_\_
5. Do you work as a labourer on land?      Yes                      No
  - What arrangement do you have for that work: \_\_\_\_\_
  - a) Sharecropping (What percentage of the crop do you need to give to the landlord)
  - b) Daily labourer
  - If yes, is food included in the arrangement?      Yes                      No
    - What is the normal price for a day of work? What is the length of time? \_\_\_\_\_
6. Do you "hold people's" land (i.e. if one owes the other money and offers land instead until the debt can be repaid)?      Yes                      No
  - If yes, what quantity of land? \_\_\_\_\_ (carreaux)
  - If yes, how much money did you get in return? \_\_\_\_\_
7. Do you have someone else holding your land?      Yes                      No

If yes, how much land? \_\_\_\_\_[carreaux]  
 If yes, how much money do you owe to get your land back? \_\_\_\_\_

8. Do you take care of others animals? Yes No  
 a. What arrangement do you have for this work? Are you paid in cash? Yes No  
 Are you paid in future animals ? Yes No  
 Other? \_\_\_\_\_

### C. Production

1. Describe your harvests from last year

Month	Production	To sell=1 To eat=2 For both=3
May		
June		
July		
August		
September		
October		
November		
December		
January		
February		
March		
April		

- 2.

Harvest	How much have you harvested	Greater Harvest (P), Less (M) Equal (E) to Last year?
Rice		
Corn		
Sorghum		
Sweet potato		
Beans		

3. Do you work the land more to sell (=1) or to consume (=2)? \_\_\_\_\_  
 4. What harvest do you sell to find the biggest economic return? \_\_\_\_\_  
 5. What crops are it difficult to sell and get a return? \_\_\_\_\_  
 6. Which crops re produced more for selling? \_\_\_\_\_  
 7. Which crops to gardeners produce for subsistence? \_\_\_\_\_  
 8. What do the large landowners produce? \_\_\_\_\_  
 9. What do small peasants produce? \_\_\_\_\_  
 10. Do you sell crops to send overseas? Yes No

If yes, which? \_\_\_\_\_  
 What price do you receive for these? \_\_\_\_\_

#### D. Agricultural Practices:

1. Land use:

a) Chemical Fertilizer	Always	Often	Sometimes	Never
b) Herbicide/insecticide	Always	Often	Sometimes	Never
c) Compost	Always	Often	Sometimes	Never

2. What types of gardeners use chemical fertilizers? \_\_\_\_\_

3. Do you want to use chemical inputs? Yes No

4. Do you want to use compost? Yes No

5. What type of seeds do you use?

a) Seed stock	Yes	No	
b) Purchased seed	Yes	No	
c) Seeds gifted from an organization	Yes	No	
d) Shared seeds	Yes	No	
e) Hybrid	Yes	No	I don't know it
f) GMO	Yes	No	I don't know it

6. What do you do with your post-harvest compost? \_\_\_\_\_

7. Do you think the agricultural techniques of farmers in your area has changed since:

a) 10 years ago? Yes No

How: \_\_\_\_\_

b) 50 years ago? Yes No

How: \_\_\_\_\_

c) 100 years ago? Yes No

How: \_\_\_\_\_

#### E. Agricultural Support

1. Are you a member of a peasant organization? Yes No

If yes, site

them? \_\_\_\_\_

2. Where/how do you find inputs for your land? (seeds, seedlings, fertilizer, tools, compost) \_\_\_\_\_

3. Do you receive credit/loans from someone or an organization that allows you to work your land? Yes No

If yes.... Which organization? \_\_\_\_\_

How much are you allowed to borrow? \_\_\_\_\_

Interest rate? \_\_\_\_\_

If no....

That means you support your land yourself? Yes No

You get seeds yourself? Yes No

**F. Agricultural plans/Post-earthquake reconstruction**

1. Did you received aid after the earthquake? Yes No

If yes, from who? \_\_\_\_\_

When? \_\_\_\_\_

2. After the earthquake did you receive IDPs at your home? Yes No  
 3. Did your household consumption change after the earthquake? Yes No

If yes, how? \_\_\_\_\_

4. Did what you decide to grow on your land change after the earthquake?  
 Yes No

If yes, how? \_\_\_\_\_

**G. Food Associations:**

*Mete: Haitian=1 American=2 Dominican=3 European=4 Don't know = (5)*

- a) Pop \_\_\_\_\_ b) Coffee \_\_\_\_\_ c) Magi \_\_\_\_\_ d) Bread \_\_\_\_\_  
 e) Casserole \_\_\_\_\_ f) Spagetti \_\_\_\_\_ g) Cornflakes \_\_\_\_\_ h) Oatmeal \_\_\_\_\_  
 i) Cheezy \_\_\_\_\_ j) Cheese \_\_\_\_\_ k) Sugar \_\_\_\_\_ l) Tomato Paste \_\_\_\_\_  
 m) Rapadou \_\_\_\_\_ n) Salted Fish \_\_\_\_\_ o) Sausage \_\_\_\_\_

**H. Class the food in order of the "coolest"?**

- a) Miami rice \_\_\_\_\_ b) Butter beans \_\_\_\_\_ c) Imported chicken \_\_\_\_\_ d) White sugar \_\_\_\_\_  
 TCS Rice \_\_\_\_\_ Black beans \_\_\_\_\_ Local chicken \_\_\_\_\_ Brown sugar \_\_\_\_\_  
 Chela Rice \_\_\_\_\_ Miami beans \_\_\_\_\_

- e) Salted Fish \_\_\_\_\_ g) Canned milk \_\_\_\_\_  
 Beef \_\_\_\_\_ Cow's milk \_\_\_\_\_  
 Goat \_\_\_\_\_ Powdered milk \_\_\_\_\_  
 Chicken \_\_\_\_\_

**H. Class the agricultural practice that is more prestigious?**

- a) Chemical Fertilizer \_\_\_\_\_ b) Traditional Seed \_\_\_\_\_  
 Compost \_\_\_\_\_ Hybrid \_\_\_\_\_  
 GMO \_\_\_\_\_

**I. Which do you think is preferable:**

- a) Chemical Fertilizer v. Compost  
 Why?

- 
- b) Manual labour v. Tractor

Why?

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c) Monoculture v. poly culture  
Why?

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### **J. Agricultural Recommendations, Food security for Dezam/Haiti**

1) Where do you think the decisions that influence the agricultural sector in Dezam are made?

- a) Land owner
- b) Local authorities
- d) Local organizations
- c) NGOs
- d) International organizations
- e) Other

1. How do these decisions affect your land and agricultural decisions?

2. What might help you cultivate your land better?

3. What is your biggest barrier in agriculture?

### **K. Life aspirations and satisfaction**

1. In your life are you (circle one): Fulfilled Satisfied Not content Miserable

Explain: \_\_\_\_\_

2. Are you satisfied with your agricultural work and production? Yes No

Explain.

3. What objectives do you have for your life?

4. What objectives do you have for your children?

5. If you had more money what is the first thing you would do?

6. In terms of food, what is the necessary minimum for a person to consume in a day?

Describe.

### **L. Food recall survey**

1. Did you consume more, less or the same as what you would eat in a normal day? \_\_\_\_\_

	Manje/Bwason	Ajoute?
1		
2		
3		
4		
5		

### Appendix 9: Peasant Groups Represented in Caracol Focus Group

Acronym	Name	# of Members
ADTC	Asosyasyon pou la defans travayé Karakol (The Association for Defending Worker Rights in Caracol)	N/A
AFK	Asosyasyon Fanm Karrefour Jesu pou Devlopman (Women's Association of Jesus Intersection for Development)	70
BMAC	Brigad Maritime an Aksyon de Karaol (Maritime Action Brigade of Caracol)	70
KFG	Kredi Fanm Gaskil (Women's Small Credit of Gaskil)	55 (all female membership)
KOSIK	Kodinasyon Kominal (Communale Coordination)	N/A
MGDK	Mouvman Jenn pou Devlopman Karfou Jesu (Youth Movement for Development of Jesus Intersection)	27
MOPAK	Mouvman Peyizan pou Avansman Karakol (Peasant Movement to Advance Caracol)	36
MOREK A	Mouvman pou Rebatè yon Karakol (Movement to Rebuild Caracol)	63
OBDK	Oganizasyon Basaline pou Devlopman Karakol (Basalin Organization for Development of Caracol)	65

## **Appendix 10: Caracol Interview Guide**

### **Main questions:**

1. How did local actors (residents, representatives of associations, and local politicians) receive the project? With hope and enthusiasm, trepidation, cynicism, curiosity?
2. What were their expectations?
3. Did local actors want to get involved in the development of the zone? This question is aimed at understanding whether rural Haitians are glad to get any kind of development at all, so they accept it. Or whether they are selective and want input into what comes into their community.
4. Was the state a facilitator of local democracy, ie: devising participatory mechanism, eliciting local views, dialoguing with local residents and those affected by the development.
5. How did Haiti's formal political institutions CASEC and ASECS inform plans for Caracol's development?

### **Some specific questions that will help answer the above:**

1. Were there opportunities to debate the project in public settings? For instance, to question the parameters.... issues such as transportation, housing, and services that would be brought into in the area.
2. Of the interchanges between planners and locals that did actually take place ... as insignificant as they might have been, they deserve to be chronicled; and
3. What aspects of the Caracol development raised concerns?
4. Was there discontent displayed? (how did locals feel? Gauge the weight -- ie number and status of individuals-- of those in favour and those against through interviews and focus groups)
5. Was discontent diffused? If so, by whom? The state, private sector, strong local non-governmental actors?
6. Was there collective resistance, if not was it prevented by specific state strategies (ie: lack of publicity, lack of platform for disseminating information)
7. Were workshops organized to discuss (share, consult allow for participation) the project?
8. Did residents receive feedback or follow up when they asked for more information or made suggestions?
9. If workshops were organized by the developers or the central government, how were they organized? By theme (housing), or by community, or sector (farmers)?
10. Was there genuine consultation or were there "therapy session"? [Officials: We'll listen, now don't you feel better?]
11. Was there openness or opacity around the parameters of project? How were these manifested?
12. Was there an identifiable and sustainable link between the residents and one or several key persons in local government?
13. Was there an identifiable and sustainable link between local politicians and national politicians in Port au Prince?
- 14.

**Some things to listen for when listening to respondents:**

\*How are historical legacies present in this case?

\*Does there appear to be a mistrust of local political institutions and actors? How do citizens view local vs. national politicians?

\*Use the interviews to help us understand how the context (culture, history, rural models of authority, where are the "legitimate" actors in the communities, assuming that groups and individuals struggle to establish that legitimacy; what does clientelistic forms of participation among the popular classes look like (which is a part of everyday life in Haiti.

## Curriculum Vitae

### EDUCATION

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- 2009- Doctor of Philosophy, Geography, Migration and Ethnic Relations - University of Western Ontario, London, ON
- Migration and Ethnic Relations Collaborative Interdisciplinary Program
  - Specialization: Development Geography; Political Ecology; Political Economy of Global Food Systems; Race, Class and Colonialism; Latin America and the Caribbean
- 2006 Master of Arts Geography – University of Waterloo, Waterloo, ON
- Specialization: International Development; Hazards; Vulnerability analysis
  - Dissertation: The Impact of Governance on Disaster Vulnerability
- 2004 Honors Bachelor of Arts (First Class) – Brock University, St. Catharines, ON
- Double Major: English Literature and Human Geography

### LANGUAGE SKILLS

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- English - Spoken, written and reading (native proficiency)
- Haitian Kreyòl – Spoken, written, and reading (bi-lingual proficiency)
- French- Reading and conversational (working proficiency)
- Spanish- Reading and conversational (limited working proficiency)

### PEER REVIEWED PUBLICATIONS

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- Steckley, M. and Doberstein, B. 2010. Tsunami survivors? Perspectives on vulnerability and vulnerability reduction: evidence from Koh Phi Phi Don and Khao Lak, Thailand. *Disasters* 35(3): 465-487.
- Steckley M, Shamsie, Y. 2015. Manufacturing Corporate Landscapes: The case of agrarian displacement and food (in)security in Haiti. *Third World Quarterly* 36(1): 179-197.

### IN REVIEW

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- Steckley M. *In Review*. Eating Up the Social Ladder: How dietary aspirations limit prospects for food sovereignty in Haiti. *Agriculture and Human Values*.

### AWARDS & FELLOWSHIPS

---

- Great Ideas for Teaching Award. University of Western Ontario Teaching Support Centre. (January 2015)
- Doctoral School in International Development. The Canadian Association for the Study of International Development (CASID). (November 10-12<sup>th</sup> 2014)

- SSHRC's Research for a Better Life Storyteller Final Five Winner (May 2014)
- SSHRC's Research for a Better Life Storyteller Award (March 2014)
- Joseph-Armand Bombardier-CGS SSHRC Doctoral Award (2010- 2014)
- International Development Research Centre (IDRC) Doctoral Research Award (2010-2013)
- Canada Community of Practice in Ecosystem Approaches to Health (CoPEH-Canada) Summer Workshop and Field School (Declined) (2010)
- Ontario Graduate Scholarship (OGS) (2009-2010)
- Migration and Ethnic Relations Scholarship, Western University (2009)
- Western Graduate Research Scholarship (2009-2014)
- Canadian Corps University Partnership Program Award, Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA)/Association of Universities and Colleges of Canada (AUCC) (September-December 2005)
- Canadian Association of Geographers Book Prize for highest academic standing in the Department of Geography graduating class (2004)

## BOOK REVIEW

---

Steckley M. (*forthcoming* 2015). Review of Winson, A. (2013). *The Industrial Diet: The Degradation of Food and the Struggle for Healthy Eating*. *Canadian Journal of Development Studies*. UBS & NYU Press.

## CONFERENCE PRESENTATIONS

---

Steckley, M. 2015. Peasant balances, Neoliberalism, and the Stunted Growth of Non-Traditional Agro-exports in Haiti. In session: Geographies of Food and Agriculture. American Association of Geographers Annual Conference. Chicago, IL. April 19<sup>th</sup>-25<sup>th</sup>.

Steckley, M. 2014. Eating White foods to escape Black identities: the case of Haiti. SSHRC Impact Awards Ceremony. Ottawa, ON, November 3.

Steckley, M. 2014. Eating Up the Social Ladder: Dietary aspirations and prospects for food sovereignty in Haiti. In session: Food Sovereignty Across the Globe. Agriculture Annual Conference for the Study of Food and Society (ASFS) and Agriculture, Food and Human Values (AFHVS): Collaboration and Innovation Across the Food System. University of Vermont. Burlington, VT, June 18-22.

Steckley, M. 2014. SSHRC Storytellers Final Five Winner. Congress of the Humanities and Social Sciences, Storytellers Showcase. St. Catharines, ON, May 26.

Steckley, M. 2014. CHAIR: Manufacturing Corporate Landscapes: The case of agrarian displacement and food (in)security in Haiti. In session: Food Sovereignty and Security. Congress of the Humanities and Social Sciences, Canadian Association of Geographers Annual Conference, St. Catharines, ON, May 23-30.

Steckley, M. 2014. Agriculture in and beyond the Haitian Catastrophe. In session: The End of Peasant Revolutions Peasant Movements in a Global Corporate World. American Association of Geographers Annual Conference, Tampa, FL, April 8-12.

Steckley, M. 2008. Implications of the Global Food Crisis in Haiti: Socio-economic barriers to alternative local food systems. Paper presented at the Measuring Impact as Faith-Based Agencies: Global Food Crisis, Bolton, ON, October 22-25.

Steckley, M. 2006. Assisting waste picking communities to add value to recyclables: towards a general model for development aid agencies and NGOs. Canadian Association of African Studies Health, Poverty and Development Conference, Montreal, QC, April 21-24.

#### POSTER PRESENTATIONS

---

2014. Peasant Prospects and Food Politics in Haiti. Shaping Scientific Solutions at Western Interdisciplinary Communities Western Science Interdisciplinary Research Showcase. London ON. Western University. November 27<sup>th</sup> 2014.

#### EDITORIAL ACTIVITIES

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2013 Reviewer for (2013) “Fault Lines: Views Across Haiti’s Divide” by Beverly Bell

#### TEACHING CONTRIBUTIONS

---

Innovations in teaching: 3-minute Teach. Winter Conference on Teaching. Teaching Support Centre, Western University. January 24 2015.

Making Sense of Qualitative Data: the muddiness of ethnography, coding and triangulation. 2014. Guest Lecture in Qualitative Methods. Department of Geography, Western University. November 24.

#### TEACHING ASSISTANTSHIPS

---

Global Agriculture and Food Systems (2015); Environment and Development Challenges (2014), Conservation and Development (2014), Geographies of Latin America and the Caribbean (2013; 2009), Environment, Economy and Society (2013), Qualitative Methods (2009), Geographies of Canada and the United States (2005), Economic Geography (2004), Geographies of Canada (2004)

#### MEMBERSHIPS

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Canadian Association of Geographers  
 American Association of Geographers  
 Canadian Association for the Study of International Development  
*Kore Pwodiksyon Lokal* (Support Local Production)

## FIELD RESEARCH EXPERIENCE

---

- November 2010- July 2013    Doctoral field research  
Location: Dezam, Haiti
- January-March 2013            Research Associate in collaboration with Dr. Yasmine Shamsie of the Political Science Department at Wilfrid Laurier University.  
Location: Caracol, Haiti.
- September -October 2006      Research Associate in collaboration with Dr. Brent Doberstein of the Department of Geography at the University of Waterloo.  
Project Title: Enhancing economic returns from waste picking activities in S.E. Asian cities.  
Locations: Phnom Penh, Cambodia  
Denpasar, Indonesia
- September- December 2005    MA field research  
Location: Khao Lak and Koh Phi Phi Don, Thailand

## RELATED VOLUNTEER AND WORK EXPERIENCE

---

- 2015                            Evaluator for the SSHRC Research for a Better life Storytelling Competition 2015
- 2013                            PSAC 610 The Local Teaching Assistant Union Steward  
Western University London, Ontario
- 2010- 2013                  Disaster Response and Community Development Worker - Mennonite Central Committee  
Dezam, Haiti
- 2007-2009                  Policy Analyst/Advocacy Officer- Mennonite Central Committee  
Port-au-Prince, Haiti
- 2004                            Research Assistant- University of Waterloo, Department of Geography.  
Project: Building a Knowledge Database for Transportation Geographies in Developing Countries