INVESTIGATING THE CUBAN REVOLUCIÓN AGRÍCOLA AS A MODEL FOR THE POST-‘PEAK OIL’ AGE

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INVESTIGATING THE CUBAN REVOLUCIÓN AGRÍCOLA AS A MODEL FOR THE POST-‘PEAK OIL’ AGE

By

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DECLARATION

I, Lisa Weideman (209090275), hereby declare that the dissertation for Master of Arts: Media Studies (Research) is my own work and that it has not previously been submitted for assessment or completion of any postgraduate qualification to another University or for another qualification.

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Summary

In this dissertation, the socio-ecological transformations that occurred during Cuba's *Revolución Agrícola* are explored, against the backdrop of the historical subalternisation of the country as a consequence of Spanish and American imperialism, and in relation to the continuing subalternisation of the country and its people through the neoliberal mass media. To contextualize such exploration, the origins of large-scale privatization of common land, and the subsequent process of urbanization in the West, are investigated, before Cuba's similar developmental path – as a result of Spanish colonialism, U.S. imperialism, and communist influence – is detailed. Thereafter, the way in which Cuba established an alternative food paradigm, characterised by local, communal, and urban production during the country's 'Special Period' in the 1990s, is discussed, with a view to illustrating how this eco-socialist model of food production, in both rural and urban areas, led to new relations between people and nature. This Cuban model is then posited as a socio-ecologically sustainable model of food production, deserving of the attention of communities around the world, who seek to gain a degree of autonomy from neoliberal agribusiness. Conversely, the efforts of mainstream neoliberal mass media to silence the immensely positive characteristics of the revolution are also investigated, and framed in terms of the historical subjugation of Cuban voices in the American mass media, and the contemporary marginalisation of the country and its people in the neoliberal mass media. Finally, the dissertation concludes by examining the alternative media response, on the part of several prominent Cubans and those sympathetic to their cause, to bring attention to the value of the socio-ecological transformations that have occurred on the island, against the backdrop of various theorisations of the importance of alternative media platforms as a radical counterforce to neoliberal mass media hegemony.

Key words: Cuba, *Revolución Agrícola*, eco-socialism, alternative media, neoliberal hegemony, urban farming

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Introduction

The present and the ensuing decades will constitute a defining era for humanity. It is during these years that choices concerning not simply the developmental trajectory of modern society, but also the possibility of existence beyond the reserves of the fossil fuels we have come to rely on, will have to be made. And while neoliberalism continues to push societies towards ever higher levels of accumulation and extraction, people who recognise the unsustainable character of the status quo are exploring alternative life systems; systems which emphasise the importance of *regeneration* and *resilience* in order to secure the future of human societies. These alternative systems necessitate the re-formation of strong partnerships between humans, and between humans and nature, particularly in the cities. In this regard, because of the growing number of people who rely on cities to provide their basic needs – not least of all food – the sustainability of urban spaces has become an issue of significant debate among contemporary theorists. Many of them posit that cities, which rely heavily upon oil to operate, must be transformed to accommodate the era of food scarcity that will surely accompany declines in fossil fuels, and/or occur as a result of unpredictable weather patterns. But for cities to adopt this new trajectory, a profound shift in current socio-economic and socio-ecological perspectives must take place, which will require cities to become spaces of community rather than places of alienated individualism, and domains of regenerative activities rather than rapacious extractivism.

Importantly, such transformations are not unheard of in the contemporary era; in fact, some communities have already undergone such changes, and Cuba arguably comprises an excellent case in point. The island's serious fuel shortages in the early 1990s resulted in the collapse of its industrial agricultural system, which in turn precipitated an agricultural revolution, particularly in the urban areas, that holds important lessons for the rest of the world concerning the challenges of initiating the above paradigm shift. It is with this in mind that, in this dissertation, the extent to which the Cuban *Revolución Agrícola* could serve as a model for urban socio-ecological transformations in the global North will be examined, along with possible reasons why Cuba's revolutionary urban farming practices have not been more widely and positively documented in the mainstream neoliberal mass media.

To this end, Chapter One will explore the various socio-economic and socio-ecological changes that took place as a consequence of the Industrial Revolution in Britain, and which ultimately gave birth to the industrialization of agriculture from which Cuba had to extract itself. That is, as the Industrial Revolution swept through Britain, it brought with it many

changes in production, which necessitated a re-orientation of societal values and perspectives. In short, the significant scientific and technological breakthroughs of that time nursed a new worldview that valorised capital accumulation and new concepts such as the industrial capitalist 'economy.' With a view to elucidating these societal transformations, the four principal features of the Industrial Revolution, namely the emergence of the market economy, the factory system, the concept of national income, and rapid technological advances, will be discussed, against the theoretical backdrops of Mokyr (1985) and Princen (2005). The work of the latter, in particular, will be used to explain the emergence of the concept of 'the economy' in the eighteenth century, and to describe the analogous rise of the narrative of 'efficiency.' Moreover, it will be shown how these new ideas were advanced by the emerging bourgeois class, who understood that the traditional structure of society would not be sufficient for the realisation of their goals of accumulation. That is, while they required a workforce to facilitate the increasing levels of production they desired in their urban factories, the majority of common folk lived in rural areas, where they practiced subsistence farming. These farmers, or 'yeomen,' enjoyed certain customary rights to the land – or commons – which granted them access to pastures and forests, for the purposes of grazing their livestock, foraging, and obtaining firewood. However, during the Industrial Revolution, the lords who legally owned the land became equally enamoured of the emerging techno-rational discourse that promised wealth to those who invested in the industrial capitalist system. Consequently, both the urban bourgeoisie and the rural land owners initiated a highly effective campaign to enclose common land, which had historically been the life-sustaining substrate of the yeomen. The subsequent Enclosure Movement entailed complicity between government and big business to facilitate the widespread dispossession of the yeomen, which, in turn, both obliged them to submit to the factory system in order to survive, and inculcated in them growing dependency on industrial farming. In relation to this discussion, *Contested Common Land: Environmental Governance Past and Present*, by Rogers, Pieraccini, Straughton, and Winchester, along with *The International Political Economy of the Environment*, by Stevis and Assetto, will constitute key texts. Finally, Chapter One will show how the Enclosure Movement facilitated the rise of corporate control of agriculture, which persists today as a dominant dynamic within modern society, and which has resulted in various increasingly unsustainable practices in urban areas, especially within the context of 'peak oil' and the global ecological crisis.

Following this, Chapter Two will underscore the harmful socio-ecological features of capitalist hyper-extractivism in general, and the industrial model of food production in particular, with reference to various theorists (Norberg-Hodge et al. 2002; Holt & Reed 2006; Conkin 2008) who are also exploring ways in which people can begin to reclaim a degree of

autonomy from corporate models of food production. However, while many grassroots initiatives that attempt to establish alternative methods of food production have emerged – often within cities – the degree to which transnational corporations wield control of the global system of food production remains overwhelming, such that sustainability arguably necessitates a larger paradigmatic shift away from neoliberal industrial agriculture. In this regard, a considerable number of researchers and activists have turned their attention to Cuba's *Revolución Agrícola*, which took place during the 1990s, and which comprised a revolutionary transformation of the island's earlier industrial agricultural system. These theorists and activists are considering the potential role Cuba could play as a model for socio-economic and socio-ecological transformations in neoliberal societies, both now and in the near future. Chapter Two will focus next on the first three principal agricultural transitions that occurred in Cuba, and which contributed to the socio-ecological conditions that precipitated the fourth agricultural transition of the *Revolución Agrícola* in the 1990s. Firstly, the colonial legacy of Cuban agriculture will be discussed, with reference to theorisations by Wright (2012), Staten (2005), and Zorina (1975). Through these texts, the development of Cuba's agricultural and socio-economic conditions under Spanish colonial rule, which was to a large degree based on slave labour, and which laid the foundations for intensive agricultural practices, will be thematised. Secondly, the role of the United States in influencing the characteristics of modern Cuban agriculture between 1898 and 1958 will be examined, with specific focus falling on the United States' implementation of a large-scale, high-input, system of food production in Cuba. To this end, the academic dialogue between Benjamin (1977), McCook (2002), and Foran (2009), will be elaborated upon. After this, the third agricultural transition which accompanied the 1959 revolution in Cuba will be thematised, with a view to showing how the communist reforms to Cuban agriculture implemented by the revolutionary government soon after it came into power, while emphasising equitable access to land, nevertheless remained uncritical of the large-scale, high-input systems inherited from the United States. Consideration of these first three agricultural transitions in Cuba will constitute the historical backdrop for exploration of the fourth agricultural transition of the *Revolución Agrícola* in Chapter Three.

That is, in Chapter Three, the socio-economic and socio-ecological transformations that took place in Cuba as part of the *Revolución Agrícola*, which occurred when Cuba experienced a severe shortage of oil after the collapse of the Soviet Union, will be critically engaged with. In this regard, a detailed investigation will be undertaken into how Cubans were forced to radically transform their daily lives following their loss of Soviet support, and subsequently, how the failure of industrial agriculture in Cuba underscored the dangers of dependency on large-scale, intensive food production systems. In short, within the context of related fuel and

capital shortages, Cuba was compelled to undergo a fourth agricultural transition towards organic, small-scale production throughout the country; a process which also required the re-appropriation of indigenous knowledge in the production of food. Moreover, as a consequence of the limited supply of fuel for transportation, agricultural practices also became a necessity *within* cities, in order for the food requirements of the urban dwellers to be met. In order to elaborate on the unique changes that took place during the 'Special Period' within the socio-economic and socio-ecological relations of Cuban society in general, and within its urban spaces in particular, the works of Koont (2007) and Clouse (2014), among others, will be referred to. Following this, the possibility that the societal transformations that Cuba underwent during the Special Period amount to the first eco-socialist revolution will be considered. In this regard, the main features of eco-socialism, and how it relates to Marxism, will be explored, with particular emphasis on Marx's concept of the 'human essence' and its status as an ideological cornerstone of eco-socialism. And in the interest of exploring these parallels, Conway's (1987), Pepper's (1993), and Baradat's (1994) respective works will be thematised. Thereafter, the ways in which post-1990 local Cuban communities approximate eco-socialist societies, in relation to the four eco-socialist human potentialities of autonomy, sociability, aesthetic appreciation, *and* the recognition of the inherent value of nature, will be illustrated, before it is argued that the eco-socialist transformations that occurred in Cuba are, in fact, indicative of an additional stage of dialectical materialism. That is, instead of Marx's dialectic of materialism concluding in a proletarian dictatorship, it would seem that, in order for an egalitarian revolution to be *sustainable*, it would need to go a step further, both through recognising the limitations of a socio-economic model based on hyper-extractivism and an industrial model predicated on techno-rationality, and through correlatively creating a socio-ecological model more inclusive of *nature*.

Thereafter, Chapter Four will seek to show how, despite the politically progressive nature of the *Revolución Agrícola*, Cuba's eco-socialist transformations remain largely unknown within neoliberal society, owing to the systematic marginalisation of the movement by the mainstream neoliberal mass media. That is, the ideological and practical threat that Cuba's alternative socio-ecological system poses to neoliberal economics in general, and corporate agriculture in particular, has arguably led to the negation of the Cuban model within neoliberal mass media. And as will be shown, this marginalisation has been made easy by the *historical* subalternisation of Cuba in the mass media, a trend that emerged as early as the first significant American-Cuban interactions. In order to underscore such historical media subversion of Cuba – as a precursor to examining the ways in which the contemporary mainstream neoliberal mass media continue to frame Cuba in general, and the *Revolución*

Agrícola in particular, in a negative light – the work of various theorists of the subaltern, such as Herndl and Bauer (2003), and Pandey (2006), will be focused upon. Next, against the backdrop of such subaltern theorisation, American media representations of Cuba during the Spanish-American War, Cuba's period of American imperialism, and the years succeeding the Cuban Revolution, will be engaged with through the critical lens of the Propaganda Model advanced by Herman and Chomsky in *Manufacturing Consent: The Political Economy of the Mass Media* (1988). In particular, special attention will be paid to a spectrum of varying treatments of Cuba by major news corporations – Fox News, Russia Today, CNN, BBC, and *The Huffington Post* – in the interest of identifying the dominant attitudes, generated by the mainstream neoliberal mass media, against the alternative life system which Cuba has come to represent.

Finally, in response to the above investigation into the ways in which Cuban voices are being subjugated in the mainstream neoliberal mass media, Chapter Five will explore some of the ways in which Cubans – and those sympathetic to their cause – have found alternative means of communicating the eco-socialist socio-ecological accomplishments of Cuba. These forms of discursive resistance will be explored, firstly, by elaborating upon the theoretical underpinnings of related oppositional media, and of movements for the democratisation and diversification of information, reflected in the works of Herman and Chomsky (1988), Shiva (2006), Downing (2011), and Fraser (1990), among others. Secondly, some examples of how Cubans are finding a voice through the global media platforms of independent YouTube films – in particular *The Power of Community: How Cuba Survived Peak Oil* (Morgan, 2006) – and internet accessible American radio shows, such as KPFA's *La Raza Chronicles*, will be explored. Thirdly, the extent to which the *Revolución Agrícola* has facilitated the transformation of Cuban urban society into one that comprises a culture of ecological *regeneration* and *resilience*, will be juxtaposed with the challenges facing both their movement and analogous global efforts for socio-ecological transformation.

Arguably, studies such as this are significant within the context of growing ecological concern over, and disillusionment with, the effects of neoliberalism. That is, increasing socio-economic disparities in neoliberal cities, accompanied by the growing ecological crisis, necessitate studies into alternative life systems that offer sustainable and egalitarian modes of being. If societies are to avoid scarcity of food and related resources within urban areas in the future, it is essential that they begin to incorporate regenerative growth practices – that emphasise the importance of nature, rather than distance from it – in a manner akin to the eco-socialist paradigm at work in Cuban cities. A paradigm involving an alternative life system that necessitates the creation of autonomous communities, which operate locally, through both

human-human and human-nature partnerships. Correlatively, it is important to investigate the capacity of such existing movements to be heard globally – rather than framed in prejudiced terms – so that dialogic engagement concerning alternative paths into the future can replace the current neoliberal monologue on the preeminence of a single-track corporate trajectory. And as will be discussed, alternative forms of media are crucial to such an endeavour.

Methodologically speaking, this dissertation involves qualitative research and centers on discourse analysis. In this regard, Wigren describes qualitative research as a study that "focuses on understanding the naturalistic setting, or everyday life, of a certain phenomenon or person" (in Neergaard & Ulhoi 2007: 383), while Denzin and Lincoln similarly explain qualitative research as being "multimethod in focus, involving an interpretive, naturalistic approach to its subject matter." Accordingly, the qualitative researcher investigates phenomena "in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of, or interpret, [them,] in terms of the meaning people bring to them" (1994: 2). This research approach contrasts with quantitative research, which often employs an artificial environment for the study, and seeks numerically quantifiable results (Wagg, Wheaton, Brick & Caudwell 2009: 147; Denscombe 2010: 325). In addition to being qualitative in nature, this dissertation entails an inter-disciplinary approach, insofar as it is couched in the fields of cultural studies and media studies and focuses on an exploration of the ways in which power relations are reflected in the tensions between mainstream neoliberal mass media and alternative media coverage of the Cuban *Revolución Agrícola*.

Consequently, this dissertation is partially Foucauldian in orientation, insofar as something akin to his genealogical method will be used. Through this method, "the historical constitution…of discourses, knowledges[,]…objects, and the meanings associated with them" will be studied. In this regard, the genealogical method allows the researcher to trace the emergence of knowledge and power in a way that challenges the belief that society follows a rational course of development, ultimately showing history to be "fractured, discontinuous, and contingent on a broad array of circumstances and possibilities" (Brock, Thomas & Raby 2011: 18). Yet, in addition to genealogical method, post-Marxism will also inform the methodology of this dissertation. That is, with eco-socialist theory underpinning the study, the Marxist concepts of workers' alienation and the 'human essence' will be referred to. However, importantly, their use is qualified in terms of post-Marxism's aim to "rescue aspects of Marxist thought from the collapse of Marxism…and to reorient them to take on new meaning within a rapidly changing cultural climate" (Sim 2013: 1). The analysis of various texts and media representations will form a considerable part of this dissertation, and in addition, the use of photographs of eco-socialist manifestations in Cuban cities will be referred to, in order to

illustrate the changes that have occurred within the urban areas. These photographs were taken by myself on a recent research visit to Cuba, which I undertook to further my understanding of the country, by seeing first-hand how eco-socialism has manifested in Cuba's urban spaces. No ethics clearance was necessary to complete this study.

Chapter One: The Origins and Contemporary Legacy of the Enclosure Movement

1.1 Introduction

Notwithstanding all the benefits and possibilities of modern society, its emergence was indissociable from an array of new socio-cultural problems that not only accompanied it, but which have also grown in proportion to the expansion of modern cities. Admittedly, a great deal of remedial effort has been aimed at addressing some of these problems within the context of urbanization; for example, through inner-city 'outreach' programmes and the salutary initiatives of social workers. However, relatively few theorists have considered how urbanization itself may entail a *spatial* dimension of disempowerment that is difficult to remedy, provided urbanization in its contemporary form is understood as an unavoidable given. In response to this deficit, the focus of this chapter will fall on the way in which urbanization – from the Industrial Revolution to the present – has substantially robbed people of the requisite space for subsistence food production, and correlatively disempowered them through progressively engendering their dependency on industrial food production.

To begin with, this chapter will seek to elaborate on the various dimensions of the related changes that occurred during the Industrial Revolution. In particular, the four main features of the Industrial Revolution that have been advanced by scholars – namely the emergence of the market economy, the factory system, the concept of national income, and rapid technological innovation – will be discussed against the backdrop of Mokyr's widely cited *The Economics of the Industrial Revolution*. Thereafter, with reference to Princen's *The Logic of Sufficiency*, the rise of the concept of 'the economy' will be considered, along with the narrative of 'efficiency' that accompanied it. Next, the factory system will be discussed, before an exploration of the tensions that soon emerged between this system and the dynamics of pre-modern agrarian society, is embarked upon. In this regard, emphasis will fall on how the pre-modern habits of yeomen were not conducive to the generation of large industrial profits that urban businessmen were seeking. And how this, in turn, precipitated the Enclosure Movement, an intervention that entailed complicity between government and big business, to facilitate the widespread dispossession of the yeomen, which, in turn, both obliged them to submit to the factory system for survival, and inculcated in them growing dependency on industrial farming. Related to this, Princen's *The Logic of Sufficiency*, Rogers, Pieraccini, Straughton, and Winchester's *Contested Common Land: Environmental Governance Past and Present*, and

Stevis and Assetto's *The International Political Economy of the Environment*, will constitute key theoretical points of reference. This chapter will then argue that these incidents, which occurred two hundred years ago, paved the way for the corporate control of agriculture, which persists today as a dominant dynamic within modern society, and which has given rise to an array of socio-economic issues in urban areas that are not ecologically sustainable.

1.2 The Industrial Revolution

In late eighteenth and early nineteenth century England, society was characterized by intensive innovation and heightened energies, which were constantly testing the limits of human knowledge and creativity. In particular, it was a time of growing interest in augmenting the productivity of the newly-established industries, expounding the possibilities of science, and increasing efficiency in all layers of the social fabric.[1] Spurred on by a powerful emphasis on rational and scientific thought, which typified this period, the narrative of efficiency gained more and more momentum, and was responsible for many of the socio-economic changes that subsequently took place.

The period of the most remarkable and drastic changes, which occurred between 1760 and 1840 in England, has come to be known as the first Industrial Revolution.[2] The Industrial Revolution was characterized by the introduction of power-driven machinery, increasingly complex use of capital, rapid urbanization, and improvements in transport. And it has been defined in terms of "the fairly quick change in the ways things were made and sold, and how people lived and worked" (Ross 2008: 8). Although quite general, this definition underscores the immense reach of the Industrial Revolution, and how it brought about paradigmatic shifts on every level of eighteenth century life. Admittedly, some theorists have indicated that the pace of change during that time was not rapid enough to be considered a revolution *per se*, and that it should rather be construed as a *process* of change, which played a significant role in

[1] The industrialization of agriculture began following the invention of the seed drill, in 1701, by a British farmer named Jethro Tull (Brezina 2004: 20), and by the end of the eighteenth century, remarkable changes had taken place in agriculture, leading to higher yields of crops and resulting in more profit for farmers. Science took a major leap forward as cures for infamous diseases, such as smallpox, were discovered. In addition, the celebrated chemist, Louis Pasteur, began his critical investigations into the miraculous power of vaccinations during this period (Willner, Weiner & Hero 2007: 47). This era also saw the invention of Watt's steam engine, which revolutionized transport and communication systems.

[2] The exact dates of the Industrial Revolution differ according to authors' perspectives of what the most important developments were (Deane 1979: 20; Rybaczyk 2005: 36).

sculpting the modern way of life (Mokyr 1985: 3; Jones 2010: 215; O'Brien 1993: 57). However, in response to questions concerning the accuracy of referring to this period as a 'revolution,' O'Brien explains that "nothing like that sustained degree of acceleration had ever occurred…in Britain (or elsewhere in Europe and America)." In fact, "between 1750 and 1850 the long-term rate of growth of the British economy became historically unique and internationally remarkable" (1993: 2). Similarly, Mokyr asserts that the reason this period is said to have undergone a 'revolution' is predominantly because "its effects were so profound that even if we divide it by seventy, the per annum change was far-reaching enough to dwarf any economic change in Britain since the Black Death" (1985: 3). As such, the immense changes that took place between 1760 and 1840, whether understood as part of an acute revolution, or as a chronic transformation, comprised a watershed event. Not only on account of the dissemination of new technologies and innovation which it entailed, but also because of the impact of these developments on long-standing socio-cultural dynamics.[3]

According to Mokyr, it is possible to identify four major schools of thought regarding the most important transformations of the Revolution, and his schematization is supported by an array of other theorists. In order, these are the "Social Change School," the "Industrial Organization School," the "Macroeconomics School," and the "Technological School." To start with, the "Social Change School" emphasises the alterations that occurred in the ways in which economic transactions took place. And it focuses on "the emergence of formal, competitive, and impersonal markets in goods and factors of production," advancing these as the most important changes that occurred during that time. In short, the emergence of the market economy is the primary concern of this school (van Zanden 2009: 263; Pomfret 2011: 15; Veitch & Christodoulidis & Farmer 2013: 206). Next, the "Industrial Organization School" (McCullagh 2004: 129) stresses the significance of the rise of the factory system. That is, they thematise the emergence of "large firms, mills, mines, railroads, and even large retail stores," along with the ways in which workers were subject to discipline and quality control within such

[3] Following Britain, other countries in Europe also underwent industrial revolutions. France, for example, experienced its industrial revolution between 1780 and 1860 (Teich 1996: 43). Admittedly, France was considerably slower at spreading new technologies across the country, and, as a result, did not experience the relatively rapid transformations that characterized the British Industrial Revolution. As such, some assert that France did not really undergo a revolution because of the relatively sluggish pace of technological appropriation. A number of factors influenced the country's slow rate of industrialization, the most significant being its economic state after the French Revolution and the Twenty-three Years War (1996: 44). Nevertheless, despite the economic and political disturbances that the country experienced while Britain was rapidly industrializing, it was only a matter of time before the impact of industrialization became evident in France too.

institutions. This group is also interested in the way in which the economy transformed, from dealing mainly with circulating capital, to concentrating on fixed capital.[4] Following this, the "Macroeconomic School" concentrates on aggregate variables, or patterns of growth and change nationally, or within sectors of industry (Ashworth in Williams 2008: 224). In this regard, the examples of "the growth of national income, the rate of capital formation [and]…the growth and composition of the labour force" are thematised by Mokyr (1985: 4). Finally, the "Technological School" views the technological innovation that occurred during the Industrial Revolution to be the primary catalyst for change during that time (Handen 2010: 35; Jacobs & Yudken 2013: 27). However, it is stressed that 'technology' should not merely be understood as the development of mechanics, but rather also in terms of the creation of innovative ways of organizing labour, consumer manipulation, marketing, and distribution techniques.

The variety of the above perspectives is indicative of the profound transformations – throughout the social fabric – that took place during the Industrial Revolution. Indeed, Holton goes so far as to suggest that the powerful implications of industrialization resulted not only in technological innovation and altered socio-economic structures, but also in an entirely new understanding of 'civilization.' In this regard, he maintains that "the set of systematic and far-reaching changes to human institutions and culture…amount to a new type of civilization, centred on industry, markets, and secular knowledge" (1985: 1). Understandably, this kind of society differed greatly from the agrarian life of pre-modern England, which had been characterized by feudal capitalism and small-scale home industries, and the differences soon resulted in growing tensions.

In keeping with the ideas of the Social Change School, what is often heralded as the most important change that took place during the Industrial Revolution is the conversion of the feudal economy to one that was predominantly capitalist (Crawford & Blackshaw 2009: 26). In terms of this, O'Brien maintains that "the origins of industrial changes in Britain in the eighteenth century are found in a precocious[,]…more complete…and… widespread permeation of social relations by commodity and factor markets" (O'Brien 1993: 6). Similarly,

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[4] On the one hand, circulating capital is understood to be capital that is consumed during the process of production such that it can only be used once. Fawcett (1870: 29) provides the examples of labourers' food, or fuel used in production. Understandably, this type of capital is closely related to medieval agricultural processes, which were mainly run on circulating capital, such as seeds, water, food for livestock, and firewood. On the other hand, fixed capital is composed of those assets that a business does not intend to dispose of in a short amount of time. As Sharma explains, fixed assets are "held by a company with the object of earning revenue directly or indirectly and not for the purpose of sale in the ordinary course of business" (2008: 63). This kind of capital can be made up of assets such as machinery, equipment, and property.

Glasner indicates that the modern conceptualization of 'the economy' rose from this period, and explains that "as the start of modern *economic* growth, the Industrial Revolution must rank among the most important events in world history" [own italics] (2013: 326). Of course, whether the emergence of the market economy can be viewed as *the* primary change to have occurred during that time remains debatable, but it is undeniable that its birth held many implications for industrializing – and for that matter, contemporary – societies.[5]

Industrial capitalism is characterised by the "private ownership of means of production; private enterprise; decentralised investment decisions oriented to market conditions, competition, and profit considerations; wage labour, and the concentration of production in factories and mechanical processes" (Kocka 1999: 104). Arguably, the features of wage labour, and the intensification of production in factories, in particular instigated the urbanization that is characteristic of this period. That is, with productionism as the order of the day, the rural populations diminished as increasing numbers of people migrated to the cities, "causing unprecedented urban explosions in many parts of the world at the time" (Pomeroy & Webster 2008: 10). Accordingly, it is often advanced that most of those who migrated to the urban areas sought work in the factories and mills in the interest of economic empowerment. Correlatively, through growing competition within the textile industry, it is generally assumed that the profit motive became the primary driver of business and consumption (Lucas 2000: 107; Fujita & Hill 2005: 43; Werlock 2009: 118). In this regard, Agazzi (in Lucas 2000: 107) explains that during the Industrial Revolution, an "indissoluble marriage of technology and profit became firmly established," and "usefulness in its most prosaic and even brutal form – economic profit, money – became the chief driving force of technology." And, in turn, in order to accommodate the generation of profits (and therefore technological progression), deregulations in private property and market exchange were introduced (Holton 1985: 3). Changes that altered the way in which capitalism was perceived and practised in most modernizing nations, and which heightened the competitiveness of businessmen, and fabricated the idea of 'infinite growth.'[6]

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[5] Adam Smith, who is widely regarded as the father of modern capitalism, published his *Wealth of Nations* in 1776 at the start of the Industrial Revolution. In *The Logic of Sufficiency,* Princen indicates that with this text, Smith "laid a conceptual foundation for a rationalized, productive economy," and introduced the concept of the 'market,' as well as the idea that it was guided by an "invisible hand" (2005: 52).

[6] Some theorists recognise that industrial capitalism was perhaps not the first form of capitalism. In fact, some assert that industrial capitalism, though a new system entirely, was preceded by mercantile capitalism. For example, John Stratton explains that mercantile capitalism contained internalized assumptions of limits, in contrast to modern capitalism, which relies on the assumption of infinite resources. This was because mercantile capitalism was reliant upon the productivity of nature, and based on a systemization of trade; as such, it was predicated on

In many ways, the profit motive was the compass needle guiding the development of these new ideas that, when woven together, formed the blanket term known as 'the economy.' And this concept not only rapidly rose to dominance, but also soon became an indelible part of human society, to the point where in its current form it comprises an axiomatic.[7] In *Treading Softly: Paths to Ecological Order*, Princen elaborates on the unquestioned power of the economy, and the problems which have accompanied its hegemony.

> Industrialists have built a grand edifice generally called The Economy. It is a structure so massive, so formidable, so strong and imposing that no observer, in or out of the industrial world, can help but notice. Indeed, one can't help but stand in awe of such an imposing construction. To behold such a work is to glimpse the vision of industrial grandeur: one hails the greatness and admires the ingenuity. What industrialists have built is propelled by science and technology, fueled by fossil fuels, geared by the workings of markets, and driven by consumer demand. It's a system, and it all works together. That Great Industrial Edifice, The Economy, will endure forever, the Faithful have no doubt. (2010: 21)

Arguably, one of the most important threads holding the above edifice together is the narrative of efficiency. This is because, while the profit motive led to business swelling with competitiveness, the efficiency narrative dictated the ways in which such businesses could best achieve the highest possible profits. According to Princen, efficiency as a dominant business principle came about once society commenced with large-scale production and mass consumption (2005: 50), which first occurred during the Industrial Revolution. In many respects, the factories and mills, which characterized the period of industrialization, functioned as the incubators of efficiency, and the permeation of the principle of efficiency was so thorough that it was applied not only to machinery output, and to the use of space and time, but also eventually to the workers themselves (Zieleniec 2007: 22; Mamic 2004: 235).

However, in order to become so far reaching in its effects, efficiency required not only a platform, such as the factory floor, but also a means of embedding itself within the subjectivity of workers. As a result, it was during this time that the concept of "workforce" was created (McCannon 2002: 278). With the development of factories and mills, those who began to move

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the idea that there *is* a fixed amount of resources in the world, and one state can only flourish to the detriment of another (1990: 64).

[7] An axiomatic is a dynamic concept that does not offer definitions of its terms or values, but rather implicitly organises space and time in such a powerful way that it is accepted as self-evident and incontestable, and reflected accordingly in all the values and norms of a society (Parr 2010: 22). In the contemporary era, neoliberal capitalism has approximated such an axiomatic.

away from the rural areas and towards the urban spaces to sell their labour, constituted the workforce. And it was these people – previously relatively self-sufficient yeomen – who became subject to methods of discipline and organisation, in order to maintain their efficiency on the production line at optimum levels.[8] The 'division of labour' is a good example of factory bosses' and businessmen's attitudes towards workers who had, at that time, come to be regarded as expendable cogs in the machine – or "standing reserves" at the disposal of their economic superiors (Feenberg 1995: 100; Heidegger 1977: 173). That is, instead of being granted the opportunity to expand their talents, of which many of them had a variety because of their agricultural and cottage-industry backgrounds, their potentialities were limited by their single, banal duties on the factory floor (Furze & Savy & Brym & Lie 2011: 128; Mahajan & Geet 2008: 1).

In many ways, Heidegger's ideas, expressed in *The Question Concerning Technology and Other Essays*, which thematise the problems of modernity, can be applied to the context of the industrial workplace. In his seminal text, Heidegger examines the modern techno-science metanarrative as one that increasingly regards nature, including humans, as "standing reserves," such that nothing is regarded as *good*, but only as good *for* something. In other words, everything natural is assigned value in relation to its potentiality for instrumentality and production. These ideas are immediately relatable to the relationship between the owners of

[8] In *Discipline and Punish: the birth of the prison*, Michel Foucault thematises the rise of "disciplinary society" in the late eighteenth century, and describes it as a society in which people are produced as "docile bodies" (Markula-Denison & Pringle 2006: 73; McLaren 2002: 87), and subtly conditioned to submit to the disciplinary regime through the use of mechanisms such as hierarchical observation, normalizing judgement, and the examination. These three mechanisms are characteristic of modernity, and work surreptitiously – and yet, in many senses, violently – to produce docile bodies. To start with, hierarchical observation operates along the principle that "we can control what people do merely by observing them" (Gutting 2005: 82). As such, modern architecture has come to play a large role in the maintenance of hierarchical observation. The panoptic layouts of buildings, as well as the various ways in which security personnel can monitor the people entering, going about their business, and exiting point to the profound level of observation present in everyday life (Foucault 1977: 201). Next, normalizing judgment seeks to judge individuals "not by the intrinsic rightness or wrongness of their acts but by where their actions place them on a ranked scale that compares them to everyone else" (Gutting 2005: 84; Foucault 1977: 146). That is, normalizing judgment uses societal pressure to make people conform to the values and *norms* of modern society. By defining what is 'normal' to a society, this mechanism simultaneously decrees what is 'abnormal' – and therefore unacceptable – within that society. Finally, the examination is regarded as a powerful combination of the former two mechanisms (Gutting 2005: 86). It is both an apparatus of observation, as well as normalization, and has become the ultimate modern tool for the measurement of individuals' alignment and identification with societal expectations, as well as the extent to which they deviate from those norms.

factories and large-scale farms during industrialization, and those who were ultimately compelled to work for them. With growing demand for high levels of production, those who did not have the means to start their own businesses or retain their farmlands, were drawn into the factory system, where they became means to the economic end of another's profit; resources to be used and disposed of in the name of productionism (McMillian 2002: 66; Capaldi & Lloyd 2011: 438). Thus, the techno-science discourse with which Heidegger's text deals, also contributed to the dehumanisation of the 'workforce.' This is because, once people were subject to disciplinary procedures that compelled them to behave in a uniform way, their human intuition and related intrinsic value were relegated to the margins of consideration, insofar as, in this new paradigm, only techno-rational thinking was deemed legitimate.[9]

One of the outcomes of the obsession during the Industrial Revolution with efficiency and rationality was the disconnect that emerged between the concepts 'social life' and 'economic life.' In terms of this, Princen shows that with the onset of the modern economy, "life divides between the economic and the social, the productive and the consumptive" (2005: 128). That is, the new economy ensured that people's labour was entirely separate from their social activities, because labourers were not regarded as being productive when their concentrations were not wholly devoted to their tasks in the workplace. Consequently, the extraordinary changes that the new economy ushered in not only transformed the way in which business was conducted and how commodities were produced. It also played a major role in dismantling traditional agrarian society, and correlatively precipitating the devaluation of rural life. However, it would be incorrect to assume that these transformations, which threatened the livelihoods and ways of life of the English yeomen, were accepted without resistance. On the contrary, the process of building up the 'workforce' was an intricate one that was significantly opposed by those who saw in it the loss of their autonomy. In order to understand the resistance that the new economy faced, though, it is necessary to briefly consider the pre-modern agrarian way of life, in order for the social changes that took place as a result of the Industrial Revolution to become apparent.

In the fifteenth century, most of the land in England belonged to landlords who either allowed "freeholders" (Stevis & Assetto 2001: 114) to live and farm on their property, or leased

[9] Foucault's analyses mentioned in the previous footnote are understood as broadening and deepening the Marxist critique of Ideological State Apparatus proffered by Althusser, who was one of Foucault's mentors, and who valourised Foucault's works as productive of new concepts in this regard (Kelly 2010: 14). As such, the validity of the Marxist tenet of the human essence – comprising of autonomy, sociality, and aesthetic appreciation – remains one of the presuppositions of this dissertation; Foucault's later contestation of this idea, notwithstanding (Honneth & Joas 1988: 33).

land out to peasants. Some peasants were known as "customary tenants" because while they worked and lived on the landlord's property, they could be told to leave at any time. However, while landlords collected rent from tenants in different forms,[10] their private ownership of property was always limited by the peasants' customary rights, to which all peasants were entitled. These rights included being able to graze livestock on, or to collect firewood or what was left of harvests at certain times of the year from private land (Wood 2002: 107).[11] When yeomen were given space to cultivate pieces of land, they often combined their land with others, shared the workload, and acknowledged common grazing areas. And through this system, most people were able to access land in order to practice animal husbandry or to grow food for their households (Stevis & Assetto 2001: 114). Moreover, the common lands were generally well organised and run by "peasant councils" (2001: 115), who facilitated joint decision-making on issues of importance, such as when harvest times would be, when crop rotation would occur, and how to address problems concerning the planting of new crops. In terms of the systems governing the peasant councils, Rosenman explains that they were "*relatively* democratic, egalitarian, and self-sustaining, especially compared to the urban life that succeeded [them]" (2014: 1). She also points to the surprisingly well-organised nature of the peasant meetings, by mentioning that such gatherings were held each year by the elected council, in order to "distribute plots of land, schedule their multiple uses, and set the 'stint' or fee for pasturing animals to prevent over-grazing" (2014: 1). And she is supported in her assertions by an array of other theorists (Brickle 1992: 155; Hopcroft 1999: 163; Brun 2013: 124). As such, despite being rural and simple, the systems developed by the peasants *worked*, and displayed a significant level of 'efficiency' within the parameters of an agrarian economy.

Indeed, the ways in which peasants operated within these common spaces were very resilient (Aston 2006: 416), as a result of the communal efforts that were made to ensure the conservation of their livelihoods in general, and of the common lands in particular. In this regard, Rodgers, Pieraccini, Straughton, and Winchester discuss how the concept of "good neighbourhood" (2012: 20) was one of the organizing principles of the use of the commons. And they show how this value "was ultimately a moral and spiritual precept flowing from the recognition that living and working alongside others required the acceptance of mutual

[10] Peasants were expected to pay either by giving a percentage of their crops to the landlord, or by working in the fields of the landlord (Delon 2013: 1004).

[11] The term 'commoner' comes from this period, and refers to a person who has access to common land (Rosenman 2014: 1). Some towns set limitations on the use of common land, such as only allowing people who earned less than four pounds a year to access such domains. In other towns, pieces of land were set aside for those who had no other access to land to grow food or graze their animals (Rosenman 2013: 1).

obligations and, hence, the fettering of individual liberty." In this sense, the agrarian practices on common land comprised an organic expression of *gemeinschaft*; communism without guidance from educated revolutionaries.[12] In other words, people recognised the interconnectivity between the fates of their neighbours and their own, and accordingly shared their resources, while the relative lack of boundaries between their lands increased the sense of kinship amongst the peasant communities (Rodgers et al. 2012: 20).

This communal way of life meant that peasants could pool their resources, share and exchange their produce with each other, and attain a relative degree of security in their access to adequate land and employment. And although the social order of medieval England was in no way ideal (because of the autocratic rule of the lords), peasants were nevertheless relatively secure in their roles as producers, aided by their claim to certain customary rights. In fact, although subject to debate, it is often suggested that the quality of life that this group enjoyed was such that, at the time, they could be described as "the largest body of independent, free, and prosperous citizens in the world" (Princen 2005: 126).

Correlatively, before the Industrial Revolution, agriculture was the largest employer of labour, and the most important producer of commodities (O'Brien 1993: 5). The significance of agriculture – as a producer as well as an employer – meant that large parts of Britain remained untouched by industrialization and urbanization. Traditional methods of producing food were used by farmers, and these techniques were passed down to younger generations, with the knowledge that they would continue to work the land (Schaie & Abeles 2008: 242). Even with the onset of factory work, the yeomen displayed a level of autonomy and self-determination unparalleled in modern society, as evinced by the way in which "workers would show up at the factory gate and labour until they earned what they needed, then leave" (Princen 2005: 125).

But as the pressures of the modern economy grew, and with them the narrative of efficiency, the relaxed behaviour of the factory workers could no longer be tolerated, because factory bosses could not generate profits with inconsistent employees. What they required was a steady workforce that would be entirely dependent upon their work in the factory – so much so that they would be willing to settle for undesirable working hours and conditions, and exploitative wages. In other words, a disciplined labour force emerged as a prerequisite for the success of the new market economy. It was in relation to this *impasse* that the enclosure

[12]According to Pepper (2003: 16), a society characterised by *gemeinschaft* is organic, rather than atomised, and relationships are based on unalienated face-to-face interactions. Instead of being preoccupied with individual gains, such a community nurses a "sense of community that moves beyond the importance of the individual or the sum of the individual identities in it." It could thus be said that communities characterised by *gemeinschaft* operate according to a common conscience, and individuals recognise their importance in relation to others.

movement developed, hand in hand with the Industrial Revolution, in order to displace traditional concentrations of manpower by obliging rural people to migrate to the urban areas through dispossessing them of their land.

1.3 The Enclosure Movement

Between the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, growing techno-scientific discourse posed a major threat to traditional agrarian ways of life. The conceptualizations that sprung from that period would not only alter the ways in which the majority of the population had lived for centuries, but would entirely transform rural and urban landscapes. A major contributor to these changes was the enclosure movement, which is said to have "set the stage for the modern age with its privatization and commodification of land and people" (Stevis & Assetto 2001: 116). Wood describes the process of enclosure as "not simply a physical fencing of land but the extinction of common and customary use rights on which many people depended for their livelihood" (2002: 108). That is, the enclosure movement was not merely about the privatization of land that had previously been available to all, but was also indicative of the change of emphasis, from customary rights to parliamentary rights. And accordingly, the Enclosure Movement – in an increasingly aggressive way – began to marginalize *gemeinschaft* in favour of the capitalist principle of *gesellschaft*.[13]

Princen elaborates upon the socio-cultural implications of the widespread privatization of land during the Industrial Revolution, and explains that,

> with enclosure, the meadow, heath, moorland, and woodland that had been their commonly managed "open fields" – lands harvested, grazed, and left fallow as "insurance" or "buffer" against their own separate production – was now privately held and traded as a commodity. In one enclosure of 6 000 acres ten owners ended up with 81 percent of the land, the remainder divided among 116 people. (2005: 126)

[13] Pepper shows that society characterized by *gesellschaft* is essentially atomised, and relations are formed in terms of individual rights and interests (2003: 16). In such a society, the maximum good is seen to spring from all individuals striving to make profits, and increase their individual accumulation. In this regard, Redfield maintains that "one may conceive of a society, the *Gesellschaft*, in which the unity is highly individualizing and differentiating. In the *Gesellschaft* the parts of the whole are hardly more than physically juxtaposed, relations are impersonal, and the will of the individual is deliberate and rational," while "the social organ is characterized by secularity…[and] there is no common conscience" (1989: 142). This individualizing worldview has equally underpinned the formation of modern Western societies.

Understandably, as the enclosure movement gained momentum, there was a significant increase in rural-urban flows. Muir maintains that the movement "spelt destitution or migration for the innumerable families whose existence depended on their ancient rights to pasture a few beasts and gather fuel and bedding on the common" (1997: 217). As such, for many, enclosure condemned them either to vagrancy or to migration *en masse.* Arguably, two main motives for this movement existed. The first motive derived from the landlords' realization that heightened profits could be achieved through new farming methods, which required large pieces of land. In this regard, peasant farmers were obstacles, as were their customary rights to land, with the consequence that wealthy farmers undertook to force yeomen off of their land – leaving them no choice but to make for the urban areas (Alweis 1968: 452; Lehan 1998: 36).[14] The second motive is derived from the factories which, as mentioned above, required a steady workforce in order for production to proceed in the most efficient (and profitable) way possible. The enclosure of common lands was therefore a convenient means of creating a flow of steady, desperate, labour into the factories (Chen 1995: 144; Evans 2013: 169).

To elaborate, firstly, new methods of farming, including the introduction of machines to speed up certain processes, showed landowners the immense possibilities for the production of food that were available to them. During this time, the economic and technological climates were such that landowners and the emerging bourgeoisie were seeking ways to make agriculture increasingly productive and scientific. Rodgers et al. point to the rationalizing trends in agriculture during this period, as well as the transformation of attitudes towards common land indissociable from them, when they show how:

> Agricultural improvement included the introduction of new techniques and new crops, improved livestock breeds, drainage and reclamation, ideas which were spread through societies and a burgeoning literature that applied scientific reasoning to farming. In the gathering national momentum, the restrictions on use inherent in the status of common land were presented as the major block to improvement, requiring private and, eventually, parliamentary schemes of enclosure. (2012: 20)

Similarly, Wood explains how shifts in people's perceptions of land during the Industrial Revolution resulted in the idea of land having to be "liberated from any…obstruction to [its]

[14] Rodgers et al. explain that during this time, social perceptions of common land changed to such an extent that "puritans saw common land as one of the great Nurseries of Idleness and Beggary" (2012: 20). This changing view of collective land meant that peasant farmers' activities were no longer regarded as useful because they did not correspond with the new productive methods, orientated around the pursuit of ever more efficiency. Traditional methods of farming were consequently forced out, and replaced with more productive industrial methods.

profitable use," and this mind-set was accompanied by "growing pressure to extinguish customary rights that interfered with capitalist accumulation" (2002: 108). Thus, a movement for widespread enclosure of common land took place between 1750 and 1850 (Teubert 2010: 161), which ultimately displaced a large proportion of farmers, and forced them to find employment in the growing urban areas.[15] Rodgers et al. indicate that from this time onwards "'improvement' became an organizing principle across both moral and physical spheres, ushering in a new frame of reference for views concerning land" (2012: 20).

Within this context, the code of 'good neighbourhood' that had for centuries governed agrarian society was dismantled by the growing influence of the narrative of efficiency – powered by wealthy bourgeoisie, by landowners and, subsequently, by parliament. Wealthy farmers began to buy large portions of common land, sectioning their property off with hedges (Ross 2008: 14), and through this process, they effectively began propagating the discourse of privatization, much to the detriment of the yeomen who were dependent upon the commons. In many ways, this process marked the beginning of "market-oriented agriculture" (Magor et al. 2007: 3), as increasingly large-scale farms began to dominate the production of food, with the goal of meeting widening demands in the urban spaces. In pre-modern times, large farms owned by aristocrats and lords had, of course, existed, but portions of their land (on average thirty acres or less) would have been leased out to yeomen (Floud & McCloskey 1994: 99). These leases were generally long term agreements, which were renewed by the landowners. However, with the advent of industrialization and the movement for enclosure, landowners stopped renewing yeomen's leases to farm on their land. As a result, relatively small plots of land were purchased by wealthy estates, and amalgamated into large pieces of arable land. The plots were then leased to large-scale farmers, who were often economically powerful to begin with. According to Floud and McCloskey, this resulted in "the emergence of the three-tiered social structure of rich landlord, substantial tenant farmer and poor landless labourer" (1994: 99). The enclosure of common land could thus be said to have provided the structure upon which modern industry is built. Indeed, many "improvers" living at that time viewed the

[15] In actual fact, this was the second enclosure movement, the first of which took place during the sixteenth century. During that time, the low price of grains, and the high demand for wool resulted in landlords buying common land in order to graze more sheep. Birnie indicates that this shift from the production of food, to a focus on sheep, resulted in widespread hunger for many peasants (2013: 20). Protests were purportedly carried out but, from that time, a considerable number of peasants were regarded as "landless labourers" (Bulliet et al. 2011: 508). By the time industrialization occurred, almost half of English agricultural land was privatized. Thus the first enclosure movement arguably paved the way for future widespread enclosure of the commons.

enclosure of land, and the advancement of large-scale agriculture, as necessary for the modernization not only of agriculture, but also of all facets of eighteenth century society.

As a consequence of this attitude, privatization of the commons continued unabated, to the detriment of the now landless masses and the correlative advantage of those who possessed the wealth to purchase land. In terms of this, Hayami indicates that "in England, the enclosure movement led to farms dominated by large landlords, and peasants were reduced to the status of wage earners, or migrated to the urban areas" (1998: 288). But such dynamics did meet with resistance; for example, Cobbett, a journalist at the time of the Industrial Revolution, expressed his distaste for the growing trend of enclosure, and the dispossession of yeomen, by describing the wealthy class as a

> big bullfrog [that] grasps all. In this beautiful island every inch of land is appropriated by the rich. No hedges, no ditches, no commons, no grassy lanes: a country divided into great farms; a few trees surround the farmhouse. All the rest is bare of trees; and the wretched labourer has not a stick of wood, and has no place for a pig or cow to graze, or even to lie down upon. (in Ross 2008: 15)

Cobbett's observation does more than merely indicate the changes to the landscape that enclosure enforced. In addition, it also points to the reduction in societal status of the previously self-sufficient farmer, to the level of a 'wretched labourer' who is compelled to join the system of wage labour, and work for the very structures that facilitated his disempowerment. Moreover, this new form of agriculture was not without consequence for the natural environment. While peasant communities had sought to work synchronistically with nature, industrial agriculture fought the "natural rhythms" of the land (Stevis & Assetto 2001: 116), and used any means necessary to secure maximum yields. As a result, traditional efforts to conserve the fertility of the soil were stopped, meadows were cultivated as farmland and then left for ruin once they were no longer productive, and forests were enclosed because they were regarded as "wastes" (Redford & Chaloner 1976: 70; Ritter & Dauksta 2011: 146). Indeed, the industrial period showed a change in attitude towards the concept of 'waste land.' Before, waste land was understood as common land that could be used for foraging, gathering wood, grazing animals, hunting, or fishing (Rosenman 2014: 1). These activities, undertaken on uncultivated lands, made such domains an invaluable part of rural life for centuries. It is only after the onset of the efficiency craze that waste lands came to be viewed negatively, because of their low potentiality for the production of profits.[16]

[16] The evolution of the word 'waste' is an interesting one, in terms of its original meaning and what it implies today. The root of 'waste' is the Latin word, 'vastus,' which means 'immense,' 'enormous,' or 'void.' 'Waste' is

While this first motivation for land enclosure – the newfound profitability of land – contributed to urbanization, the second motivation was more active in the precipitation of rural-urban flows. This is because, with regard to the first, landowners merely sought to remove those who had become obstacles to large-scale agricultural production, such that their endeavours were not directly aimed at augmenting rates of urbanization. Conversely, manufacturers in the urban areas had different, but complementary, needs. In this regard, Princen emphasizes that "the government's enclosures were 'endorsed as heartily by landowners as by manufacturers'" (Princen 2005: 126). This was because a workforce was needed in the factories and mills, and the instability of labour until then was not conducive to profits. Thus, the bosses needed a way of maintaining a steady, and dependent, workforce; they needed "to make 'workers' out of the sheltered serfs and apprentices," and this process "required the creation of a frightened disoriented class called the proletariat" (Heilbroner 2011: 30). In this way, the economic dynamics at play during that time brought the industrial working class into existence, with the idea that this class of people would comprise the labouring masses upon which the success of modern industry would rest.

However, to be effective, the enclosure movement required the support of parliament. Customary rights had always been accepted by English society, but during the period of enclosure, it was of the utmost importance to landowners that these rights be nullified. As Wood explains, they began to dispute the "communal rights to common lands by claiming exclusive private ownership; eliminating various use rights on private land" and "challenging the customary tenures that gave many smallholders rights of possession without unambiguous title" (2002: 108). Essentially, this movement sought to ensure that the basic right to access land, necessary for peasant farmers to sustain themselves, was removed. The enclosure movement was therefore ultimately made possible by "Acts of parliament, royal license, purchase of rights by one owner, and common agreement of the collective owners, usually under pressure" (Stevis & Assetto 2001: 115). Parliament granted businessmen permission to carry out land enclosure by an Act, that stated that if "landowners owning more than half of the land agreed," sectioning off land for private use could take place (Ross 2008: 15). As a result, during the Industrial Revolution, more than 3 554 Acts of Enclosure were passed under King George III (Endersby 2007: 21). Heilbroner emphasises the potent socio-economic forces behind this disintegration

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also associated with 'vasto,' which denotes an uncultivated or uninhibited space. In fact, the word was originally used to suggest a broad "absence of cultivation" (Wedgwood 1859: 467). In this sense, the "waste water" of a mill is that which pours over the edges, and does not contribute to the actual running of the mill (1859: 467). Thus, the word 'waste' was not initially negative, but simply descriptive; arguably it only became a pejorative term with the rise of the 'efficiency narrative.'

of customary law when he maintains that "the great chariot of society, which for so long had run down the gentle slope of tradition, now found itself powered by an internal combustion machine," in the context of which "transactions… and gain… provided a new and startlingly powerful motive force" (2011: 13). And this new economy was filled with a blind ambition to propagate its principles, an ambition which culminated in the relegation of a previously self-sufficient people – once regarded as "the pride and strength of England" (Heath 2011: 279) – to the margins of rural social life, or to the status of urban wage slaves. That is, because the dispossessed who moved to towns had "little means to support themselves [they] became ripe pickings for…industrial employers" (Princen 2005: 126). Instead of being able to choose their working hours and determine for themselves when they had done a sufficient amount of work for the day, the new organization of labour was such that they "worked under new work disciplines geared to the systematic pursuit of profit" (Holton 1985: 3). Correlatively, activities and behaviour that were not conducive to profit were smoothed out of the system, ensuring no creases in the new socio-economic fabric.[17] Furze, Savy, Brym and Lie point to the contrasts between the old system of labour and modern organizations, when they explain that

> Unlike agricultural production, factory production required the centralization of workers. The centralization had a number of important effects. One of the key changes was the length of the working day. Peasants on farms worked when work needed doing, often increasing the hours they worked during harvesting. Working hours were largely defined by the task that needed doing. With the emergence of factory production and the intensification of production processes, workers increasingly had to work the hours demanded by their employers. Factory production relied on the running of machinery, so the longer the machinery ran, the greater the production. One of the key outcomes of this was the extension in the length of the working day and a decline in the number of religious holidays allowed. (2011: 127)

The industrial restructuring of workers' activities, as described above, is characteristic of what Thompson (in Furze et al 2011: 127) refers to as the transition from task-based work to time-based work. In many ways, the wage-labour system complemented this new paradigm because, instead of being paid per task, wage-earning workers were paid for a predetermined number of hours that they were obliged to work.[18] And, with the introduction of the division of labour in

[17] Some practical methods of discipline that became popular during the Industrial Revolution were the suppression of wages; bells, whistles, and clocks to control workers' movements; timesheets and time-keepers; and fines and physical punishments for those who did not conform to the rules of the workplace (Watson 2003: 122; Allen 2008: 134).

[18] The working day for factory labourers was often twelve or more hours long (Furze 2011: 127).

the factories, the tasks assigned to each worker within that time tended to be highly repetitive and mundane.

The enclosure movement made all this possible. It played a principal role in the transformation of agriculture, as well as the success of modern industries, and in most respects it succeeded in what it set out to accomplish. That is, highly profitable, large-scale agriculture came to dominate the landscape from the eighteenth century onwards, while the creation of a docile urban workforce – so necessary to the success of industrial production – was realized more efficaciously than ever anticipated. Indeed, Vallin, Wunsch, and Caselli indicate that, "towards the end of the 18th century, the urbanization rate in Europe began to increase and rose from about 20% to 80% in about 150 years" (2005: 324). As such, it could be said that the enclosure movement played a major role in the propagation of urbanization, insofar as it is estimated that the changes in agricultural practices that occurred during industrialization were responsible for "one-half to two-thirds of the urban growth" at that time (Vallin et al. 2005: 324). In addition, Carter and McRae elaborate on the tremendous effects that the enclosure movement had upon the physical landscape of England, as well as the way in which English society was organised:

> These developments literally altered the landscape of the country. Open fields were enclosed by hedges and walls; in the cities, smoking factory chimneys polluted the atmosphere; poor-quality houses were built in large numbers and quickly became slums. The mental landscape also changed. The country was divided into those who owned property or land – who were rich – and those who did not – who were poor. A new world was born. (2001: 198)

Moreover, because of the shift away from collectivism towards individualism, which occurred during the Industrial Revolution, traditional structures that had aided the poor and supported social welfare were sidelined, in order for resources to be channeled into the pursuit of personal survival and advancement.

Although land enclosure continued throughout the Industrial Revolution, it was mostly complete by 1850 (Ross 2008: 14). At its height, enclosure resulted in major profits for businessmen, which they in turn spent on expanding their factories and mills, or constructing new ones. This was an intoxicating pattern that entirely "modified the organization of settlements in space" (Vallin et al. 2005: 323), and in many ways, it continues to do so today. Wood describes the enclosure movement as "the most vivid expression of the relentless process that was changing not only the English countryside but also the world: the birth of capitalism" (2002: 109).

1.4 Contemporary agribusiness, the legacy of enclosure

The Industrial Revolution's new economy and all its intricacies, which were fortified by acts of enclosure throughout the English countryside, have had considerable implications for the modern era. Although the Enclosure Movement is often regarded as concluding in the mid-nineteenth century, there is evidence to suggest that enclosure – or privatization – became a growing feature of modern society, and its immense momentum, energized by both a popular faith in capitalism and a growing preoccupation with efficiency, has carried it through the twentieth into the twenty first century. Dewaelheyns, Bomans, and Gulinck describe privatization as "the moving of human activity from the 'public' space to the 'private' space" to such an extent that it "threatens the survival of the public sphere" (2011: 87). As such, privatization persists in rural domains where the strained relationships between family farms and corporate agriculture become ever more apparent, under the new dynamic power of corporatism, which has fortified agribusiness activities and come to wield massive socio-political influence (Wiarda 1997: 183; Mokyr 2003: 11; Unger 2008: 2).[19]

In terms of this trend, it is no longer merely entrepreneurial farmers, but rather *corporate businesspeople* who are purchasing large tracts of land, in the interest of extending contemporary agribusiness. Holmes explains that agribusiness is "a term used…to denote both industrial agriculture and its corporate lineages, from investing and financing to research and development, petrochemicals, and transportation" (2013: 27). It can also be understood as a "large scale, highly capitalized and mechanized" scheme of food production (Dinham & Hines 1984: 143), which promotes the industrialization of traditional farms, and includes the development of factory farms. While such large-scale, intensive farming is a legacy of nineteenth century enclosure, its major contemporary components – research into biological alterations of crops, the development of new, cheap, factor inputs, and intensive mechanization – stem considerably from the 1920s and 1930s, during which time notable resources were channeled into industrializing this sector. However, the megafarm arguably only reached maturity in the latter half of the twentieth century, when neoliberal capitalism emerged. Kyung-Sup et al. indicate that neoliberal policies emerged from the 1970s onwards, and these policies placed major emphasis upon "deregulation, privatization, and the marketization of social services." As a result, this new economic paradigm significantly augmented corporatism,

[19] Wiarda indicates that "the distinguishing mark of corporatism…is the integration and incorporation…of [non-governmental] groups into the state structure, into actual policy decision making and, frequently, policy implementation too" (1997: 183).

through facilitating private influence in matters of national economic policy. In short, neoliberalism emerged "in advanced capitalist societies where the state and the capitalist class were the two most powerful players" (Kyung-Sup & Fine & Weiss 2012: 169). And while related neoliberal policy reflects the values of technophilic twentieth century society, its preoccupation with hyper-efficiency has allowed agribusiness to thrive. In terms of this, White and Przybylski maintain that "unlike the community garden or the family farm models, vertical farm prototypes propagate imaginations laden with hyper-efficiency and 'current technology'" (2010: 182). Consequently, businessmen are increasingly being encouraged to expand their aspirations, and think in terms of an *infinite* economy. In short, while "in previous centuries, agriculture was an occupation and a way of life; it has now become agri-business" (Menon 2011: 142).

In *Culture Wars: an Encyclopedia of Issues, Viewpoints, and Voices*, Chapman advances two characteristics of the industrial farm, which set it drastically apart from the principles of the traditional family farm. Firstly, the farmers on factory farms typically do not own the livestock, and operate according to the guidelines dictated by the head organization – be it a dairy, meat, egg, or crop producing corporation (Centre for Popular Economics (US) 1986: 106; Chapman 2010: 168). By precluding the farmers from owning any livestock, it is ensured that the farmer maintains the status of labourer, and that s/he has no voice in the production procedures. Secondly, "megafarms are also vertically integrated" (Peterson 2009: 65; Chapman 2010: 168); that is, all aspects of production are usually controlled by the same corporation or common owner. Arguably, the United States has spearheaded this kind of industrial agriculture.[20] In the first thirty years of the twentieth century, the American government invested a considerable amount of resources into agricultural innovation (Dyster & Meredith 1990: 77; Hillstrom & Collier 2007: 59). Holmes suggests that in the early twentieth century, American agriculture was increasingly dominated by "the 'new' farmer who embraced 'the strong arm of science' and turned an acute eye toward 'the commercial mechanisms of…business'" (2013: 24). And there is much evidence to suggest that this new outlook was inextricably intertwined with the use of new technologies. In terms of this, Meyer and Turner offer three principal characteristics of agricultural industrialization, namely, biological innovations, new cheap factor inputs, and mechanization (1994: 309).

[20] In 1909, an agricultural scientist named Butterfield presented President Roosevelt with a report on how he felt American agriculture could be expanded. This report is said to mark a turning point in American agriculture, because it set the ball rolling for the introduction of an "intensive type of agriculture" that would emerge noticeably in the 1930s (Holmes 2013: 24). In California in particular, this new type of farm – the "factory of the field" – was said to be "rapidly eliminating the prosperous farm" (2013: 24).

Firstly, as early as the 1920s, American agricultural scientists were seeking biological ways to improve crop production. Hillstrom and Collier point out that America was not naturally home to a large variety of crops and fruits. And because of this, the late nineteenth century saw many variations of produce being sourced from countries that displayed similar environmental conditions to the United States (Hillstrom & Collier 2007: 61).[21] The country's agricultural industry was thus based on the manipulation of foreign species of plants, especially after the turn of the century when the "search for genes" became all important. During that time, scientists were already seeking specific traits in plants – such as resistance to drought or insects, early ripening, and attractive colouring – that could "be bred into existing grain or fruit crops to offset the attacks of pests and diseases; extend the growing range of valuable crops such as wheat, cotton, and soybeans; or even improve the marketability of a particular fruit" (Hillstrom & Collier 2007: 61). And while the act of manipulating plants to suit society's needs can be traced back to ancient times,

> it was not until the emergence of modern genetics and especially the 'rediscovery' of Mendelian laws of inheritance around 1900 that scientists began to exert control over the process…[even though it] would take several decades more before commercial agriculture began to reap the benefits of that scientific work, for example, with the arrival of the high-yielding 'hybrid' corn in the 1920s. (2007: 61-61)

Indeed, after the introduction of hybrid corn in the 1920s, American agribusiness faced few restrictions regarding the size of its projects, or the production of profits. New hybridized species of crops, recognised as having increased yields, opened new export markets and improved and diversified local diets (1994: 310).[22] Moreover, new developments, such as new varieties of hybrid corn and rice, are considered possibly "the most important contribution of applied biology in the 20th century" (Meyer & Turner 1994: 310). After the 1920s, the use of these hybrid species in farming escalated dramatically,[23] and while by the 1940s, 40 percent of corn crops in America were hybrid seeds, by the 1950s, the use of hybrid corn seed is said to have been universal (Newman 2013: 37). This growth spurt was also positively influenced by

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[21] For example, certain types of "hard-winter wheats" and grains were brought over from Russia to be planted in the Great Plains, while varieties of avocado and navel oranges were sourced in Central America and the Caribbean, to be grown in California (Hillstrom & Collier 2007: 61).

[22] Hybrid seeds are said to have increased yields by up to 100 percent, compared with natural seeds (Newman 2013: 37).

[23] The major profitability of these seeds was recognised quickly by businessmen and farmers, alike. In the 1930s alone, nearly 200 maize hybrid seed companies were formed in the USA (Bewley, Black & Halmer 2006: 351).

state policies to subsidize agriculture from the 1930s, in the form of direct government subsidies or indirect subsidies, such as price supports. With these dynamics at play, "the temptation was to give the miracle crop more and more land" (Newman 2013: 37), and the legacy of this still hangs over contemporary society. The seemingly endless possibilities presented to farmers by the technology of seed hybridization have meant that agribusiness is now the dominant force in global agriculture – not merely with the support of the immensely influential corporations, which control the flows of global food production, but also with the financial and legislative backing of most states.[24]

The huge amount of freedom that contemporary corporations enjoy, with regard to biological technology, was underscored by the signing of the Agreement on Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPS), in 1994. Khor explains that TRIPS "is being used as a protectionist instrument to promote corporate monopolies over technologies, seeds, genes, and medicines. Through TRIPS, large corporations use intellectual property rights to protect their markets, and to prevent competition" (in Young 2013: 111). Put simply, this agreement gives large corporations the right to patent seeds and to prevent local farmers from practicing the ancient tradition of saving seed, such that they are forced to purchase new seeds from corporations each year (Goodhart 2005: 208; Jain & Jain 2011: 156; Young 2013: 111).[25]

The second characteristic of agricultural industrialization in the twentieth century is "new cheap factor inputs" (Meyer & Turner 1994: 309). New factor inputs include much of the paraphernalia that farmers are required to use in connection with hybridized seeds. With the introduction of hybrid seeds, "herbicides and pesticides to protect valuable monocrop systems…from natural threats" along with "a range of specialized equipment to plant, irrigate, cultivate, harvest, store, and transport the increased bounty" were suddenly required (Hillstrom

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[24] Collins and Yeskel (2013) explain that "over 74 percent of agribusiness subsidies go to the wealthiest 10 percent of enterprises." For example, "of the $1.4 billion in annual sugar price supports, 40 percent of the money goes to the largest 1 percent of firms," which indicates how large agricultural corporations are being supported by government – to the detriment of traditional farmers.

[25] This relatively recent occurrence carries heavy social implications for farmers in general, and farmers of the global South, in particular (Phillips 1999: 364; Heistinger 2013: 23). For example, in India, the phenomenon of farmer suicide is a prominent issue. That is, farmers find themselves caught in a cycle of debt because they are forced, or convinced, by corporations to conform to industrial agricultural methods. These farmers then spend their meager funds purchasing hybrid seeds, expensive fertilizers and pesticides for their farms, with the hope that new methods will increase their yield. Subsequently, even when farmers are able to grow their crops successfully, they are forced to sell their produce to companies that do not offer fair prices. Moreover, whereas in the past they would have kept the seeds from the previous harvest, as a result of TRIPS, doing this is a crime. As such, farmers are compelled to buy the next year's supply of seeds from the corporation (Hope & Shiva 2001:14).

& Collier 2007: 62). Development in these aspects of the cultivation process significantly alleviated many of the constraints involved in raising agricultural output (Meyer & Turner 1994: 310). One kind of fertilizer, in particular, is regarded as having had a major impact upon the development of modern agriculture, namely nitrogen fertilizers. This kind of chemical fertilizer was developed in the 1920s, and its use is said to carry many benefits, such as increased protein content in grains, the propagation of fruit and vegetable yields and growth, a heightening in the number of livestock grasslands can support, and an increase in frost and drought resistance in plants (Pimentel 2012: 195). Moreover, because of its chemical origins, nitrogen fertilizer also granted farmers a degree of freedom from animal-produced fertilizer, or naturally occurring types. Indeed, the use of this fertilizer grew so much that by the close of World War II, it accounted for 80 percent of global fertilizer output (Meyer & Turner 1994: 310), and today more than 54 million tons of chemical fertilizer are used in the United State alone each year (Underkoffler 2004: 12).

Another new and cheap factor input, which emerged in the early twentieth century, was commercial pesticide. In the 1890s, lead arsenate was introduced as a pesticide, and by 1910 it was one of the most widely used insect controllers. 'Paris Green' – a copper acetoarsenite compound – was another kind of pesticide that grew in popularity, and together with lead arsenate, sales for these commercially sold pest controllers reached ten million pounds per year in England (Dent 2000: 3; Alt 2010: 137). Other new brands of pesticide also emerged rapidly in the first half of the century, with the consequence that

> the first forty years of the 20th century witnessed an increased use and reliance on chemical insecticides, including the introduction of new compounds such as ethylene oxide, thiocyanates and phenothiazine. However, the application of chemical products tended to be haphazard and very imprecise with the technical material often ineffective. (Dent 2000: 3)

Arguably, the acceleration of the development of chemical pesticides in the second half of the century was largely the result of World War II (WWII). In fact, one of the most widely used insecticides of the twentieth century, DDT (Dichlorodiphenyltrichloroethane), was a product of WWII. The insecticide was used by the United States during the war to combat lice and mosquitoes, and in order to prevent outbreaks of typhus and malaria (Quaratiello 2004: 84). In fact, it is because of the use of DDT during the conflict that "World War II is thought to be the first major war in which more people died from enemy action than from disease" (Glotfelty in Quaratiello 2004: 84). Correlatively, in 1948, the scientist who had discovered DDT's use as an insecticide received a Nobel Prize in medicine and physiology for his work with the

compound (Quaratiello 2004: 84). And having generated major profits through the production of chemicals for the war, chemical companies in the United States began manufacturing DDT as an agricultural product in the post-war era. "Government, farmers, foresters, and amateur gardeners" all purchased these new insecticides in an effort to restore order and control in their surroundings. As Quaratiello shows, even people "in the growing suburbs of the 1950s…wanted to rid their neighbourhoods of the unpleasantness of insects" (2004: 84).[26] In agriculture, the production of DDT contributed significantly to the 'Green Revolution' of the 1950s and 1970s, which saw dramatic increases in food production (Schoch 1996: 100). In short, through its use, farmers were suffering significantly fewer crop failures owing to invasions of insects, and because of this, the pesticide is considered "the first of a family of synthetic chemicals that revolutionized man's war against insects" (Rinella & Hamilton & McKenzie 1993: 9). However, the dangers of DDT also progressively became apparent. That is, by the 1960s, people were beginning to notice the effects of DDT on non-human animal life, and on human health. Bird life was affected most noticeably. The poison caused irregularities in the reproductive capabilities of birds, most noticeably causing their egg shells to become thin and easily breakable. Correlatively, humans experienced headaches, fatigue, confusion, and numbness when exposed to the pesticide for an extensive amount of time (Rinella & Hamilton & McKenzie 1993: 9; Schoch 1996: 100). Nevertheless, the use of other types of chemical insecticides persists in agribusiness.[27] Arguably, the efficiency of DDT set the standard for its successors, ensuring that contemporary industrial agriculture remains dedicated to the obliteration of insects through chemical means.

The third, and arguably most apparent characteristic of agricultural industrialization in the twentieth century is the mechanization of labour on large-scale farms. As mentioned above, the early twentieth century saw significant amounts of funding being channeled into the development of agribusiness. As a result of this, by the 1930s, American agriculture began to undergo major changes through the introduction of mechanization and new methods of farming. In terms of this, one of the most important novelties during this period was the tractor. In the 1920s and 1930s, small tractors with internal combustion engines were being mass produced

[26] The use of DDT was so widespread that residues of the poison could be found in almost all animal and human tissue, and Schoch shows that "in 1970, during the heyday of DDT use, average residue levels of DDT in human fat was 7.95 ppm [parts per million]" (1996: 100).

[27] With the signing of the 2001 Stockholm Convention on Persistent Organic Pollutants, states committed themselves to developing control mechanisms in the trade and production of DDT. However, this Convention did not ban the use of the product, and it continues to be used for disease control in various countries while research and funding for alternative and less harmful methods remains lacking (Clapp & Dauvergne 2008: 131).

and sold at a relatively low cost so that more farmers could afford them. Subsequently, fittings were invented to perform additional tasks, which were previously performed by hand in the fields (Kutz 2007: 73).[28] And accordingly, farmers steadily began replacing their draft animals with tractors – a process of substitution that was almost entirely complete by the 1960s (US Congress 1986: 91). This seemingly simple technical contribution to farming carried significant implications, such as the freeing up of land that had previously been used to grow food for draft animals, speedier ploughing times and freedom from the unpredictable temperaments of animals, all of which allowed farmers the time and space to further expand their lands. Throughout the twentieth century, increasingly efficient machinery was also created in order to further augment the productivity of farms. For example, by the end of WWII, the newly mechanized process of milking cows had thoroughly revolutionized dairy farming. Indeed,

> two symbols of dairy farming – the milking stool and the milk can – disappeared almost completely during the first half of the twentieth century. The introduction and widespread adoption of milking machines outdates the milking stool almost completely by 1945, while pipelines that transported raw milk from cows' teats to refrigerated storage tanks for direct pumping into tanker trucks relegated standard ten-gallon cans to antique dealers. (Nordin & Scott 2005: 140)

In fact, the rapid growth of the use of mechanical milking machines owing to their success and production of profit led to a tenfold increase in their adoption between 1950 and 1960. In this regard, Bieleman indicates that during that decade, the number of machines being used in the United States grew from four thousand to thirty-nine thousand, while in the following decade, these figures doubled, meaning that 85 000 mechanical systems were in place by 1970. Correlatively, from 1950 to 1970, the number of cows in America that were being milked mechanically also grew from 5 percent to 90 percent (Bieleman 2010: 282). This was because, with these machines, it became possible to milk up to sixty cows in one milking parlour, while previously handmilkers would only have been able to milk approximately ten cows in a cowhouse. Today, the largest milking herd in the world is said to be ten thousand cows strong. Members of the herd are "milked three times a day…seven days a week" (Davis 2012: 84). Arguably, this level of efficiency in agriculture was only made *imaginable* and possible by the legacy of British land enclosure, by the Industrial Revolution, and by the techno-rationalist

[28] Other machines that were introduced on farms in the early twentieth century, and which have set the precedent for contemporary agribusiness, include "grain combines, pick-up balers, side-delivery rakes, corn pickers, field forage harvesters, and milking machines," which collectively allowed for "more work in less time and with less human effort" (Cooper, Barton & Brodell 1947: 2).

discourse of efficiency which, from the 20th into the 21st century, has been uncritically accepted as a given socio-economic principle. Gübler (in Meyer & Turner 1994: 308) maintains that as a result of this, between the 1930s and 1980s, "world agriculture was transformed from a resource-based to a technology-based industry," cast in the mold of a new paradigm, namely that of industrial capitalism, and after the 1970s, neoliberal capitalism.

However, while agribusiness contains many positive aspects, such as the ability to produce intensively and to maintain relatively low prices of produce, the possibility that its negative socio-economic influences outweigh its positive attributes, also needs to be considered. With its roots in the nineteenth century movement for enclosure of the commons, agribusiness has not only perpetuated, but also significantly aggravated, the problematic socio-economic patterns that emerged as a result of the Enclosure Movement. The continuing decline in human farm labour and the endangerment of small-scale "family farms" within the rural areas, are largely the result of the hyper-mechanization of agriculture. And these two socio-economic realties have arguably resulted in correlatively adverse implications for the urban areas. That is, the propagation of agricultural mechanization has not only led to the demise of rural farm labour and small-scale farms, but also to increased urbanization, a consequent decrease in workers' self-sufficiency, and a growing reliance upon corporatism for food security. But, in order to investigate these socio-economic issues, it is important that the primary points of declining farm labour and the endangerment of the family farm, are first elaborated upon.

To start with, there is vast evidence to suggest that the number of people employed in agriculture has plummeted since twentieth century hyper-mechanization. Kumar, Mital, and Pennathur note that mechanization

> exerted a major socioeconomic impact on society as…farm operations replaced manual labour with machines. This replacement marked the decline of the agricultural workforce in the United States. At the end of the nineteenth century, nearly 50% of the population was involved in agricultural employment. [But by] the end of the twentieth century, a rapid and steady decline in the agricultural workforce meant that less than 2% of the U.S. population worked in agriculture. (2013: 110)

Mechanization of agribusiness was irresistible to corporate farmers because "machinery led to greater production with fewer workers" (Kumar et al 2013: 110); simply put, one machine could be purchased to complete the tasks of several labourers. In fact, Groneman and Norton assert that "each tractor displaced three to five farm workers," while others suggest that this figure could be closer to seven or nine workers (1987: 221). Large numbers of farm workers were subsequently displaced in the first half of the twentieth century, as new machines were

introduced to agribusiness. However, while this was a concern for many of the unskilled workers who depended upon the farm setting for employment, agribusiness farmers did not consider the displacement to be problematic. On the contrary, the fact that labourers were forced to migrate to the urban areas in search of jobs in upcoming industries, was construed as advantageous to the economy. As Schwartzman maintains, "the fact that the new machinery once installed displaced workers was of no concern. What mattered was that workers were hired to manufacture the new machinery, and their purchases of consumer goods stimulated production and employment in other industries" (1997: 11). Because of this mindset, traditional farm labour was not only greatly diminished, but also increasingly articulated in pejorative terms.

Unsurprisingly, those who could no longer secure employment in agriculture were generally "among the least educated and least skilled workers and in minority groups" (Committee on the Impact of Biotechnology 2010: 188). Consequently, urban areas received masses of unemployed, unskilled, and uneducated minorities, as part of a process of "deskilling farmers" and farm labour (Stone 2001: 576).[29] Cities could not, of course, immediately accommodate the influx of rural migrants, which resulted in rampant unemployment in the urban areas. In addition, those who were able find employment were generally obliged to accept meager wages.[30] However, the mechanization of agriculture not only negatively affected many farm labourers. In addition, many farmers themselves were also – and continue to be – rendered helpless by the might of agribusiness. Most notably, agricultural industrialization in "the early twentieth century changed the landscape of U.S. agriculture. Small farms growing diversified crops around the country transformed into a small number of large specialized farms concentrated in specific geographical regions" (Kumar et al 2013: 110). This phenomenon has come to be known as the endangerment of the 'family farm.' As Cavanagh and Mander indicate in their *Alternatives to economic globalization: a better world is possible*, small and local

[29] Those who were most affected by this 'de-skilling' generally formed part of minority groups, for example, many of the migrants were black. As Phillips and Straussner indicate, "while in 1940, 77 percent of blacks in the United States still lived in the South, by 1970, only 50 percent remained, and only 25 percent continued to live in rural areas" (2006: 15).

[30] Indeed, there is evidence to suggest that many of the landless labourers who migrated to the urban areas for employment ended up contributing to the growth of urban slums. Sinha explains that "continuous migration not only tends to swell the number of urban unemployed in almost all developing countries, but also exacerbates the already critical problems of slums" (2013: 12). Similarly, Canterbury indicates that "slum dwellers are reportedly on the increase globally as rural-urban migration remains a vital strategy for individuals to improve their livelihoods" (2012: 136).

farming systems are thoroughly incompatible with globalized and corporate agribusiness operations (2004: 211). This is because family farms cannot compete with the wealth and power that gives the agribusiness its immense inertia. Consequently, small farms are pushed to the brink of economic failure, and then bought up by large corporations, leaving farmers "landless, homeless, cash-less, and hungry," alternatively urban or wage slaves (Cavanagh & Mander 2004: 211). In short, as Stone points out, "agribusiness profits either by driving independent farmers off their land or metabolizing farm operation so that farmers become a proletariat" (2001: 575). And while agribusiness compels family farms to become indebted, corporate farming uses local resources indiscriminately, with the full support of government (Stone 2001: 575-576). As a result of this trend, in contrast to "earlier times [when] agriculture was primarily for own consumption and then for sale, now it is solely for profit." That is, "the corporations who own most of the farms don't care what they produce, or, to whom they sell, as long as the profits are increasing" (Menon 2011: 143).

The consequence of this is not only that communities, which were previously and perhaps historically based on traditional farming lifestyles, have found their culture uprooted by the development of industrial agricultural production, pursued in the name of hyperbolic profits. In addition to destroying such traditional ways of life, the natural environment has also suffered severe degradation. Agribusiness is considered to be the "single largest source of nonpoint source pollution in the United States" (Teske 2004: 186).[31] Moreover, these trends have augmented the growth of urban areas, as farm labourers and farmers alike are progressively forced to find alternative employment in the cities. And as many people continue to migrate to urban areas, they find themselves compelled to align their lives with the neoliberal narratives that govern urban flows and to submit to the very laissez-faire economic system that destroyed their former way of life. In this way, the current dynamic of de-ruralisation can be understood as a continuation of that flow first put in motion by the Enclosure Movement.[32]

This movement of people *en masse* to urban space has also birthed a number of further factors, which have served to strengthen neoliberal narratives, and to weaken dissident voices. Firstly, on an increasingly tangible level, people have become de-skilled in the art of food production, because the corporately managed urban space neither encourages, nor caters for, acts of self-sufficiency with regard to food. In Western society, the majority of urban dwellers

[31] The pollution of groundwater in areas of industrial agriculture is well documented, as well as the incredible amounts of animal waste and chemical waste, which are often disposed of in regional rivers (Emel & Wolch 1998: 4; Blatt 2008: 26; Conner 2009: 182).

[32] Currently, over fifty percent of the earth's population resides in urban spaces, and this number continues to rise. It is predicted that by 2025, 60 percent of the population will live in cities (Carreiro, Song & Wu 2007: 10).

depend on supermarkets to provide them with their daily food requirements. And in allowing themselves to be entirely reliant upon these commercial chains, people exchanged their food security for the convenience of shop-bought groceries. This is because there is evidence to suggest that the current system of food production is as finite as the fossil fuels it requires. In terms of this, Nordahl explains that,

> from before the advent of agriculture until the Industrial Revolution, societies never had to rely on fossil fuels to feed themselves. Today, the conventional system of agriculture in the United States relies on fossil fuels for almost every phase of food production: in the manufacturing of fertilizers, pesticides, and herbicides; for powering the complex machinery necessary for tilling, planting, harvesting, washing, sorting, and processing; and in transporting the final food product thousands of miles to our supermarkets. As the bounty of cheap oil dwindles, so too, does our bounty of food. (2009: 18)

Because of this growing dependence upon fossil fuels in order to grow food, society is faced with the imminent possibility of severe food shortages; as fossil fuel reserves are diminished, the likelihood of food crises in urban areas becomes ever more concerning.[33] However, despite this, the corporately dominated food system is unwilling to alter its policies in favour of more sustainable, less profitable, alternatives. On the contrary, agribusiness has for decades been using fears of critical food shortages as a motivation for increasing fiscal support. In this regard, Stone explains how the expansion of agribusiness has been "justified by the deceptive trope of population outstripping food supply, a trope designed to naturalize the urban proletariat" (2001: 575). That is, corporate agriculture uses the rapid rates of population growth on many continents as its rationale for intensifying its expansion, all the while generating "food insecurity and hunger as it goes and [using] that hunger…to justify further expansion" (2001: 575).[34]

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[33] Many countries are already reporting inflation in the cost of food because of rising oil prices (OECD 2008: 37; Westhof 2010: 35). The issue of food shortages in urban areas becomes all the more problematic when one considers that half of global populations now reside in cities and towns. At present, cities rely on long-distance production of food for supermarkets and, with urban areas not being geared towards the growing of food, there is evidence to suggest that, in cases of critical food shortages in the city, this model of food production would prove drastically inadequate (Smith 2007: 592).

[34] In recent times, a variety of authors (Redman 2007: 102; Hall, Clover, Crowther & Scandrett 2013: 159) have indicated that previous assumptions of large-scale farms being more productive than organic, small-scale farms are not entirely correct. McFadden shows that if scientists were to compare the total output per acre of large farms, with that of small farms, the large-scale farms would seem more productive. However, when the total output of a variety of produce is measured – grains, fruits, vegetables, and livestock – the small scale farms are proven to be

Moreover for the most part, urban dwellers are no longer adept at growing their own food, because of the forced separation of people from land, which began with the Enclosure Movement. Indeed, the majority of city folk would arguably not be able to provide for themselves if the current system of food production were to suffer a crisis. This possibility brings into focus the modern person's loss of connectivity with nature in general, and the land in particular. From the agricultural purges of the Industrial Revolution, to the mechanization of agriculture in the twentieth century, recent history has seen Western society being conditioned to deny its ultimate reliance upon the Economy of Nature.[35] Ikerd elucidates upon this trend, when he refers to how

> Urban dwellers in particular have lost all sense of personal connection to the farm or the soil. During most of the twentieth century, many people living in cities either had lived on a farm at one time or knew someone, usually a close relative, who still lived on a farm, which gave them some tangible connection with the soil. At least they knew that *land* meant something more than just a place to play or space to be filled with some kind of commercial development. But most personal connections have been lost with the aging of urbanization. One of the most common laments among farmers today is that people no longer know where their food comes from. (2008: 107)

Because the connection between people and land has largely been dissolved, the mega-hubs of modern society have come to reflect this separation. Indeed, the natural environment has been relegated to the margins of consideration in many metropoles and cities, such that in many urban centres nature, let alone food gardens, is barely featured. What this means is that, after being compelled to leave the rural areas – spaces which traditionally nursed people's abilities to be self-sufficient, sociable, and creative in their own right – people are finding themselves in an increasingly corporate urban space, which is heavily privatized and, accordingly, unconducive to self-sufficiency.

Secondly, while neoliberal societies seem to favour *gesellschaft* thinking, in recent times, the privatization of public (urban) space has become a major point of contention. Referring to the growing trend of privatization, Shaftoe explains that "urban land is at a

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more successful. He goes on to mention that "acre for acre, small, organic, farms use less energy, create less pollution, offer more satisfying work, and produce more clean food from the land" (2011: 105).

[35] Eco-feminist and environmental activist Vandana Shiva observes that, ultimately, all economies rest upon the Economy of Nature. She explains that "nature's economy consists of the production of goods and services by nature – the water recycled and distributed through the hydrologic cycle, the soil fertility produced by microorganisms, the plants fertilized by pollinators" (2006: 16). Without these essential processes neither subsistence nor the market economies can survive.

premium, so in a profit-orientated society, space where people can just loaf around is not seen as a financial priority." Moreover, "contemporary worries about security, litigation and 'stranger danger' result in the urban realm becoming increasingly privatized and controlled" (2012: 6). In terms of this, there seems to be a disparity between the wishes of those who reside in urban spaces, and who identify with *gemeinschaft* thinking, and those who regard public space as counter-productive. 'Public space' is defined by Kurt Iveson as "particular places in the city that are (or should be) open to members of 'the public'…such as streets, footpaths, parks, squares and the like" (2007: 2). Iveson goes on to indicate the growing concern among activists that "spaces in contemporary cities are becoming more exclusionary, and hence less accessible to those seeking to put them to work in circulating ideas." Here, Iveson is alluding to the democratic potential that lies in public spaces. Parks, squares, and open pieces of land are areas in which citizens can pursue recreational activities unsanctioned by corporatism – such as growing food gardens, escaping from the corporate space of the office, and socialising in a class-free environment. Public spaces are thus the breeding ground for feelings relating to *gemeinschaft*, insofar as they are the urban commons to which citizens should be entitled.

However, through corporatism's progressive privatization of public spaces, citizens are being limited in their abilities to be both critical and self-sufficient. With little to no space to grow food gardens, people are not given the opportunity to pursue such liberating activities, which are potentially profound acts of revolt against the current system of food production, as well as the neoliberal socio-economic paradigm. Moreover, without sufficient public *space*, citizens are increasingly compelled to socialize in pseudo-public spaces, such as shopping malls in which conformity to the norms of corporatist society is a consistent imperative, and where the free, classless, association of people remains largely unfacilitated.[36] Through such means, people are not afforded a critical distance from the neoliberal system, and the possibility of critical movements emerging within the urban environment remains largely inhibited.

Ironically, while contemporary political discourse often deals with notions of *choice* and *consumer democracy*, it would seem that the average urban dwellers' abilities to make choices regarding the origins of their food, as well as the extent to which they allow corporatism to affect their lifestyles, remains highly illusory. While growing dependence upon corporations

[36] The implication of cities identifying these pseudo-public spaces as places where 'the public' can gather is that those who do not necessarily have access to them, or "undesirable" characters such as the homeless, are not represented in society's conception of 'the public' (Fyfe 2006: 213). In this way, because pseudo-public spaces are governed by neoliberal principles, and are essentially private property, corporate forces are given the power to decide who comprises 'the public.'

to provide food and space for people began centuries ago, it would seem that a system of dispossession continues to operate – at an increasing rate – in contemporary society. Yet, as will be discussed in the following chapters, pockets of resistance to such neoliberal hegemony do exist around the world, of which Cuba is arguably one of the most important examples.

Chapter Two: Cuban Enclosure and Resistance

2.1 Introduction

With the growing problem of corporately controlled food systems, many theorists (Norberg-Hodge et al. 2002; Holt & Reed 2006; Conkin 2008) have begun to investigate ways in which people can begin to reclaim a degree of food autonomy. While recent years have seen the emergence of movements for urban agriculture, along with campaigns to boycott the mainstream food system,[37] it is becoming ever more evident that a complete paradigm shift – rather than a few dispersed efforts – is required. In this regard, a considerable number of researchers and activists have begun to focus on the agricultural revolution of Cuba, which took place during the 1990s. And with a view to accounting for the growing interest in this occurrence as a potential model for an alternative society, in what follows, its historical context will be considered. This will be done in order to provide a solid theoretical foundation for in-depth discussion of the dynamics of the *Revolución Agrícola*, in the following chapter.

That is, in this chapter, three of the four main agricultural transitions that occurred in Cuba will be explored. To start with, the colonial legacy of Cuban agriculture will be discussed, with particular reference to Wright's *Sustainable Agriculture and Food Security in an Era of Oil Scarcity*, *The History of Cuba*, and Zorina's "On the Genesis of Capitalism in Nineteenth century Cuba." Through these texts, Cuba's agricultural and socio-economic path, influenced strongly by both the colonizing might of Spain and the importation of slave labour until the late nineteenth century, will be thematised. Next, the role of the United States in influencing modern Cuban agriculture between 1898 and 1958 will be examined, and specific focus will fall on the United States' implementation of a large-scale, high-input, system of food production on the island. To this end, the dialogue between McCook's *States of Nature: Science, agriculture, and environment in the Spanish Caribbean, 1760-1940*, Benjamin's *The United States and Cuba: Hegemony and Dependent Development, 1880-1934*, as well as "Theorizing the Revolution" by Foran, will be elaborated upon. After this, the third agricultural transition which accompanied the 1959 revolution in Cuba will be discussed. That is, the manner in which the revolutionary government implemented a series of reforms soon after coming into power, which

[37] *Foodtank* is just one of the many collaborative websites available for ordinary citizens to access information and ideas regarding urban farming. *Foodtank* also points to success stories of urban agricultural initiatives, such as those in Detroit, London, Singapore, and the practice of "sharing backyards" in Canada – social movements that are all promoting the reclamation of not only public space, but also food autonomy (Foodtank, 2014).

although pro-poor in many respects failed to transform Cuban agriculture, insofar as they remained underpinned by large-scale and high-input systems. Discussion of these three transitions will form the basis of the exploration, in the following chapter, of the fourth transition which occurred with the advent of the oil crisis in Cuba after the collapse of the Soviet Union – an event which precipitated the countrywide remedial agricultural measures that now so interest theorists, as an organic response that holds potential lessons for the world.

2.2 Spanish colonialism, slave labour, and the birth of the wage labourer in Cuba

Cuba was first inhabited by migratory tribes from North and South America. The first known inhabitants were the Guanahatabeyes, who are thought to have arrived there from North America, about ten thousand years ago (Suchlicki 2002: 5). For the most part, these people practised fishing and gathering in order to acquire food. Joining them, approximately 4 500 years ago, were the Ciboneyes, who were also primarily hunter-gatherers. However, with the arrival of the Taino tribe from South America about fifteen hundred years ago, the first farmers were introduced to the island. Although the Taino tribe hunted, they also planted crops of cassava and maize, along with vegetables such as sweet potato, squash, beans, and peanuts, and various fruits (Chandler & Chandler 2005: 25; Wright 2009: 52).[38] These people are said to have had a "good understanding of local ecology and ecological aspects of agriculture," and implemented various ways of farming, which sought to "minimize competition for the soil and moisture resources" (Wright 2009: 52). As such, the traditional farming methods of the Taino people not only recognised the limited resources of nature, but also sought to conserve those aspects – such as healthy soil and water – which were vital to the success of their crops.

However, these harmonious traditions were progressively marginalized when the Spanish colonialists arrived on the island in 1492, and began to impose not only their authority, but also European systems of agriculture, upon the island. At first, the settlers focused on the island's mineral resources, but having exhausted the available deposits of copper and gold (Bethell 1984: 105; Markel 2012: 15), they turned increasingly to agriculture (Europa 2002: 302; de Quesada 2010: 4). The land was divided up and distributed among the settlers, who soon began to set up cattle farms and grow tobacco. Sugar cane was also propagated on

[38] In fact, the Taino people are thought to be responsible for initiating the cultivation of about 60 percent of the crops still grown in contemporary Cuba. They are also said to have been the first culture in the world to "nurture the delicate tobacco plant into a form that could easily be processed for smoking" (Sainsbury 2009: 34).

relatively large pieces of land, although the sugar boom that came to characterize Cuban history would only occur some three centuries later (Brandon 1997: 52; Wright 2009: 52). Rather, to begin with, Spanish farmers ran mixed crop-livestock systems, with much emphasis placed on the production of crops. But the differences between the indigenous Cuban agricultural systems and those of the Spanish were marked, and the privileging of the latter led to a general "process of agricultural conversion to European practices" (Funes 2007: 5). And although Cuba was one of the first colonies to transform their food-production processes in accordance with the European ideal, this occurred largely to the detriment of its indigenous peoples.

In this regard, the settlers dominated the indigenous peoples of the island; once a large proportion of them had been exterminated through combat or incidentally through disease – particularly those illnesses brought by the colonialists – the remainder was confined to demarcated regions.[39] That is, the settlers used their comparatively advanced weaponry to annihilate a large portion of them, and implemented a scorched earth policy so as to further 'tame' the Cuban environment. Of those indigenous people who survived the initial onslaught of the settlers, many fell victim to diseases introduced to the island by the conquistadors, such as measles, typhus, influenza, and smallpox (Lockard 2007: 499; Henken 2008: 32). The devastating effects of the arrival of the Spanish were reflected in the dramatic decrease in the indigenous population; between 1492 and the first half of the sixteenth century, it is estimated that the native population fell from approximately 112 000 people to a mere five thousand (Henken 2008: 32). In fact, their drastic decline was such that in many areas "the native people had become all but extinct because of the brutal treatment by the Caucasian colonizers" (Valenti 2002: 84). Of the remaining native population, a large number "disappeared into Cuba's white Creole population over the next 350 years" (Henken 2008: 33), while others disappeared into the forests and swamps, making occasional appearances to attack nearby settlers. And against the backdrop of the latter conflict, the rest of the population, "after ultimately unsuccessful experiments with different systems of labour and land grants," were relegated to reserves (*reducciones*) created to contain them (Bauer & Mazzotti 2009: 14).[40] In this way, the Spanish

[39] The native Indians attempted many times to resist colonial domination; most famous was Hatuey, an Indian chieftain, who led rebellions against the settlers. And although in 1512 Hatuey was overpowered and executed, a spirit of resistance persisted among the natives who continued with endeavours to drive the Spanish away, until their defeat by the latter, in Caonao, in 1513 (Robins 2003: 6; Hughes & Fast 2004: 7).

[40] As Bauer and Mazzotti indicate, these *reducciones* were more than merely a way to manage the indigenous population. Instead, they were created to 'tame' the natives, by facilitating the "implantation of Catholicism and the transformation of indigenous peoples from *rústicos* (uncivilized)…into mature political subjects" (2009: 14). To this end, such towns were monitored by 'civilised' people, such as monks or Spanish officials; some of these

enclosed the indigenous populations, while dividing arable land amongst themselves with the view that the natives were merely a hindrance to the huge potential for profit which farming offered. Thus the Indians were the "first victims of the bloody epoch of colonization and the original accumulation of capital" on the island (Zorina 1975: 8). However, by marginalizing the indigenous people in this way, the Spanish in effect destroyed their chances of developing an indigenous workforce. And Henken indicates that soon the "victorious conquistadors found themselves surrounded by vast tracts of fertile, virgin land, but…alone on an increasingly depopulated island." Moreover, "although the bulk of the natives on whom they had relied for labour were gone, the Spanish stubbornly refused to soil their hands by working the land like lowly farmers" (2008: 32). Consequently, this "rapid demographic collapse of indigenous populations in the early sixteenth century created labour shortages that induced elite groups to turn fairly quickly to African slaves for their labour needs" (2007: 136). Accordingly, from the sixteenth through to the eighteenth centuries, there occurred a steady growth in the importation of slaves, to create a workforce not only for the sugarcane plantations, but also to cultivate tobacco and to work in the urban areas.[41] However, until the mid-eighteenth century, the labour deficit remained a problem and the island did not become a significant producer. Rather, as a "neglected, sparsely populated outpost of the empire," the country mainly practised farming for local consumption needs (Keen & Haynes 2012: 239). Yet, while until the mid-eighteenth century, the number of slaves being imported per year was only a few hundred – for the purpose of sparing the settlers the effort of farming their own lands – subsequently slave labour came to play an increasingly important role in Cuba's economy. It has even been suggested that it was the slaves "whose bones paved the road to the development of capitalist relations in Europe and Cuba" (Zorina 1975: 7).

But before Cuba could undergo such immense economic transformation, farmers first had to find a way to deal with the restrictive land and trade policies that had been imposed on them by the Spanish Crown, which upheld principles of mercantile capitalism (Bagchi 1982: 14; Cohen 2012: 95). That is, producers were not presented with diverse options for trade and commerce because Spain had decreed that "colonists could purchase goods only from the mother country" (Childs 2009: 48), and this inhibited the island's ability to become a player in world markets. Spain's objective in this regard was to keep the island dependent upon it for

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towns – for example Yara, Dos Brazos, La Guira, and Jiguaní – still functioned on this principle until the late nineteenth century (Henken 2008: 34).

[41] Many of the slaves brought to Cuba are said to have originated from Benin, Rwanda, Namibia, and the Cameroon (Peretz 2007: 5), while it is estimated that over 650 000 slaves were imported from Nigeria alone (Wright 2009: 2009: 52).

basic essentials, while producing increasingly monocultural industries. As Henken explains, "throughout the colonial period…there was little consideration of developing a local manufacturing economy or of diversifying Cuba's monocultural agricultural industry," with the consequence that the country became "less, not more, agriculturally diversified" (2008: 47; Farber 2007: 24). Moreover, Spain discouraged Cubans from establishing local entrepreneurial efforts, in the hope that the island would remain dependent upon the motherland for basic essentials, and focus merely on the production of raw materials. Arguably, the epitome of Spanish control over Cuban trade was found in the establishment of the *Real Compañía de Comercio de la Habana* (Johnson 2011: 9; Curry-Machado 2011: 13). The role of this company was to purchase all materials produced by Cubans – often at a reduced rate – and to sell Spanish goods to Cuba at an inflated rate. And this was facilitated by the fact that the company "had an exclusive right to provide the island with all its imported manufactured goods" (Henken 2008: 48). To add insult to injury, in the midst of tightening Spanish control, Cuban entrepreneurs were bombarded with new taxes, such as import, sales, fleet, church, and mining taxes (Pérez 2003: 49).

However, a critical turning point in terms of Cuban economic functioning was the British occupation of Havana between 1762 and 1763, during the Seven Years War.[42] This resulted in more liberal trade policies in Havana, which opened up the locals to foreign shipping and increased commercial activity for the eleven months of Britain's occupancy (Figueredo & Argote-Freyre 2008: 78). In short, the British invasion "helped put an end to the island's relative isolation from the political and economic forces that had already remade the rest of the Americas and ushered in its incorporation into the modern world economy as something more than a roadhouse between Europe and the Americas" (Henken 2008: 49). Indeed, in many ways, Cuba's experience with British rule resulted in the country changing its perceptions of trade and 'economy.' In particular, Britain was able to significantly influence Cuban society to accept industrial capitalist economic policy, which included the conception of the Cuban economy as something separate from the Spanish economy. During those few months, the Cuban merchant class was exposed to trade with Britain and North America, and when the Spanish finally managed to regain control of the country in 1763, they realized that Cuban merchants' exposure

[42] The main conflict of the Seven Years' War took place between 1756 and 1763, and involved most of the superpowers of the time, including Britain, France, Spain, Prussia, Austria, and Russia. Combat was spread over many separate battles – collectively responsible for nearly a million deaths – for power over colonised territories and European land. The War ended with Britain, France, and Spain signing the Treaty of Paris, and Saxony, Austria, and Prussia signing the Treaty of Hubertusburg (Danley & Speelman 2012: 523; Marston 2013: 77).

to freer trade, and newfound entrepreneurial enthusiasm, would be near impossible to reverse. Consequently, Cuba's gates were opened for increasingly liberal commercial activities.

It was the new possibilities that became available to Cuban merchants – as a result of Spain's slackened hold on the island's economy – that resulted in an agricultural boom. And in order to cope with the new demands, Cuba began to import slaves at an escalated rate. Knight indicates that "large-scale importation of slaves into Cuba began in the 1760s," and that by the 1790s "Cuba was regularly importing 7 000 slaves per annum" (1997: 61). As a result of the newly liberated trade policies, and the influx of slave power to the island, "by 1805, there were twice as many sugar mills in Cuba as there were before the English occupation of Havana" (Staten 2005: 20).[43] However, ironically, just as Cuba's economy began to emerge in the above way, European countries began to abolish slavery, which placed an immense amount of pressure on Cuban farmers, who understood that the days of easy access to slaves were numbered. Spain agreed to abolish the slave trade to Cuba by 1820, and in a rush to secure an ample labour force, a further 700 000 slaves were shipped to the island between 1800 and 1867. The peak of this occurred in the 1830s, during which 181 000 slaves were imported, while Spain turned a blind eye to the anti-slavery policies it had agreed to uphold (Knight 1997: 61; Klein 2010: 193). It was ultimately the use of slaves that paved the way for Cuba's economy to function in an industrially capitalistic fashion.

That is, by 1820, it is estimated that slaves constituted 43 percent of the Cuban population (Zorina 1975: 12; Lipski 2008: 99). However, slaves were not especially needed in the urban areas of Cuba at that time because, as with most colonies, the manufacturing of raw materials – apart from sugar – did not take place on the island. This was because the colonial powers preferred that the colonies assumed the role of provider of raw materials, while the *alma mater* processed and profited from the goods. As such, the start of the nineteenth century saw sugar rise to the most "stable and beneficial" of Cuban crops, which "steadily displaced all other export crops" (Zorina 1975: 10). And as a major sugar boom was experienced on the island in the first half of the nineteenth century, three main types of planters emerged, namely, old owners of land who had wealthy family legacies; wealthy companies that sought to gain a percentage of the sugar market; and self-made immigrants. All of these farmers' "immense wealth was built on the institution of slavery with virtually all of the largest sugar plantations using slaves for the backbreaking work of cutting cane" (Staten 2005: 24; Binder 1993: 147).

[43] The sudden awakening of Cuban trade was also due largely to the slave rebellion in Haiti in 1791 (Doak & Schwarz 2006: 50); because of the rebellion, Haiti was no longer a productive sugar producer, and Europe's attention turned to Cuba to potentially fill the role of the world's greatest source of sugar.

It was also these wealthier groups who benefitted from the land reforms in the early nineteenth century, which saw the Spanish Crown offer up previously state-owned land for sale to farmers who could prove that they had "been in possession of the land for ninety years and had been cultivating it for forty years" (Staten 2005: 20).[44] Although these reforms "increased the number of landowners and allowed property owners greater freedom in the use of the land" (2005: 20), private ownership of land remained available only to the privileged few who could afford to purchase it. And what this meant was that "despite enormous difficulties derived from the severity and limitations of the colonial regime, the concentration of wealth…in the hands of the upper reaches of Cuban society advanced" (Zorina 1975: 10), which contributed significantly to future wealth and power disparities.

In effect, with the emergence of the distinct affluent farming class, the dichotomy of the wealthy landowners *vis á vis* the landless, labouring, slave class, became ever more apparent. In addition, during the early nineteenth century, the institution of plantation slavery had been firmly established on the island,[45] and this system had solid ties to the industrial revolution, which was occurring in Britain at that time. In fact, some authors assert that plantation slavery created the conditions for the establishment of industrial capitalism in Europe, as well as the Industrial Revolution (Inikori 2002: 117; Postma 2008: 2). In terms of this, Zorina indicates how "the slave plantations of colonial Cuba which flourished in the first half of the nineteenth century, the same as in the south of the United States and in other islands of the West Indies and Brazil," were all "closely tied to the capitalist world market and to the international division of labour" (1975: 12). As such, there is evidence to suggest that plantation slavery in Cuba and other colonies made it possible for the newly conceptualized 'economies' of the North to flourish – through the provision of raw materials for the creation of commodities in European markets. In other words, the factory system and division of labour, which characterized Industrial England, were only achievable through the importation of raw materials from the distant shores of, among other places, Cuba.

Correlatively, the sugar boom in Cuba benefitted from the Industrial Revolution through its acquisition of new agricultural machinery, especially for the processing of sugar cane.[46] In

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[44] Cuban land had previously been held in *usufruct*, which meant that farmers could profit from the land, but the land remained the property of the Crown (Suchlicki 1974: 65; Staten 2005: 20).

[45] In fact, as a consequence of the immense presence of slave labour on the island, Cuba was described as "the country of sugar and slaves" (Humboldt in Zorina 1975: 12).

[46] In 1827, Cuba began to use steam power, by adopting steam-boiling kettles for use during the processing of sugar cane, and steam-powered sugar cane crushers. And in 1839, the Rillieux evaporator was adopted, which

fact, as early as 1818, some farmers began making use of steam engines at sugar mills (Allahar 1990: 80). This technology was by and large provided by North American companies, such as Merrick and Sons from Philadelphia, Novelty Ironworks from New York, and Isaac and Seth Porter from Boston. As soon as Cuban ports had been opened up to international trade, American engineers had started to migrate to the island in order to operate and carry out maintenance on the imported machinery, especially during harvest season (Staten 2005: 22). Of course, these years correlatively marked the start of a growing dependence of Cuba on North America for trade and capital investment. This was in large part due to the fact that, like certain other raw materials, sugarcane depreciates the longer it awaits processing, which meant that it could not always be profitably "traded internationally in crude form to be processed in the industrial countries" (Dye 1998: 1). In response to this problem which "imposed a different regimen on the industrialization and modernization of the cane sugar industry," Cuba underwent an industrial revolution of its own in the second half of the nineteenth century (1998: 1). That is, Cuba's economy continued to expand throughout the nineteenth century, with increased mechanization and a growing support for wage labour. In fact, the late nineteenth century saw Cuban sugarcane farms become the most mechanized in the world, and they became responsible for a third of the world's sugar production at the time (Salvucci 1996: 55; Wright 2009: 52). In particular, the 1860s marked a peak in Cuba's sugar boom, and with it, a remarkable North American presence in the country. This was reflected in the fact that, by 1861, Cuba was exporting more than half of its sugar to North America, and over five thousand American tourists were visiting the country each year (Staten 2005: 28; Lehning 2013: 97).

One of the main contributors to Cuban affluence at this time was the realization, on the part of Cuban entrepreneurs and farmers, that wage labour was potentially more profitable than slave labour. Indeed, slavery came to be regarded as a hindrance to the progression of the Cuban economy, and this new wave of thought stimulated the growth of capitalist relations in the country, which sought to emulate the European model (Zorina 1975: 14; Taylor 2001: 159). With the new focus on wage labour, contract labourers arrived in Cuba from China, and they were employed by large sugar processing plants. The existing Cuban slaves were also turned into wage labourers, because ultimately – with the use of technology becoming more commonplace on farms – employing workers as wage-earners meant that the farmer no longer had to pay for their food, boarding, or clothing. Indeed, very often, "slaves who were set free would stay working on a plantation for fixed wages determined by their former masters"

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allowed for more sugar to be harvested than traditional methods of boiling the cane (Haber 1992: 29; Sluby 2004: 29).

(Fahoome 2007: 35). With wage labour, Cuban farmers were also able to extend the working day to seventeen, eighteen, or even twenty hours, in much the same way that the European capitalists had done in factories (Zorina 1975: 12; Gilbert 1981: 116). In addition, similar to the situation of British small-scale farmers during the Enclosure Movement, the Cuban "tobacco and sugar cultivating peasantry [were converted]…into wage earning workers" (Zorina 1975: 15). This was because small-scale landowners could neither afford the requisite increasingly complex machinery, nor cultivate new land profitably without it, which subsequently compelled them either to mortgage their land and fall into debt, or to seek out dependent employment on big farms or in the towns. In this regard, the call for wage workers in cigar and cigarette factories in the urban areas in general, and Havana in particular, was all too tempting within their desperate context. And in this way, the 'working class' of Cuba was born (Farber 2011: 131). At that time, Havana alone held 536 cigar and cigarette production houses, employing altogether over fifteen thousand workers (Zorina 1975: 15). In much the same way as in England, poorer farmers were forced to join the ranks of wage earners, while freed slaves – who now had to fend for themselves in an increasingly capitalistic Cuba – also contributed significantly to the growth of the working class.

A consequence of this was that increasing strain was placed on the urban centres to cater for inflated population numbers. As with many of the European and American cities that had undergone urbanization during the Industrial Revolution, slums and shanty towns began to develop along the outskirts of Havana, where the wage labourers were mostly situated (Sublette 2004: 256). And it was there that the growing inequalities in Cuba's social structure became apparent, and a matter of growing dissent. As Staten maintains, the island's economic growth throughout the nineteenth century was impressive, most notably in terms of

> the increase in sugar production, the greater use of technology, the development of the infrastructure on the island, the growth in tourism, the site of Havana as a major world trading centre and the growth in trade with other countries, [which] clearly indicated tremendous progress. Yet, at the same time it is also important to point out that the benefits of that growth and progress were clearly not shared very evenly among its population. (Staten 2005: 29)

Instead, the establishment of distinct class differentiation in Cuba resulted in the "wealthy planter class, [which] stood in dramatic contrast with the majority of Cubans who did not benefit from sugar wealth" (Staten 2005: 28). Urban slums were accordingly characterized by a disenfranchised and angry population, who saw the contrast between their own circumstances and that of the neighbourhoods where wealthy businessmen and farmers chose to live. The already swollen urbanization figures were also aggravated by the fact that large corporations

were beginning to dominate agriculture. Indeed, the rise of agribusiness seems to have occurred sooner in Cuba than in America or Europe. Already by the late nineteenth century agriculture in Cuba was no longer "characterized by an increase in the number of processing enterprises, but by an increase in average capacity of each enterprise" (Zorina 1975:16; International Labour Office 1989: 16).

In this regard, the United States was a strengthening influence in Cuba at this time, and has been construed as responsible for the expansion of industrial agriculture on the island (Higman 2010: 224). After all, throughout the nineteenth century, America had enjoyed a growing presence on the island, and after Cuba's War of Independence (1895-1898), which saw Cuba finally free itself from Spanish authority, the island became very open to American counsel.[47] Indeed, America quickly became Cuba's major trading partner and sponsor (McBride 2004: 39; Denis 2007: 50), and the newly fortified partnership between the two countries signified the second transition in Cuban agriculture.

2.3 The American years: 1898 – 1958

A century before the Spanish-American War, the United States had been interested in gaining influence in Cuba. In fact, as far back as 1783, American president John Adams described Cuba as "a natural extension of the North American continent" (Solomon 2011: 247),[48] while in the decade before the War of Independence, America offered to purchase Cuba from Spain (Tone 2006: 245; Tucker 2009: 785). However, although they failed to secure the island, the United States strongly supported the Cuban forces in its later struggle for independence from Spain. In this regard, in 1895, the United States created a Committee of Cuban Exiles, in order to form an American support base for the Cuban cause, and to garner sympathy for Cuban rebels.

[47] The Cuban War of Independence incorporated the Spanish-American War, which took place between April and December 1898. Leading up to the war, America had greatly supported the Cuban rebels who sought independence from Spain, but the United States only intervened in 1898, when the battleship *Maine* exploded in Havana. The United States blamed Spain for the explosion, and declared war against the country. After eight months of fighting, Spain conceded and granted Cuba independence. A Peace Treaty between the United States and Spain was signed in Paris, December 1898 (Graves 2000: 5).

[48] The United States' increasing interest in other American countries also became apparent in 1823, after President James Monroe was noted as warning Europe to cease interfering in the Americas. The president announced that "any attempt by a European power to influence or colonise any independent nation in the Americas would be seen as an attack on the peace and safety of the United States" (Darlington 2002: 233); a policy, which became known as the Monroe Doctrine.

Furthermore, propaganda campaigns were flighted in newspapers, which published "lurid and sensational stories of Spanish atrocities" on the island (Darlington 2002: 234). Consequently, after the Spanish-American War was won, America's increasing presence in Cuba did not initially meet with resistance.

While the United States had been a strengthening force in Cuba throughout the nineteenth century in general, two incidents in particular confirmed American hegemony on the island. Firstly, once the war had ended, the United States insisted on remaining in the country in order to oversee the island's transition to independence. That is, once Spain had confirmed Cuba as an independent political entity, it was advanced that the presence of the American troops was necessary to "restore local rule and re-establish an orderly society" (Ladenburg 1974: 12; Gonzalez-Pando 1998: 3). To these ends, America established a military government in Cuba between 1898 and 1902. Secondly, between these years, the United States was able to advise Cuban leaders on the drafting of a new constitution, which included certain amendments to the document that favoured American economic activities on the island. These changes were later referred to as the Platt Amendment, and consisted of eight articles, four of which came to be highly contested. Ladenburg indicates that these four articles sought to ensure the following: that the government of Cuba would never enter into a treaty that would reduce the independence of Cuba; that the Cuban government would not assume any public debt that it would not be able to repay with ordinary revenues; that the United States could exercise the right to intervene in Cuban politics for the maintenance of a government adequate for the production of life, property, and individual liberty;[49] and that Cuba would sell or lease to the United States lands necessary for coaling or naval stations (1974: 13). However, the Platt Amendment was not generally well received by the Cuban public, even though – according to the American government – the amendments were meant to protect Cuban independence (Darlington 2002: 234; Espinosa 2009: 81). On the contrary, Cubans felt that the articles granted the United States too much freedom in the Cuban economy and a gross amount of power over the island's government. In effect, the articles were viewed as covertly *depriving* Cuba of its independence, rather than reinforcing it (Ladenburg 1974: 14; Hernández 2009: 68). America's response to Cubans' concerns was the assertion that the island did not have enough experience in self-

[49] This article was of particular strategic and commercial importance to the United States, because it ensured that America could protect the interests of American investors in Cuba. In this regard, Tucker emphasizes how the U.S. congress assured American investors that "their government was prepared to send its army back onto the island in order to guarantee the safety of their capital" (2007: 17). This assurance was a particularly strong motivator for increased American investment at that time, because it "placed the full potential force of the American military behind the investors who came to dominate Cuba's economy" (Tucker 2007: 17).

governance to judge what was good for it, but that America would help it to overcome this limitation. Cubans were understandably not convinced, but the country was nevertheless compelled to accept the amendments when the United States proclaimed that they would not withdraw their troops from the island unless the Cuban government conceded. Consequently, the Platt Amendment was voted in as an appendix of the Cuban Charter, and through these four articles, the United States achieved "all the rights of an imperial power, with none of the obligations" (Bulmer 2012: 207).[50]

Consequently, the United States' influence over the formation of the independent Cuban government soon became apparent. Cuba adopted a Bill of Rights, a supreme court, two houses of congress, and an elected president (Ladenburg 1974: 13), which mimicked the American structure. Moreover, the first president of the independent Cuba (from 1902-1906) was Estrada Palma, who was deeply supportive of, and supported by, the United States, and who wasted no time in establishing special trade agreements with America, involving reduced tariff rates for exports from both sides (Combs 2008: 180). Under Palma's leadership, a significant increase in American investments meant that about forty percent of the Cuban economy came to be controlled by Americans (Ladenburg 1974: 13). In turn, this major American investment in Cuba resulted in the island becoming largely dependent upon American goods and trade.[51] Through such means, the United States effectively became a neo-colonial power in Cuba; while the U.S. did not always practise *overt* control over Cuba, its power generally took some or other *covert* form, through policies and trade agreements (Whitney 2001: 17). In fact, this became so evident that Cuba was described as a "pseudo-republic controlled by U.S. imperialism" (Alvarez 2013: 1), and consequently struggled to construct a politico-economic identity external to that of America.

Cuba's dependence on the United States also became increasingly apparent in the country's agricultural industry. After the War of Independence, Cuba's agricultural sector lay in tatters, and Palma's administration emphasized the need for a speedy recovery in this sector.

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[50] In the years following the Platt Amendment, the United States made use of its freedom to occupy the island several times, in order to protect American interests. American troops occupied Cuba in 1906, 1909, and 1912, to quell rebellions against the Cuban government. The years 1917 and 1923 also saw American troops enter the country with a view to halting strikes on the sugar mills, and to protect American-owned property (Darlington 2002: 234).

[51] Alvarez indicates that while American investment in Cuba between 1898 and 1902 stood at 30 million dollars, between 1902 and 1906, overall investments had increased to 80 million dollars, owing to the United States' renewed confidence in Cuba's loyalty (2013: 2). As a result, early on in its independence, Cuba became reliant on American funds.

Naturally, farmers turned to the United States for loans to begin rebuilding their farms, but requests were turned down because America felt that "loans would destroy the planters' 'self-respect,'" and instead recommended that Cubans request loans from banks (McCook 2010: 50). However, the banks also denied Cubans' pleas for loans because of the low price of sugar at that time, so that farmers were forced to liquidate their debts by selling their property to American investors (Judis 2006: 48; McCook 2010: 50).[52] In an effort to offset this dynamic through modernizing and improving their agricultural sector, the Cuban government then approached America to help create an Experimental Agricultural Station in Cuba. Soon enough, an American scientist and expert, Franklin Earle, was appointed to establish the *Estación Experimental Agronómica*, in accordance with the American model (Conde 1958: 99; McCook 2002: 47; McCook 2010: 50). The station was set up to investigate the possibilities for expanding Cuban agriculture, and was strongly influenced by techno-scientific discourse, following the American and European trend at that time. In this regard, Earle

> organised the station into two divisions, one of which would concentrate on practical work, the other on basic research into Cuban plants, soils, and ecology. The practical division consisted of the departments of general agriculture, animal industry, and horticulture. The research division consisted of the departments of chemistry and soil science, botany, and vegetable pathology. (McCook 2010: 50)

Although the station's work would later be blunted by fluctuations in the country's politics, its first years of existence saw it contribute significantly to the modernization of Cuban agriculture, in terms of research and communications with Cuban farmers and farm workers, and through innovations such as agricultural publications in Spanish. Yet, while the Station effectively initiated research into Cuban agriculture, it has also been suggested that "the U.S. government used science and technology as tools to consolidate effective control of the island and as an ideological justification for this control" (McCook 2002: 48). Indeed, it was the hope of the American scientists who ran the station that agricultural sciences would be "taught in the schools and colleges, so that Cuba could…count on a body of educated agriculturalists who could promote modern agriculture" (McCook 2010: 52). As a result of this strong propagation of scientific farming, Cuba began to industrialize its agriculture heavily, and in this regard, during the years of American research and experimentation, Cuba received increasing amounts

[52] This could arguably be viewed as another way in which America was able to expand its control over Cuba. By forcing Cubans to sell their land to them, American farmers and businessmen gained an even greater hold over the island's economy (Judis 2006: 48).

of American capital – in total, 205 million dollars by 1913 – especially for the farming sector (Fahoome 2011: 14; Alvarez 2013: 2).

Thus, over the next twenty years, Cuba experienced nothing short of an American takeover of agriculture in general, and sugar in particular. That is, while in 1878 the sugar growing estates (*ingenios*) were on average approximately 3 000 acres in size, by the 1920s the largest *latifundia* were between 100 000 and 200 000 acres large (Dye 1998: 19). The island also experienced its most remarkable sugar boom during and after the First World War, when the production of European beet sugar came to a standstill. At this point, Cuba and America became the main suppliers of sugar, and as a result, "by the end of 1918 an unprecedented speculative race was on," which came to be known as the "Dance of the Millions" (Tucker 2007: 18; Benjamin 1977: 28). The Dance of the Millions saw American and Cuban banks lending maximum amounts to Cuban farmers and planters, in order for them to intensify their operations. Forests were cleared to make space for the expansion of sugar mills, only to have the price of sugar collapse in 1921 when European beet sugar recovered (Ayala 1999: 71; Atack & Neal 2009: 374). Candelaria explains that "the debacle resulted in major investment losses by those who participated and [a]…negative impact on Cuban markets and investors in sugar commodities (in Candelaria, Garcia & Aldama 2004: 217). And the effect of this collapse was felt throughout Cuba, because of the immense reliance that the island had established not only on its monocultural *latifundia*-economy, but also on American capital. Nevertheless, during the 1920s, the *latifundium* continued to "tower over the Cuban economy" (Benjamin 1977: 28; Meurs 1999: 187), protected through major fiscal and economic intervention by the United States which saved Cuba from bankruptcy, and two years later they were once again profiting from a steady international sugar price (Tucker 2007: 19). But the cost of this was, accordingly, increased American influence over the country.

By 1926, only 176 sugar mills were operating on the island – signifying a drastic decrease from the 1 100 that had operated in 1894, but the decline in the number of mills was a result of the "consolidation" of various operations into large-scale industrial projects (Benjamin 1977: 28).[53] However, of the 176 sugar mills, one hundred were owned in part by foreign firms, and 75 were entirely owned by American banks or sugar companies.[54] And of

[53] This "consolidation" generally involved wealthy firms buying small-scale farmers out of business, or pressurizing them to sell their land. All signs indicate that this process of "consolidation" was neither a process of mutual benefit nor agreement (Fahoome 2011: 15).

[54] At that point, the American mills were responsible for between sixty to seventy percent of all sugar ground in Cuba (Fontaine 1975: 23; Benjamin 1977: 28). Moreover, the United States' oligarchical control of Cuban sugar led to certain American firms controlling 95 percent of the sugar harvest (Gonzalez 2003: 693).

the 75 sugar mills owned by the United States, only twelve firms were responsible for their operations (Benjamin 1977: 28). As Dye explains, "this development in landholding was not a structural feature left by early colonisation of the island. It was a product of the early republican era associated with the leading enterprises in the key growth sector of the economy" (1998: 19). The politico-cultural consequences of the creation of the American dominated *latifundia* economy for Cuba were numerous, and included domination "by U.S. firms, the supremacy of one crop (sugarcane), [and] one main trading partner (the United States)," along with "unemployment, malnutrition, illiteracy, and every malaise derived from unrestrained capitalism in the hands of the 'local puppets' of a foreign power" (Alvarez 2013: 1). The environmental implications of this model were also manifold. The Dance of the Millions was particularly damaging to the forests of Camaguey and Oriente Provinces, and during the boom entire parts of the indigenous hardwood forests were cleared by means of "large-scale slash and burn" methods, so that sugar plantations could be established. But as Tucker shows, "the brief, giddy postwar boom was part of a quarter-century of massive land clearances" (2007: 20; Gonzalez 2003: 695), and was entirely characteristic of the American industrial model of agriculture in Cuba.[55] Gebelein also indicates that the mills that were established in the early twentieth century had a lifespan of a mere forty years, while the soil could only withstand three sowings of cane – approximately fifteen years each (2011: 14). This meant that once the soil had been depleted at a specific site, the farmer would simply shut down the operation, and leave for fertile lands. In this regard, Gebelein further explains that "once the landscape is denuded and the soil has no nutrients to support species of plants with a root system to hold the soil, it is easily washed away" (2011: 15). As such, the production of sugar radically transformed the natural complexity and landscape of Cuba, because of the destructive extraction processes involved (Monzote 2009: 270; McNeill & Mauldin 2012: 122).

The social implications of this dominant system of farming in Cuba were also immense. Most notably, this system both solidified American imperialism in Cuba, and afforded the United States the power to further sculpt the Cuban agricultural landscape in its own image. And the *laissez-faire* attitude of America meant that those sugar owners who generated huge profits, also held powerful sway in Cuban politics (Dominguez 2009: 196; Rosenberg 2012: 758), where they were able to enforce "policies that suited American economic interests at the expense of Cuban national development" (Darlington 2002: 234). It has even been argued that, by the mid-1920s, "American interests dominated Cuba's banks, mines, and rail transport as

[55] As a result of destructive colonial and American agricultural policies on the island, Cuba went from having a natural forest covering of 65 percent of the total land, to a mere 14 percent by 1959 (Gonzalez 2003: 695).

well as the tobacco, cattle, and sugar industries" (Pérez 1986: 75; Darlington 2002: 234). For the people of Cuba, American domination of agriculture resulted in increasing numbers of dispossessed farmers and planters throughout the 1920s. That is, whereas the end of the nineteenth century saw many farmers leaving agriculture in search of employment in the towns, the early twentieth century was characterized by native farmers being bought-out or pushed off their land by wealthy American firms (Fahoome 2011: 15). Also, in a mirror-image of the European processes of industrialization, land enclosure, and urbanization – discussed in Chapter One – between 1907 and 1919, sixty-three thousand new jobs opened up in Cuban urban centres, which were deeply appealing for those farmers who could no longer compete with the new American mega-farms. Unsurprisingly, the rate of urbanization increased throughout the 1920s, as previously self-sufficient farmers became part of the economy of wage labour (de la Fuente 2011: 112). In this way, the industrial agriculture of the 1920s consumed the native farming class, and aided in the production of the proletariat class (Benjamin 1977: 28).[56] Benjamin explains how, as a consequence of this,

> dependence upon the United States in the first three decades of the twentieth century…brought well-being to those Cuban merchants, professionals, and politicians allied to the North American economic presence. However, it…also created structural deformities in the Cuban economy, leaving large segments of the population without a sense of efficacy or a satisfactory standard of living. (1975: 68)

The disparities between the classes in Cuba during this time would come to play an important role in the build up to the revolutionary era of the 1950s. And these inequalities were aggravated in the late 1920s, when the Great Depression took hold of America and, consequently, of Cuba. The severe economic conditions between 1929 and 1940 "tore the heart out of the Cuban export economy, set back Cuban living standards some 30 years or more, and made unemployment and destitution the lot of most Cubans" (Benjamin 1975: 67). The harsh consequences of the Great Depression for Cuba underscored the island's immense reliance on the economy of the United States, and this realization fuelled nationalist sentiments in the country (Alexander 2002: 48). Compounding this growing discontent among Cubans was President Machado, who gained the presidency in 1924, and who subsequently forced himself into an extended second term in 1928. However, Machado's corrupt pro-American government gave rise to a dissenting voice amongst most of the proletariat class, many intellectuals and students, and some of the middle

[56] In addition to furthering the creation of the Cuban proletariat, the United States also supplemented the existing labour force with imports of "tens of thousands of West Indian labourers" (Benjamin 1977: 28).

class (Benjamin 1975: 68; Keen & Haynes 2012: 397).[57] Uniting these voices was Cuban nationalist rhetoric, which spoke to those who had been marginalized by both American imperialism and the authoritarian rule of Machado. Moreover, the establishment of the Cuban Communist Party in 1925 signified an opposition to the capitalist status quo, and in theory supported the growth of an alternative politics in Cuba.[58] However, this first Communist Party proved incapable of precipitating socio-economic change mainly because of its collaboration with the Machado regime to enrich its own agenda, but also because of its initial disapproval of Fidel Castro's rebel army, which made an appearance some years later (Robins 2003: 21; Rabe 2005: 69).

Yet, following the rising levels of malcontent during his rule, President Machado was eventually forced out of government in 1933, in the face of labour protests, the loss of military backing, and weakened American support for his government (Robins 2003: 21). In many ways, the ousting of Machado represented a watershed era in Cuban politics and socio-economic organisation, because the removal of Machado "produce[d] a second generation of leaders" (Robins 2003: 21), who would later play a major role in the Socialist Revolution. Robins explains that the opposition to Machado

> reflected the differentiations that [Cuban] society had undergone in the previous decades. The growth of the state, and its role in expanding public works, had given rise to a bureaucracy and an incipient middle class. Limited economic diversification also had led to a larger role by trade unions. Students from differing backgrounds increasingly attended university and, upon graduation, found opportunities lacking and their expectations unmet. Although now free of Spanish domination, Cuba's colonial heritage persisted. (2003: 21)

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[57] President Gerardo Machado influenced parliament to allow him to preside for a second term, which would last six years, instead of the constitutional four year term. But he grew unpopular with the people when it became apparent that he was furthering the country's indebtedness to America in the late 1920s (Pérez 1976: 57; Skwiot 2012: 121).

[58] It is interesting to note that, since the late nineteenth century, Cuba contained a strong anarcho-syndicalist presence, especially within the labour movement. In fact, anarcho-syndicalism dominated the leftist labour movement – often at loggerheads with socialist discourse – and continued to be a strong presence in labour movements throughout the 1920s. In this regard, Benjamin comments that with the formation of the Communist Party in 1925, "the cutting edge of the labour movement…came under the control of anarcho-syndicalists and their militant strike tactics" (1975:70). However, the anarcho-syndicalist movement was repressed by Machado's regime, which recognised the movement as a force to be reckoned with. As a result of this, Machado's government "jailed, disappeared, assassinated, deported, [and] forced dozens of anarchists…into exile" (Shaffer in Hirsch & van der Walt 2010: 286). The late 1920s thus marked the end of the anarchist movement "as an effective element for radical change in Cuba" (2010: 286).

Another important consequence of Machado's resignation was that it led to the rise of American-supported Fulgencio Batista, who took power in 1933, and controlled Cuban politics until Castro's revolution in 1959 (Zebich-Knos & Nicol 2005: 4).[59] With Batista, the influence of the United States was reinforced, and America sought to repair the damage wreaked by the Great Depression and Machado's regime. Although American investment was never fully restored to its pre-1925 levels, the ensuing years saw huge growth in foreign investment in Cuba, rising from 23 million dollars in 1933 to 81 million dollars in 1940. And once again, Cuba fell into the habit of relying on the United States for the majority of its imports – accounting for about sixty-five percent of total imports by 1940 (Zebich-Knos & Nicol 2005: 5).

But such dependency resulted in growing discontent among nationalists, and by the 1950s, the socio-economic and political conditions in Cuba were primed for revolution. In fact, the political climate at that time corresponded well with Foran's schema of the five causal factors which precipitate revolutions in Third World countries. The first factor that could instigate a revolution is dependent development, or the enforcement of growth within limits "set by a country's insertion into the capitalist world economy," which leads to grievances among poorer sections of society (Foran 2009: 17; Lane 2013: 145). This factor was highly apparent in Cuba during the 1950s, when, for the second time that century, the island found itself almost entirely dependent upon the United States for imports, for investments, and for the purchase of its sugar. Secondly, a repressive and exclusionary state is suggested as another revolutionary contributing factor (Mann 2012: 170). This feature generally refers to dictatorships or states run by external, colonial powers, which are responded to by grassroots movements whose participants recognise themselves as separate from the complicit middle and upper classes. With regard to Cuba, Batista's repressive rule for almost a quarter of a century had egged on nationalist and democratically-oriented movements. Thirdly, the "elaboration of effective and powerful political cultures of resistance" is proffered as another characteristic of pre-revolutionary periods. The existence of many figures who make use of various appealing ideologies within their rhetoric – such as socialism, memories of past struggles, nationalism, and folk traditions – tend to ignite revolutionary sentiments among certain groups (Foran 2009:

[59] Batista rose to power after the forced resignation of Machado; however, he was not immediately president of the country. Instead, he appointed himself Chief of Armed Forces, and formed part of a pentarchy, in which five Cuban leaders attempted to share power. But of the five, Batista was recognised as the most dominant force, and was thus able to act as "arbiter of Cuba's destiny for years to come" (Suchlicki 2002: 95). Batista was only elected as president in 1940, and was dictator of the country from 1952.

17; Pei 2009: 52). And in Cuba, Fidel Castro's poplar movement drew strongly from nationalist ideology, and the memory of Jose Marti – a hero of the War of Independence. Fourthly, revolutions are often preceded by a period of economic depression, during which the economy is weak or disrupted (Stone 1986: 18; Witmer 2013: 38). Interestingly, Castro is recognised as having *instigated* an economic depression, in order to send the economy into a decline and stoke revolutionary sentiments (Foran 2005: 64), and he achieved this through his guerilla war, which resulted in a massive destabilization of the economy because of disturbances in the production of sugar. Finally, a "let-up of external controls" for varying reasons – for example, world war, economic depression, and a "divided foreign policy" – tends to leave a state exposed and vulnerable to insurrection (Foran 2009: 17; Pei 2009: 52). In Cuba, this relaxing of external control occurred as a result of America's indecisiveness concerning who to support as Cuba's future leader. Batista was suspected of losing Cuban support, but the United States could not support Castro, who expounded in anti-imperialist rhetoric. As such, America's declining support for Batista reduced the state's power and legitimacy to a large extent, and contributed to the rise of revolutionary fervor in the country.

Arguably, the convergence of these five factors at one opportune moment resulted in the Cuban Revolution of 1959. What set Castro apart from other opposition leaders was his excellent organisation of resources and people. While amassing support for the rebellion, Castro created a "public committee" that produced an illegal anti-Batista newspaper, which sought to spread the goals of the movement and to reveal the oppressive nature of Batista's government (Markel 2008: 48). In addition to the public committee, a military committee was also developed to train Castro's people how to fight, in order to overthrow Batista. In only one year, Castro was able to recruit approximately 1 500 members, who were divided up into committees and smaller cells. Importantly, Castro did not recruit people from the Communist Party, because he "did not want his actions dictated or dominated by the Communists" (Markel 2008: 49). This lent to Castro's movement a dynamic independence and correlating organizational effectiveness. Admittedly, after a failed attack on the Moncada Army Barracks in 1953 (Mujal-Leon 1988: 9; de la Cova 2007: xii), during which Castro lost many of his people, he was sent to prison. However, during his trial, he delivered his famous speech, including the lines, "Condemn me! It doesn't matter! History will absolve me!" (Quiroga 2005: 28; Staten 2005: 74), which soon emerged as prophetic because the publication of Castro's speech garnered support from the marginalized Cuban majority, and thereby rendered his cause all the more popular. Subsequently, he was released early from his fifteen year prison sentence, in 1954, and began rebuilding his movement (Rabe 1988: 118). After reestablishing the movement's original structures, in 1955 Castro, along with several other important figures, went into exile in Mexico

where they underwent military training (Caistor 2013: 38).[60] After a failed attempt at invading Cuba in 1956, Castro successfully raided an outpost at La Plata in 1957, where he gained weapons and additional fame, with his success resulting in volunteers joining the rebels, who had taken up residence in the Sierra Maestra Mountains in the southeast of Cuba (Ciment & Hill 1999: 503). Aided by peasants, Castro's rebels moved slowly west towards the capital, Havana, while Batista began to feel pressured from all sides – rebels, citizens, and even the army – and this pressure drove him to "crack…down harshly on Cuban citizens" (Markel 2008: 64). Infamously, Batista allowed public executions of people suspected of helping the rebels, and their bodies were left in the open as reminders of the State's authority and power. In response to Batista's growing violence, the United States halted military support of the Cuban government, and withdrew their supply of weapons (Farber 2007: 74; Andrain 2012: 122), which further weakened his position in relation to the rebels.

In 1958, as a last ditch attempt to maintain power, Batista sent ten thousand troops to the Sierra Maestra Mountains to defeat Castro, whose army consisted of merely three hundred people. However the rebels possessed superior knowledge of the terrain, and not only defeated Batista's troops, but even gained more members, as some soldiers defected to Castro's army (Delpar 1974: 118). Having lost the battle, Batista understood that his days as president were numbered, and as Castro continued to move towards Havana, Batista fled the country on the 1st of January 1959. Fidel Castro – the most obvious alternative at that time – seized leadership of Cuba, and began the implementation of new and radical, economic policies and land reforms, which would have a transformative effect on Cuba in general, and Cuban agriculture in particular. At this point, with the revolution over, the island underwent its third agricultural transition, during which it attempted fervently to escape imperial influence, and redistribute land to peasants, in order to revitalize small-scale farming traditions. However, the Soviet Union's encroaching influence, as will be discussed next, impacted negatively upon these goals.

2.4 Agricultural reforms and Soviet influence

Castro's victory in 1959 ushered in a new era for Cuba, characterized by U.S. aggression and blockading, along with a pariah status imposed by the rest of the capitalist world. This was mainly as a result of the quick support offered by the Soviet Bloc, to relieve some of the island's economic and military burdens (Payne 1988: 9-10; Farber 2007: 150-151). However, contrary

[60] Among those accompanying him were his brother, Raúl Castro, Colonel Alberto Bayo, and the now legendary Che Guevara.

to what mainstream Western media and education disseminate, Cuba's alignment with the Soviet Union had more to do with economic and political survival than a coupling of similar ideologies (Loeber 1986: 368). In fact, many authors suggest that Castro was not particularly interested in Marxist-Leninist theory before the revolution, which is evinced by the lack of support for himself and the Revolution from the Cuban Communist Party of the time (Bonsal 1971: 68; Prados 2006: 206).[61] As such, Castro's triumph in 1959 was not originally labeled a socialist revolution, and was instead regarded as being radically nationalist, "with an ambitious socialist reform program" (Hoffmann 2004: 132). However, with the dawn of the 1960s, the Soviet Union began to recognise the potential importance of Cuba to the Communist Bloc, especially in terms of the Soviets' "concern for the fate of the revolutionary movement in Latin America as well as the push for a change in the world distribution of power" (Farber 2007: 151). And by showing support for the revolutionary movement in Cuba, the Soviets gained an air of contemporary relevance and renewed vigor. Consequently, a Soviet trade delegation was sent to Havana in 1960, and relations between the two countries were confirmed and further endorsed. After this meeting, the Soviets provided Cuba with a modest collection of artillery, light arms, tanks, anti-aircraft rockets, and limited technical assistance (Hilsman 1996: 29; Brenner 2008: 14).

However, the Soviet Bloc's support of Cuba almost immediately after the Revolution gave the United States a basis upon which to build the 'communist' image of the Cuban Revolution, and to give rise to the popularized understanding of it – "as if Cuban life had started in 1959, as if Cuba had no history and was merely a product of events beyond its shores" (De Quesada 2009: 14).[62] The premature coupling of Cuba with communism, a few years before

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[61] During the Cuban Revolution, the Cuban Communist Party had actually been instructed by the Soviet Premier, Khrushchev, to keep out of the revolutionary proceedings and to distance itself from any destabilizing movements on the island. This was because Khrushchev was wary of interfering in politics concerning the United States and the Americas (Brenner 2008: 14).

[62] By 1960, the Cold War had been underway for fourteen years, if one understands it as beginning at the end of World War II, when both the United States and the USSR had demonstrated military and economic might. In terms of this, Levering and Botzenhart-Viehe suggest that by 1946, "both sides had the military power, the economic resources, and the determination to engage in a far-flung and intense ideological, political, military, economic, and cultural struggle for influence" (2002: 2). And the tensions that grew from the subsequent West-East and Capitalist-Communist dichotomies, resulted in a worldwide separation between, on the one hand, the United States and its allies, and on the other hand, the USSR and its allies. Some authors suggest that, apart from the post-war tensions between the Allies and the USSR, the roots of the Cold War can actually be traced back to the Bolshevik Revolution in Russia in 1917, when the Bolsheviks refused to pay the West back the debts that had accumulated under the Tsars' rule (Saull 2001: 209; Dlamini et al. 2007: 4). Regardless of its origins, the effects of the Cold

the island actually decided to structure itself according to the Soviet model, created the Cuban 'imaginary' that American society would fixate upon for the next fifty years. Yet, in many ways, the United States arguably *drove* Cuba to align with the Soviet Bloc, as a result of its aggressive punitive measures against the new state after 1959.[63] That is, Castro recognised that "his international objectives were likely to result in conflict with the United States," and was forced to turn eastward and align himself with the Soviet Bloc – the only other dominant economic force at that time – for protection and economic support (Smith 1992: 13). But in seeking assistance from the Soviet Union, America's suspicions of Cuba's socialist leanings within the context of the Cold War seemed to be confirmed. Moreover, America's loss of Cuba had not only wounded the superpower economically and strategically, but had also dealt a massive blow to its ego, in its avowed role as the benign hegemon in the Americas. Indeed, it has been suggested that,

> in the context of the Cold War, the United States saw the Cuban Revolution not only as a violation of its long-standing political and economic interests on the island, but also as an unacceptable Soviet incursion in the Western Hemisphere. In addition, in the *longue durée* of international politics, since the United States had banned European powers from any expansion in the American hemisphere in 1823, the Soviet alliance with Cuba seemed an intolerable breach of the Monroe doctrine. Furthermore, Castro's Cuba also was seen as [setting] a dangerous example for other Latin American or Third World countries. (Hoffmann 2004: 134)

America's frustration with Cuba's growing alliance with the Communist East culminated in the Bay of Pigs Invasion on 17 April, 1961. The confrontation began with an American-funded counter-revolutionary army invading Playa Girón, on the West coast of the island. The army was composed of about 1 400 Cuban expatriates who had settled in America (van Gosse 1993: 226; Crooker & Pavlovic 2010: 44), and who were opposed to Castro's Revolution.[64] The troops, who were escorted by the U.S. navy, were launched from Guatemala, landed in Cuba, and were summarily defeated within three days by the Cuban army, under the direct command of Castro. The botched attempt to overthrow the Cuban revolutionary government was both a

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War are still experienced in contemporary times, as the 'communist threat' remains strong within American popular media, even in the wake of the Soviet Union's dissolution.

[63] For example, as of July 1960, President Eisenhower banned the importation of Cuban sugar – a sanction that would have been devastating for the island, if not for the immediate assistance of the Soviet Union, which offered to buy the sugar previously destined for American shores (Brenner 2008: 14).

[64] Since the Revolution, America had made use of malcontented Cubans to spy on the new government and to pass inside information on developments in the country on to the United States (Tempo 2008: 119).

dismal failure and an international embarrassment for the United States and conversely, an immensely positive event for the Cuban state. During the invasion, Cuban forces killed over one hundred invaders, while the survivors were taken prisoner (Knight 2003: 117; Crooker & Pavlovic 2010: 44), and then publicly questioned before being sent back to America in 1962, in exchange for ransom.[65] In the end, the Bay of Pigs incident reinforced Castro's image as a national hero, and strengthened nationalist sentiments within Cuba. Correlatively, the Cuban army's victory in the Bay of Pigs Invasion pacified Soviet concerns that the Revolution was merely temporary, and as a result, they pledged more weaponry to the island, and mobilized additional economic and political aid (Brenner 2008: 14; de Quesada 2011: 49). In fact, by 1962, the Soviets had equipped Cuba with such military force that its army was recognised as the most powerful in the whole of Latin America. While America raised few concerns about this, they did warn the Soviets not to send nuclear weapons to Cuba, which Khrushchev assured he would not do. However, in October 1962, an American spy plane captured images of what seemed to be medium-range missile sites in Cuba – all within range of a number of major American cities (Govender et al. 2007: 47- 48).[66] Because it was clear that the Soviet Union had supplied these missiles, President Kennedy imposed a blockade on Cuba, and demanded from Khrushchev that the missiles be removed from the island, while ships en route to Cuba that were suspected of carrying missiles were forced to turn around. During the thirteen days that it took Khrushchev to concede to U.S. demands, a deep crisis was experienced in both the West and the East, because nuclear war seemed an imminent possibility (Govender et al. 2007: 48; Caldwell & Williams 2011: 57). Yet, before removing the missiles from Cuba, Khrushchev demanded that, in return, America dismantle a strategic missile site in Turkey, which was a major threat to Soviet territory (Chun 2006: 106). Although both superpowers subsequently agreed to remove their weapons – quelling the threat of nuclear war for the time being – the image of Cuba as a Soviet stepping stone was powerfully imprinted on the collective psyche of the capitalist West. And this image received further endorsement in 1965, when Cuba officially became a communist state. At that point, Cuba's relationship with the United States deteriorated drastically, and the Soviet Union emerged as the main trading partner of the island (Fauriol &

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[65] The failed invasion was followed by a twenty-month period of negotiation between Castro and U.S. representatives. In exchange for the prisoners, Castro first requested that America provide Cuba with 500 tractors, before changing his request in 1962 to 62 million dollars (Hargrove 2000: 12). In the end though, Castro released the prisoners in exchange for 53 million dollars' worth of medical supplies and food, donated by American corporations (Kelley & Pereira 2008: 1999). The prisoners were sent back to America on 23 December, 1962, and as a "Christmas bonus," Castro allowed 1 000 relatives to leave the island with them (Sanders 2000: 39).

[66] These cities included Los Angeles, Chicago, and New York (Crooker & Pavlovic 2010: 43).

Loser 1990: 317; Crooker & Pavlovic 2010: 45). However, it would take another five years before the country's "political structures were formalized in the mould of the Soviet model," and another six years for the first convention of the new Communist Party to take place (Hoffmann 2004: 133).[67]

In terms of agriculture, though, the most significant development during this time was Cuba's entrance into the Council for Mutual Economic Assistance (COMECON) in 1972, which resulted in the country being integrated into the "socialist 'division of labour' as supplier of sugar" (Hamilton 1992: 48). Cuba's trade agreements with the Soviet Union were extremely favourable, as the Soviets offered a good price for the island's sugar, and in return sold oil cheaply to Cuba. And because of the tremendous advantages these trade conditions held for the Cuban economy, the island continued to develop its agricultural industry along the lines of a high-input, intensive model, even though the continuation of monocultural farming stood in stark contrast to the revolutionary state's original vision for the transformation of this sector (Diaz-Briquets & Pérez -Lopez 2000: 89-90; Wright 2012: 56). In this regard, Funes-Monzote mentions two main agricultural reforms that took place immediately following the revolution (2006: 6). The first reform in 1959 sought to reduce farm sizes, and to distribute land to peasants who had previously merely been tenants. While the maximum size allowed for privately owned farms was reduced to 400 hectares, many of the massive landholdings that had been owned by American corporations before the revolution were simply taken over by the Cuban state, and run along the same principles as before (Hobbs 2008: 568; Balfour 2013: 63). That is, the massive cattle ranches and sugarcane plantations that had characterized American imperialism on the island were seized as *state* farms after the revolution (Rosset 1994: 15), with no effort being made to convert the agricultural systems in place into small-scale, diversified, operations. The second agricultural reform, in 1963, sought to destroy the landed class, by further reducing the permitted size of farms to 67 hectares. Once these reforms had taken effect, between 60 and 70 percent of land had been expropriated from wealthy landholders (Rosset 1994: 15; Funes-Monzote 2006: 6). In an official state publication, the reforms were explained as encouraging diversification of industry, creating a more efficient system in terms of human and natural resources, and achieving the "elimination of the deep dependency on monocultural agriculture

[67] Even with the country's adoption of Soviet ideology, one marked difference between Cuban socialism and that of Eastern Europe was that Cuban socialism contained a profoundly nationalist sentiment – a unifying spirit emerging from past struggles and iconic figures – whereas Eastern European socialism regarded nationalism as an oppositional force (Hoffmann 2004: 134).

that [was] a symptom of [Cuba's] inadequate economic development" (Funes-Monzote 2006: 6).

But with the state's call for the expansion of farming operations in the sugar, tobacco, and citrus industries, the ideas contained in the country's policies contrasted drastically with the reality of Cuba's agricultural development. While the country had undeniably "inherited an agricultural production system strongly focused on export crops grown on highly concentrated land" (Rosset 1994: 15), the revolutionary government made few efforts to improve this model. Instead, the country's trade agreements with the Soviet Bloc merely exacerbated the situation. Throughout the 1970s, the economic support that Cuba received from the Soviet Bloc and its membership of COMECON ensured that its agricultural sector was rapidly modernized and mechanized. And consequently, by the 1980s, Cuba boasted the most mechanized agricultural industry in Latin America. However, an impressively modern industry could not make up for the fact that the island had, once again, fallen into a pattern of dependency (Baloyra & Morris 1993: 275). In terms of this, Hamilton shows how, in 1978, 69 percent of Cuban trade relied upon Soviet countries, which was the same percentage at the height of Cuba's trade with America between 1946 and 1958 (1992: 48). That is, Cuba's membership of COMECON forced the island to focus on large-scale monocultural production – specifically sugar – and created a dependency upon importations of essential commodities, manufactured overseas. As Funes-Monzote explains, what this meant was that the Cuban economy was "characterized by a contradictory dualism between its relative modernity and its function in the Socialist Bloc's division of labour as a supplier of raw agricultural commodities and minerals, and net importer of both manufactured goods and foodstuffs" (2006:11). Thus, ironically, Cuba's agricultural system was "a model similar to that seen all over North America: big farms growing mono-crops to be shipped elsewhere, with everything based on the low cost of fossil fuels used for fertilizer, pesticides and transportation" (Tracey 2011: 219). Accordingly, the island's modern agriculture was characterized by the same elements as American agribusiness during that time, namely, a thorough reliance upon large tracts of land devoted to a single crop, agrochemicals, hybrid seeds, petroleum, and machinery in order to maintain – or increase – levels of food production (Cavanagh & Mander 2004: 228; Brenner 2008: 156).[68] In other words, just as the United States underwent agricultural industrialization through biological innovations, new cheap factor inputs, and mechanization (Meyer & Turner 1994: 309), so too, Cuba - as a member of COMECON – chased these ideals with great zeal, in an effort to expand its

[68] By the 1980s, Cuba's three main export crops – sugar, tobacco, and citrus – were being grown on over fifty percent of the land (Association for the Study of Cuban Economy 2000: 166; Clay 2004: 158).

economy. The related statistics are quite staggering. During the nineteen-eighties, Cuba used approximately thirteen million tons of diesel, 1.3 million tons of fertilizers, and eighty million dollars' worth of pesticides per year (CLEC 1989: 8; Diaz-Briquets & Pérez -Lopez 2000: 104). In fact, it has even been suggested that during this time, Cuba's use of chemical fertilizers *exceeded* that of the United States (Morgan 2006; Brenner 2008: 156). In addition, the division of arable land on the island was highly oriented towards industrial agriculture, with the state owning 80 percent of the land in order to intensively produce export crops, while the other 20 percent of the land was shared between small-scale farmers and co-operatives (Gonzalez et al. 2004: 84; Funes-Monzote 2006: 7). Moreover, with a large-scale, intensive, agricultural model being pursued, many environmental issues inherited from American sugar farming in the country were aggravated. That is, under American imperialism much harm had been done not only to the indigenous forests, but also to the land needed to carry out agricultural activities. However, under Soviet management, these environmental issues were significantly compounded, specifically because of the inflated use of chemicals, and the employment of large machinery which compressed the soil.

As such, while communist Cuba displayed extremely radical political and economic policies in relation to the *laissez-faire* West, the island's agricultural model itself was neither radical, nor the embodiment of a process of diversification, which the revolutionary state had initially declared it would be. Rather, between 1959 and the late 1980s, Cuba continued to follow the high-input model it had inherited from its (neo-)colonised past, and made little effort to revolutionize this crucial aspect of its economy. Moreover, the status of small-scale farmers and farm workers, whose empowerment was supposedly the focus of the revolution and its goals, remained relatively unchanged from the height of American imperialism to the late 1980s. After all, throughout the twentieth century, the process of mechanization in Cuban agriculture had been encouraged and subsidized by both the American-funded administrations and the revolutionary government, ultimately resulting in a severe decrease in the rural population, as the need for labour was reduced through the introduction of machines (Chadwick 1976: 175; Pérez -Lopez 1991: 69).

However, such dynamics did not escape criticism, and as early as 1984, Horowitz recognised the unsustainability of Cuban agriculture under the communist model, not only in terms of its productivity goals, but also with regard to the feasibility of highly mechanized, high-input operations (1984: 213). He highlighted these potential problems in the 1980s, arguing that

> Cuban planners may have greatly miscalculated and overstated the production increases which might be possible due to economies of scale…Furthermore, given the rapidly rising cost of petroleum and imports, even with significant Soviet subsidies, it would appear foolish to orient Cuban agriculture entirely towards capital-intensive (petroleum-dependent) production. Hence, an optimal agrarian strategy for the foreseeable future may be to encourage smaller-scale, more labor-intensive production…in both the *private and public* sectors. (Horowitz 1984: 213)

However, Horowitz also indicated the improbability of the Cuban state adopting such alternative policies at the time, maintaining that, "given the current enchantment of Cuba's revolutionary leadership with mechanization and high technology, it seems unlikely that planners will even test this hypothesis. They have somehow made the assumption that both socialism and development proceed best through large-scale production units" (1984: 213). While critical of the Cuban agricultural system, Horowitz's ideas are easily relatable to capitalist models as well. That is, the mechanization of farm labour that proliferated in America during the 1980s, including the fiscal and corporate support of large-scale operations, was largely analogous to the circumstances in Cuba. Arguably, the main difference was that the American state and corporations could afford to disguise the negative implications of the large-scale model, whereas Cuba, being constantly represented in a negative light within the Western media – and subject to continued trade embargoes from the United State – was not able to hide the cracks in its system.

By 1981, nearly seventy percent of Cuba's population resided in the urban areas (Pan American Health Organisation 1995: 62; Campbell 2001: 47). This high level of urbanization was arguably a result of the perceived benefits of city life, relative to life in rural towns,[69] along with the limited number of the latter, because of the largely restrictive policies of Soviet agriculture, which only demarcated about 12 percent of arable land to small-scale initiatives. In response to the severe shortages of rural farm labour because of urbanization, in the 1980s, Castro announced that there would be a forty percent increase in the wages of agricultural workers (Habel 1991: 38; Leonard 1999: 42). This raise effectively meant that farm workers would become some of the most privileged workers in the country, and it was advanced to encourage a renewal of interest in agricultural work (Leonard 1999: 42). However, regardless of the rising financial attractiveness of agricultural work, the urban populations remained largely unchanged. Moreover, with wage labour dominating in the urban areas, there was very

[69] The urban areas were widely regarded as offering relative job security, the possibility of vacations, as well as wage and health benefits. Castro's government also made many efforts to make the cities more egalitarian, by offering reduced-price meals at work centres, day-care facilities, and increased access to education (Horowitz & Suchlicki 1967: 555).

little space for, or even interest in, the pursuit of practices of agricultural self-sufficiency. As with the American consumer system during that time, Cuban cities were net importers of food. That is, because of Cuba's focus on certain export crops, the country was not able to produce enough food to sustain itself.[70] In short, the Soviet agricultural model and Cuba's membership of COMECON had resulted in the country becoming thoroughly dependent upon imports to satisfy basic food requirements. And it was the island's dependency upon imports to provide the country with food that ultimately led to its downfall in 1989, when the Soviet Union collapsed.[71] With the dramatic withdrawal of Soviet support, both economically and in the form of accessible petroleum, Cuba was faced with critical food shortages in the cities, which compelled the Cuban state to reconsider questions concerning food security and agricultural self-sufficiency. Consequently, Cuba was forced once more to undergo an agricultural transition – one that would challenge the structure that had been developed over centuries, and reverse the negative implications of its erstwhile high-input system. Arguably, this fourth transition would, in fact, be the first truly *Cuban* agricultural model to emerge; moreover, because of its egalitarian characteristics, and its inherent acceptance of the economy of nature as most crucial, the subsequent *Revolución Agricola* of the 1990s could be viewed as the first eco-socialist revolution to have ever taken place.

[70] In an effort to decrease the food shortages in urban areas, Castro allowed private sales of produce in urban areas during the 1980s. Farmers were permitted to sell excess produce (left over after having met the government's quota), at a set price in farmers' markets (van Dijk et al. 2013: 128; Saxonberg 2013: 139).

[71] Three of the most widely recognised reasons for the collapse of the Soviet Union are, firstly, that Moscow had been overambitious in its competitiveness with the United States, with regard to the purchasing of arms, which placed a massive strain on its economy, secondly, that the inefficiency of the Union, which Gorbachev had tried unsuccessfully to remedy through *glasnost* and *perestroika* became too much, and thirdly, that the multi-ethnicity of the Soviet Union had become increasingly difficult to manage during the 1980s, when minority nationalities began to call for their own autonomy. As a result of these factors, the Soviet Union fell apart in 1989, and was dissolved in 1991 (Duiker & Spielvogel 2012: 803).

Chapter Three: Cuba's Eco-socialist Transformations through the *Revolución Agrícola*

3.1 Introduction

At the start of the 1990s, Cubans were forced to revolutionise their daily lives when the collapse of the Soviet Union underscored the dangers of food dependency on large-scale agriculture. Within the context of related fuel and capital shortages, agribusiness was severely problematized, and Cuba was compelled to transition into a fourth agricultural phase – one characterised primarily by organic, small-scale production throughout the country. However, what made this transition remarkable was the way in which agricultural practices became a necessity *within* cities, in order for the food requirements of the urban dwellers to be met.

In what follows, the unique changes that occurred within Cuban agriculture during the 'Special Period' on the island in general, and within the towns and cities, in particular, will be discussed. Thereafter, an exploration of the possibility that the changes Cuba underwent during that time constitute the first eco-socialist revolution will be undertaken. In this regard, the relationship between eco-socialism and Marxism will be elaborated upon, with particular emphasis on Marx's concept of the 'human essence' and its status as an ideological cornerstone of eco-socialism. Next, the ways in which post-1990 Cuban society approximates an eco-socialist society, in relation to the four eco-socialist human potentialities of autonomy, sociability, aesthetic appreciation, *and* the recognition of the inherent value of nature, will be illustrated, and it will be argued that the eco-socialist transformation that occurred in Cuba is potentially indicative of an additional stage of dialectical materialism. That is, instead of socio-economic changes *culminating* in a proletarian dictatorship, the latter emerges as only the penultimate historical stage, which needs to be superseded by a final stage involving recognition of the limitations of productivist and highly rationalised industry, and the correlative transitioning to a societal model more inclusive of *nature*, and characterised by an eco-socialist approach to economics.

3.2 The Special Period and the *Revolución Agrícola*

Without Soviet funding, and with rapidly diminishing petroleum supplies,[72] Cuba was compelled to transform the way in which its cities functioned, and to create a new model of food production, which would be able to sustain the inhabitants, regardless of fuel shortages. Koont maintains that, considering the urgent conditions in which Cuba found itself with regard to food security,

> a shift to urban agriculture seemed an obvious and necessary solution: urban production minimised transportation costs while small-scale production minimised the use of machinery. And agroecological production,[73] which avoided the use of no-longer-available toxic petrochemical-based fertilisers and pesticides, was necessitated by the fact that production sites were near the living areas of large concentrations of people.[74] (2007: 312)

Accordingly, by 1990 Cuba had transitioned into its 'Special Period,' which was a time characterised by distinct economic austerity measures and critical food shortages (Staten 2005: 6; Greenspan & Schlecht 2007: 285; Eastman, Ralph & Brown 2013: 134). During this period, it is estimated that the average Cuban lost nine kilograms of weight as a result of the drastic decline in food availability (Donovan et al. 2009: 26), while a spike in malnutrition in children occurred, along with an increase in underweight babies and anaemia in pregnant women (Kirk & McKenna 2009: 223; Nikiforuk 2014: 96). The urban areas suffered most acutely at the start of the decade, because of the way in which cities had been developed to exclude agricultural activities, in favour of those activities that benefitted industry. However, in light of the failure of industrial farms to access petroleum, seeds, vaccines, animal feed, and mechanised tools –

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[72] Sarmiento points to the rapid decline in oil supplies in Cuba, by explaining that before the collapse of the Soviet Union, Cuba had been importing approximately twelve million tons of oil at preferential rates. However, with the dissolution of the USSR, Cuba could only afford four million tons per year, at world market price (in Maier & Lebon 2010: 77). This, above all other losses, affected the future trajectory of the country.

[73] Agroecology is a scientific discipline that offers critical insight into the dominant agricultural model employed in most of the Western world. The discipline questions the implementation of high-input systems, as well as the conventional separation of the protection of biodiversity from the production of food (Stassart et al. 2012: 25). Moreover, it adds scientific reasoning to systems of thought and agriculture that are opposed to high-input food production.

[74] Arguably, the fact that petrochemicals were not incorporated into urban farming because of the close proximity of such operations to human dwellings, serves to underscore the toxic nature of contemporary agricultural practices in most of the Western world, and gives credence to voices raised in opposition to these intensive systems.

all crucial to the maintenance of industrial food production – it became clear that urban centres would not have the time to wait for conventional solutions to address the burgeoning concerns of food scarcity.

During this time, the trade embargoes and sanctions that had been imposed on Cuba by the United States in the 1960s also began to take a terrible toll on the island's economy and social sphere. In particular, the sanctions severely limited Cuba's access to adequate medical supplies and food support, as ships found docking in Cuban ports were subsequently denied entrance to American ports for up to six months (Simoni 2008: 72; Keen & Haynes 2009: 552). And without Soviet support, this meant that the island's supplies of essential goods were halted nearly overnight.[75] The United States' considerable influence over international economic flows also ended most of Cuba's access to foreign capital – including the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank (Harrison 2001: 97). Consequently, the Cuban Peso suffered a dramatic decline in worth, rendering the currency virtually useless in world markets (Veltmyer & Rushton 2011: 282). It was at this point that Cuban society collectively realized that they would have to begin to produce everything they needed *within* the country, as they were no longer able to secure goods from the outside, and so began the revolutionary transformation of Cuban society in general, and urban Cuba, in particular. A transformation that entailed the pursuit of autonomous food systems, and the engenderment of renewed self-reliance amongst all Cuban citizens.

During the Special Period, the state continued to provide food rations to all Cubans; however, the amounts of food were steadily reduced because of the government's inability to maintain pre-1990s levels of expenditure (Garth 2013: 60; Garth 2013: 93).[76] Out of desperation, many urban residents were initially compelled to travel out of the city in order to purchase food from the rural farmers, or *granjeros.* But with hunger levels rising to critical conditions, urban dwellers were soon forced to begin growing their own fruit and vegetables organically, on any available land in the city. In terms of this, Pinderhughes describes how the food shortages

> motivated urban residents in Havana to plant food crops in their yards, patios, balconies, rooftops, and vacant land sites near their homes. In some cases, neighbors got together to plant crops – beans,

[75] In an effort to cripple the country further, the United States tightened their restrictions on Cuba two years later, by announcing that foreign companies operating in Cuba would no longer be allowed to do business in America (Tracey 2011: 220).

[76] In fact, the average caloric intake was halved by 1993, as a result of a 73 percent reduction in food imports – from 8.1 billion dollars, to a meagre 2.2 billion dollars (Garth 2013: 93).

> tomatoes, bananas, lettuce, okra, eggplant, and taro. If they had the space and the resources, some households began to raise small animals – chickens, rabbits, even pigs. Within two years there were gardens and farms in many Havana neighbourhoods. (2004: 211)

Importantly, the practice of urban farming was not restricted to the lower socio-economic strata, rather, the *entire* society had to engage in urban farming in order to supplement their household food security. As a result, even professionals – engineers, electricians, doctors, and mechanics – took to the soil, and began farming through processes of trial and error. A practice which the government promoted because urban agriculture was regarded as vital to the survival of the majority of the Cuban population. During that time, "any unused city lot, even government-owned, could be used to grow food" (Tracey 2011: 220), and Cuban ingenuity was noticeable in how agriculture was adapted to suit even "idle stretches of land between concrete blocks," while "urban peripheries [were] turned into makeshift organic gardens…[and] vacant or abandoned plots in close vicinity to people's homes were transformed into plantation sites" (Friedrichs 2012: 62). In order to institutionalise urban farming and to provide a clear understanding of what urban agriculture entails, the State disseminated the idea of urban farming as involving two components. Firstly, the 'geographical' aspect of the definition meant that urban agriculture was any farming activity that took place "in or near urban settlements." In terms of this, 'urban' space was considered to be any area within the boundaries of Ciudad de la Habana, or any area within ten, five, or two kilometres of provincial capitals, municipal seats, or towns containing more than one thousand residents, respectively (Koont 2007: 311). Consequently, urban farming came to be seen as occupying approximately fifteen percent of all Cuban agricultural land. Secondly, the 'technological' component of the island's conceptualisation of urban farming was that it would need to consist of agroecological practices, which minimise the use of petrochemicals.

With a view to institutionalising and incentivising urban farming, the State developed a framework consisting of 28 categories of sub-programmes, for the overarching urban agriculture initiative. Of these 28 sub-programmes, twelve specialised in the production of crops, seven focused on urban animal husbandry, and 9 sought to strengthen tertiary areas of support – such as the production of seeds and organic fertilisers, the installation of effective irrigation systems, and the general training and education of people in urban farming practices (Wright 2012: 88). Of these various sub-programmes, the most successful has been that of the growing of vegetables and fresh condiments – an area in which Cuban urban farming has

excelled, year on year.[77] Such impressive yields are attributable, in large part, to the Government recommending the construction of *organoponicos* – a series of rectangular walled beds, approximately 30 metres long by one metre wide, containing soil and organic composts. This method of raised bed *organoponicos* rapidly became one of the most successful elements of Cuban urban agriculture, and is still widely in use within the cities (Lim 2014: 145).[78]

In addition to these elements, the State also sanctioned the formation of the *Grupo Nacional de Agricultura Urbana* (GNAU), to play a supportive role in the guidance, supervision, and evaluation of agricultural activities in all urban areas (Koont 2007: 316). And urban farming was further institutionalised by the creation of relevant courses at university, so that students could obtain undergraduate and postgraduate degrees in agroecology – from as early as 1995 (Fusco 2008: 107; Wilson 2014: n.p.). Another motivation for people to join the ranks of urban farmers was that the price structures according to which farmers worked were calculated so that a small profit could be generated from the sales of produce. This profit became an incentive for people to become farmers, as the incomes of those involved in producing food quickly became more than the average state salary (Horowitz 1995: 238). "Moral incentives" to undertake urban farming also existed (Koont 2007: 321), insofar as urban farmers were offered the opportunity of furthering their education in agroecological practices. For example, in an effort to increase citizens' knowledge of urban agriculture, permaculture experts were imported in order to train farmers in permacultural techniques, which they could in turn teach to others (Todd & Waller 2011: 5). In addition to this, the working environment of urban agriculture was widely deemed to be supportive and healthy. As a result of the largely successful governmental campaigning for citizens to join the ranks of urban food producers, by 2006 urban farming had created up to 160 000 well-paying jobs in Cuba (Worldwatch Institute 2013; Clouse 2014: 131). Moreover, in an effort to make the distribution of produce farmed in the urban spaces available to people, over one thousand kiosks were established throughout urban centres, to make the fruit and vegetables produced in the neighbourhoods accessible (Todd & Waller 2011: 5). The produce sold at these markets is also generally more affordable than the fruit and vegetables sold at farmers' markets.[79] Indeed, urban agriculture is so successful in Havana that between eighty to ninety percent of the fruit and vegetable

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[77] By 2006, Cuban urban farming was producing 1 kilogram of fresh vegetables, per capita, per day (Koont 2007: 312).

[78] For images of *organoponicos* in Cuba, see photographs 1 – 7 in the Addendum.

[79] Community gardens not only grow food for the members of the community, but also distribute fruit and vegetables to clinics, schools, and senior centres. Having done so, there is normally a surplus to sell in the neighbourhood markets at reduced prices (Solomon 2006: 5).

requirements of the citizens are met by the food produced *within* the city (Sheehan 2007: 53; Gonick 2008: 102), while in the towns and smaller cities, urban gardens may provide up to a hundred percent of the people's fruit and vegetable needs. The consequences of this are immensely positive, and range from fewer emissions through less transportation, packaging and refrigeration, to healthier lifestyles for citizens who have easy access to fresh, organically grown produce.

However, despite the quantitatively positive results of the urban farming revolution in Cuba, the movement has received some criticism. The urban farming craze of the 1990s has sometimes been construed as a "reactionary" and "utilitarian" measure, which transformed landscapes that "might otherwise have been slated for more conventional uses – parking lots, playgrounds, city parks, rooftops, and front yards" (Clouse 2014: 150), in a way that was generally *ad hoc* in nature. But as Clouse shows, such urban agriculture has come to be widely supported by Cubans, even if some indicate that an improved design and planning should be implemented to ensure a better incorporation of farming within the cities (2014: 154). Thus, much of such criticism of Cuba's vastly diverse practices of urban agriculture may be likened more to recommendations for the future, given the speed at which they were taken up within the confines of cities, and the relatively few years – and minimal resources – which the country has had to ameliorate the shortfalls of the practices within urban spaces. Indeed, having gained some distance from the food crisis of the 1990s, Cubans now "see an opportunity to better relate the material, environmental, and social aspects of urban agriculture with other urban processes" (Clouse 2014: 154). And this new way of thinking has been supported by government through the incorporation of urban agriculture into cities' land management plans, as well as the implementation of legislation and regulations to protect the practice of urban farming (Pinderhughes 2004: 213; Moughtin, Signoretta & Moughtin 2009: 56-57).

The success of these transformations has also received acclaim from scholars around the world who are interested in alternative paths to development (Feinsilver 1993: xvii; De la Barra & Buono 2009: 83; Veltmyer & Rushton 2011: 3). According to many of them, Cuba has been the first country in modern history to promote an economic paradigm that recognizes the natural limitations of both industry and, more specifically, systems of industrial food production (Wittle & Santos 2006: 94). Moreover, the country's strongly socialist orientation has magnified the singular nature of events in contemporary Cuba, which would seem to tend toward both social *and* ecological equity. And this has been valourised as a unique blend of socialism and ecological sensitivity that is arguably indicative of the presence of a larger revolutionary dynamic at play, namely that of eco-socialism. In the interests of explaining this idea, in what follows, a detailed consideration of the various facets of eco-socialism will be

undertaken, with special focus falling on how eco-socialism has been advanced as a logical progression beyond conventional socialism, which is now understood as only the penultimate stage of the material dialectic of history.

3.3 From socialism to eco-socialism

The concept of communism is not particular to the modern era, but is in fact an ancient idea that simply signifies a "local, communal relationship among small groups of people" (Baradat 1994: 149), something which in fact characterized many ancient cultures throughout history. However, with the advent of the Industrial Revolution in the nineteenth century, the idea of production of goods on a national scale emerged, owing to novel communication networks and technologies, and increasing mechanisation of labour (Olson 2002: 62; White 2007: 177). Correlatively, the concept of socialism came to represent the equitable distribution of such goods on a national scale, while communism continued to represent local, communal ways of living. However, industrial capitalism continued to gain considerable momentum during the nineteenth century and economic inequality increased significantly, and it was within this context that Marx insisted on socialism as the ultimate result of widespread industrialization because of the unsustainability of such rampant economic disequilibrium (Glassman 1995: 183; Kemp 2014: 60). To this end, Marx, in his texts, appropriates the term communism in order to stir audiences emotionally, and to foster rebellion against capitalism, while reserving the term socialism to mean a collectivized, national economy (Baradat 1994: 150). The emotive use of 'communism' is apparent in Marx's *German Ideology*, when he declares that communism is not simply "a *state of affairs* which is to be established, an *ideal* to which reality [will] have to adjust itself." Rather, communism is called the "*real* movement which abolishes the present state of things" (1986: 182). Underlying these sentiments are Marx's ideas on the paradoxical nature of modern capitalist society, where enough is produced to provide everyone with a comfortable share, but where the working class – despite being the producers – are denied this, while the affluent take more than they need. In short,

> for the first time in human history humanity has created an economic system that produces enough for all people so that they may enjoy the spare time necessary to refine their humanity – to be free, in other words. Yet, that very economic system distributes its bounty to a few wealthy people, thus artificially perpetuating the enslavement of the masses. (Baradat 1994: 157)

According to Marx, one of the major pitfalls of capitalism is the way in which workers experience self-alienation as a consequence of the capitalist conditions of production (Churchich 1990: 85; McNally 1990: 267). In particular, factory work and the division of labour were regarded as bringing about such alienation. This is because for Marx, "as long as a cleavage exists between the particular and the common interest," and while "activity is not voluntarily, but naturally, divided, man's own deed becomes an alien power opposed to him, which enslaves him instead of being controlled by him" (1986: 180). In terms of this, Marx suggests that labourers are principally alienated in three ways. Firstly, while work holds the potential to be a creative expression of the self, the tendency of capitalists to abuse their power over the worker leads to the latter experiencing unbearable working conditions. As such, the workers "come to hate the process by which they could refine their own nature" (Ollman 1976: 138; Blumenberg 1999: 56). Secondly, because of the nature of the capitalist system, it is necessary that workers be exploited by capitalists, so that maximum profits can be generated. In this regard, workers are forced to sell the products of their exploited labour for less than they are worth, with the surplus value going to the owners of industry (Younkins 2002: 80; Bratton, Denham & Deutchmann 2009: 125). Thirdly, workers experience self-alienation because of the increasing use of machines, in place of manual labour. That is, mechanisation does not allow workers to fully explore their creative capacities because it reduces them instead to "little more than feeders of machines" (Dinwiddy 1992: 431).

In addition to asserting that the nature of the capitalist system promotes the self-alienation of workers in the above ways, Marx also insisted that capitalist domination does not allow human beings to realise their uniquely human potentialities of autonomous action, sociality, and aesthetic appreciation (Conway 1987: 30). The term given to describe such collective human potentialities is the "human essence" (Wood 1981: 17; Tabak 2012: 12), and it is understood as something that is facilitated in different degrees by various forms of society. Accordingly, the more a society prevents the realization of the potentialities which comprise the human essence, the more dehumanized that society becomes. Of course, for Marx, a communist society is the only kind of arrangement in which these potentialities can be achieved fully. And for this reason, Marx maintains that communism is the "true appropriation of the human essence through and for [one]; it is the complete restoration of [one] to [oneself] as a…human being" (Ollman 1976: 92; Löwy 2005: 88). Understandably, this assertion is predicated on the principle of economic determinism or the idea that a person's consciousness is born from the socio-economic circumstances in which s/he is immersed (Carlson 2000: 26; Hughes, Sharrock & Martin 2003: 90). Accordingly, for Marx, the various economic systems that have characterised societies throughout history have led to historical progress, and in this

regard, he advances four main struggles as encompassing the trajectory of history,[80] and predicts a fifth and final struggle. One which will occur when the capitalist elite (thesis) are confronted by the proletariat (antithesis) and obliged to concede to the inevitable dictatorship of the proletariat (synthesis) – and beyond this, the withering away of the state when the socialist ethos finally becomes ubiquitous.

This final dialectical shift therefore entails nothing less than the realisation of human potential. That is, firstly, autonomous action is recognized as being an important element of the human essence and is described as one's ability to be the "conscious author of one's acts" (Conway 1987: 31), but this potentiality is stifled when people are driven by basic needs for survival. Such desperation arguably clouds one's judgment, and prevents one from behaving autonomously, or indeed consciously. As Conway maintains, human beings "are capable of autonomous action only by virtue of having the capacity to be *conscious* of what it is they are doing," and through carrying out such activity in an "intelligent and reflective…way" that sets it apart from "the activity of non-human animals" (1987: 32). But according to Marx, there are two ways in which the capitalist system prevents workers from gaining autonomy. To start with, the market economy dictates production, such that workers are not able to pursue the production of their choice, but are rather forced to produce according to the whims of the market (Dale 2010: 189; Garner 2010: 33). Correlatively, Marx asserts that the division of labour and widespread mechanisation required by capitalist competitors have stopped workers from nurturing skills that bring value to their work, namely a sense of craftsmanship. Rather, they are compelled to become efficient at only a few simple tasks, which are often facilitated or mediated by machines. These factors stunt the creative and interesting possibilities of work, and make "productive activity for the vast majority as monotonous and unattractive as work can possibly be" (Conway 1987: 37).

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[80] According to Marx, three main socio-economic struggles have already taken place since the beginning of human society – all characterised by a thesis, antithesis, and a resulting synthesis, which subsequently becomes the thesis for the new era of socio-economic struggle. The first kind of society Marx recognises is unorganized, but this social form meets its antithesis in the emergence of division of labour and private property. The conflict between the two results in the second era, characterised by empire (synthesis), a dominant socio-economic paradigm that was eventually challenged by barbarians, to create the third synthesis of the landed aristocracy. With this new thesis, the period of feudalism occurred, only to be challenged by the new bourgeoisie class, who were successful in their struggle, and established the bourgeois democracy – the era of capitalism – which characterises contemporary societies. According to Marx, the fourth struggle will occur between the bourgeois democracy and the proletariat, who will eventually succeed in establishing a communist society, governed democratically by the proletariat, until the need for such governance withers away because of the strength and persuasiveness of the socialist ethos (Baradat 1994: 164).

Secondly, because the capitalist system has promoted the attitude of regarding fellow humans as mere means to an economic end, the "unique potentiality of communicating and co-operating with others" has been lost (Conway 1987: 33). That is, the capitalist system has nursed a sense of quiet suspicion and aggression between people, which breaks down their abilities and inclinations to work in a co-operative and sociable way (Vonnoy 1980: 130; Ho 2009: 114). On the one hand, workers become less inclined to foster a sense of sociality towards their employers because of the unpleasant working conditions the latter condemn them to. On the other hand, the development of sociability among capitalists is also retarded in such an economic system, because of the way in which they come to regard workers as ultimately disposable and expendable (Postone, Galambos & Sewell 1995: 340; Perelman 2011: 31).

Thirdly, Marx considers a capitalist society to be one that does not foster the capacity for aesthetic enjoyment amongst workers (Morris 2014: 17). This is because workers are not able to reach a level of disinterested contemplation, on account of their need to survive (Kain 1982: 90). Such desperate pursuit of survival, Marx suggests, makes humans no different from non-human animals. Regarding this, Marx identifies two principal ways in which the capitalist economic system blunts humans' abilities to realise this potentiality. To start with, people are said to become less interested in pursuing activities that may develop their aesthetic appreciation because of the emphasis capitalist society places on acquisition (Conway 1987: 39; Harvey 2010: 256). That is, people seem more interested in saving their money to increase their power, as it were, than in spending their money on aesthetically valuable activities, which develop them personally. Instead, base appetites and desires are purportedly fostered within members of a capitalist society, and they become preoccupied with the related consumerist ideals (Visano 2006: 18; Yagi, Yokokawa, Shinjiro & Dymski 2013: 249). Next, the impossibility of dwelling manifests in a capitalist economic system because, in a modern and urban context, workers are subjected to a rentier system. In this system, workers live in spaces that they recognize as belonging to someone else, such that a condition of impermanence haunts the modern worker's abode (DeFazio 2014: 174-175). Moreover, this sentiment is aggravated by the fact that workers know full well the conditions in which the affluent live, and how they contrast with the squalor of their own situations.

The above description of the ways in which capitalism reduces the human essence are, of course, well known and widely discussed points, which have guided many decades of anti-capitalist and pro-communist rhetoric. And discussions of this kind have moreover gained momentum in contemporary times, as societies are increasingly plagued by social ills, the origins of which stem from the dominant neoliberal economic system. However, there is evidence to suggest that Marx – historically situated in the middle of the Industrial Revolution

– neglected a major additional dimension of capitalist alienation, namely the deleterious effects that the widespread exploitation and marginalization of *nature* has on humans. Admittedly, Marx evinced sensitivity towards the highly extractive character of the capitalist system, by suggesting that eventually the resources capitalism depends on would become depleted, and would force a "new means of production [to]…evolve, resulting in economic change" (Baradat 1994: 168). Yet he failed to explicitly register the exploitation and repression of nature as an important dimension of humankind's *own* subjugation within the capitalist system. Within the contemporary context of the environmental crisis this shortfall of Marxism has become increasingly apparent, as questions of the future of nature – and *its* economy – become all the more urgent. As a response to this issue, the relatively new concept of *eco*-socialism has emerged, which underscores the profound links within capitalist societies between human repression and the marginalization of nature. To understand the important bearing that this has on developments within Cuban society, an elaboration on the concept of eco-socialism is required.

The eco-socialist paradigm is underpinned by the basic socialist principles of egalitarianism, elimination of capitalism and related form of poverty, need-based resource distribution, and democratic control of lives and communities (Pepper 1993: 234). However, a distinguishing feature of eco-socialism is how it has become "more willing to acknowledge the complexity of the modern globalising world and thus move away from that crude economism which has disillusioned many would-be Marxist theorists and practitioners in the past." The paradigm is described as radically environmental *and* homocentric, on account of its marrying of socialist ideals with environmentalism, in a way that transforms socialist principles to suit the contemporary context of environmental catastrophe (Pepper 2010: 33-34). In short, eco-socialism recognises "the relationship between inequity and difference among humans, and the domination of nature" (Cudworth 2003: 48). One of the essential underpinnings of eco-socialist theory is that the capitalist economic system, which has enjoyed tremendous growth over the past two hundred years, is predicated on the exploitation of natural resources, which is carried out enthusiastically by the institutions that subscribe to the capitalist mode of production (Mentan 2012: 58; Kröger 2013: 1). In this regard, Pepper identifies four ways in which the capitalist economic system destroys the natural environment (Pepper 2010: 34-35), and his schematization is supported by an array of other theorists. Firstly, in the pursuit of profit, manufacturers tend to produce more than what the consumer market either needs or is able to use; precious resources are thus wasted needlessly in the manufacturing of consumer items (Schweickart 2011: 126; Fine, Saad-Filho & Boffo 2012: 80). Secondly, the need to satisfy the desires of investors has become paramount to multinational corporations, and to this end,

neoliberal economics is ruthless in its use of resources in order to turn a profit (Sampson & Hair 1990: 301; White, Carniero & Urish 2008: 190). Thirdly, the intensely competitive character of capitalism compels corporations to disregard the harm their firms wreak on the natural environment, which ultimately externalises the costs of pollution and waste – a cost that is inevitably paid by the most vulnerable members of society (Adams 2003: 307; White 2004: 32). And fourthly, because capitalism is "expansion oriented," its own survival depends on the dissemination of consumer culture, resulting in infinitely increasing demands being placed on nature and its resources (Crockett 2013: 84; Hull 2013: 96).

Similarly, Low, Gleeson, Green and Radović suggest that two contemporary phenomena have contributed toward modern society's separation from nature, namely "substitutability" and "remoteness." According to these authors, substitutability refers to the modern trend of replacing natural processes or methods of production with scientific ones, giving society the impression that nature can be entirely replaced by human technology. Alternatively, remoteness is the "placing of geographical distance between production and consumption" (2005: 38), and is apparent in all globalised trade and the consumption of products that are manufactured or grown a great distance from the end consumer. The result of this is that the stages of production that are heavily dependent upon natural resources, and/or which are detrimental to the natural environment, remain hidden from those who consume the goods – reinforcing the estrangement of human society from nature.

In terms of discussions surrounding the related alienating effects of capitalism, the most significant amendment that eco-socialism makes to Marxist theory is that capitalism not only alienates people from themselves and fellow humans, but *also* from nature. It is with this in mind that Pepper maintains that "alienation from nature is separation from a part of *ourselves*" (1993: 233), and it is only through the implementation of a socialist system of production that this alienation from ourselves and nature could be reversed. Moreover, it is suggested that an eco-socialist society would

> rediscover and express people's real relationship to nature – neither separation and superiority, as contemporary capitalism presupposes, nor mere equality, as ecocentrism believes. Rather, society and nature are dialectically related, so that each is a manifestation of the other. (Pepper 2010: 34)

According to the eco-socialist perspective, humans' perceptions of nature are produced in much the same way as society's consciousness is constructed through its socio-economic conditions (Holden 2000: 171; Pepper, Webster & Revill 2003: 359). What this suggests is that society's conceptualisations of nature are capable of changing – in much the same way that socio-

economic conditions can be transformed. And because of the constant interactivity between humans and nature, it is advanced that the two dimensions share dialectic relations; that is, "humans depend on the natural environment for their existence, and are shaped by, and in turn alter, their surroundings." Similarly, humans rely on nature "for the realisation of [their] intellectual and aesthetic powers" (Dickens in Cudworth 2003: 49). Through the latter, Dickens points to the fundamental role that nature plays in facilitating people's realisations of the human essence, and Marx's three potentialities of autonomy, sociality, and aesthetic appreciation. But arguably a fourth, eco-socialist potentiality exists, alongside those identified by Marx, namely the *recognition of nature as an inherently valuable part of humanity*.

In terms of this, Cudworth explains that while Marxism is often used to "analyse people's disaffections with their paid employment," it can also be a tool for studying the ways in which people have been alienated from nature (2003: 50). This particular form of alienation has resulted from capitalism's commodification of nature, which has ultimately led to human society regarding nature as merely a 'means to an end,' which is increasingly expected to support an economic system severely lacking in ecological sensitivity.[81] And Robbins et al. further explain how, in modern society, "nature is something *external* to ourselves and society," and that

> by seeing human society as separate from nature, we have allowed humanity the apparent right to use it in whatever manner we see fit. In the case of capitalist society, this generally means the exploitation of nature as raw materials for commodity production, or the commodification of nature itself. If we want to buy or sell something on the market, after all, we must be able to see it as an object, external to us. (2011: n.p.)

In contrast, the eco-socialist paradigm involves both the idea of equitable socio-economic relations between people, and equitable socio-ecological relations between people and nature, a prerequisite of which is the *de*commodification of nature. Moreover, eco-socialism seeks the establishment of an economy that does not exploit nature to such an extent that her natural limitations are exceeded. As Princen emphasises in *The Logic of Sufficiency*, "missing are the principles of social organization consonant with long-term, sustainable resource use. It is from such principles that ecologically sensitive patterns of use can emerge" (Princen 2005: viii). But

[81] 'Commodification' is understood as the process an object or resource undergoes, from being considered as containing inherent value, to something that is only considered valuable in terms of its potential for exchange (Robbins, Hintz & Moore 2011: n.p.).

in order for such patterns to become effective, eco-socialists emphasise a conception of the collective good, which is inclusive of nature.

In *Earth Democracy*, Shiva elaborates on the interrelated existence of three economies, which is an idea in conflict with the capitalist insistence upon the independent, infinite, force of the market economy. That is, for Shiva, the market economy is built upon the economies of sustenance and nature. The economy of nature is described as the "first economy, the primary economy on which all other economies rest" (2005: 16), and it involves the production of goods and services by nature, which come about through systems that, in terms of their complexity, *dwarf* those created by the market economy. Even so, the market economy does not consider the goods produced by nature, or the economy of sustenance, as valuable. Rather, Shiva suggests, "only production and productivity in the context of market economics has been considered" within the capitalist context (2005: 16). Consequently, eco-socialism supports the recognition of the importance of nature's economy. From the perspective of the paradigm, the way in which human society can find a measure of equilibrium with nature is to reappropriate "collective control over our relationship with nature, via common ownership of the means of production: for production is at the centre of our relationship with nature, even if it is not the whole of that relationship" (Pepper 1993: 233).

But in order for an alternative economy to succeed in such a way that nature is no longer brutally exploited for commercial gain, transformations in what society regards as 'necessary for survival' will have to take place. That is, because capitalist society has inculcated consumerism within its citizens, and created the 'false' needs and desires that Marx refers to, people have developed skewed understandings of what is essential for a comfortable existence. As such, an eco-socialist system will be required to redefine 'wealth' and to establish the limitations of a "reasonable material wellbeing to all" (Fisher 2013: 244; Welford 2013: 25). Within such a system, wealth is distributed according to the needs of individuals within the society, but because each person has what is required for a comfortable existence, individual desires are placed secondary to the needs of the community at large (Huan 2010: 8). Something which entails a reflection of the concept of *gemeinschaft*, common in pastoral societies before the Industrial Revolution, as discussed in Chapter One. And as with pre-industrial times, rights to private land would have to be either highly restricted, or non-existent, as communities claim back common land, which all members of the local community have the right to use in a socially responsible manner.

In relation to the above eco-socialist theorisation, the question arises as to what the specific features of a potential eco-socialist world might be, and there seems to exist relative consensus among eco-socialists concerning these. Firstly, eco-socialist existence would have a

strong tendency towards regional- and self-reliance, and would seek to gain increasing distance from external economic control (Scott 1990: 94). Secondly, a focus on local production for a local economy would be a prominent feature, along with the minimization of transportation for the purposes of distribution (Sarkar 1999: 213). Thirdly, there would be common ownership of the means of production – preferably by members of the local community (Barry & Frankland 2014: 148). Fourthly, because production within eco-socialist systems would be to a large degree free from market forces that dictate current excessive production, it would allow such projects the time to develop systems that are less exploitative of, and harmful to, nature. This feature also points to principles that take into account the long-term effects of production, and the ways in which an ecologically sustainable ethos could be adopted in industry. Fifthly, within eco-socialist communities, members will conceivably experience a decline in their standard of living, but this reality is accepted in return for security and a good *quality* of life (Iovina 2007: 380). And finally, the sixth feature is that of an increasing attempt to create a self-reliant community, which nurses relations with other nearby communities or regions (Carter 2007: 72; Pepper 2010: 39).

For Marx, the time frame of socialist revolution was uncertain, mostly due to the purportedly spontaneous nature of the proletarian revolution relative to different stages of development in different societies (Hanson 1997: 65; Dunayevskaya 2003: 154). However, Marx did predict that such an uprising would be caused by increasingly unbearable living and working conditions, and the realisation by the proletariat of their subjugation within capitalist society. Regardless of the beginning of the revolution, though, Marx asserted that its consequence would be economic change, necessitating a transformation of the economic foundation of society, leading to a conversion of the superstructure.[82] Eco-socialists similarly assert that the catalyst of the proletarian revolution will come when, firstly, capitalism fails to produce the goods that the affluent minority have come to depend upon and expect, and secondly, when the system proves itself unable to produce "a physical and non-material environment for the rest which is tolerable enough to contain discontent" (Pepper 1993: 234). And just as Marx was sure that such changes would take place in proportion to the level of proletarian discontent, so too, in terms of eco-socialism, it is understood that the speed of such

[82] Marx suggested that the structure of society could be explained in terms of the base-superstructure metaphor, often illustrated as a pyramid. The base of the structure accordingly comprises the means and relations of production and on top of this foundation is the superstructure, which contains the various institutions, religion, norms, culture, legal system, and education system present in the society, which are informed by and also legitimate the base (Whitehead 2010: 45). Consequently, if the base of the structure experiences a transformation, the superstructure is compelled to undergo changes as well.

a paradigmatic shift will be in proportion to the level of environmental degradation and the degree to which this impacts negatively on the welfare of the majority of the global population.

While some states have made attempts to adopt a socialist economy, few, if any, have been able either to maintain it, and/or to continuously promote the development of autonomy, sociability, and aesthetic appreciation among their citizens (Žvan 1979: 362; Frankel 2010: 49). Moreover, the fourth eco-socialist potentiality – namely the recognition of the inherent value of nature as part of humanity – has arguably received scant thematisation in previous socialist states. Instead, the understanding and practice of socialism throughout the last century has been plagued by forceful bureaucratization and the continued exploitation of workers in the interest of achieving ever greater levels of production, efficiency, and state wealth. And this process has almost always spelled disaster for the natural environment, in terms of resource extraction and pollution. Indeed, it would seem that, throughout the twentieth century, "communism's economic monopoly had all of the drawbacks Marx ascribed to capitalist monopolies: it was bureaucratic, wasteful, inefficient, and unjust" (Gorman 1995: 170).

Admittedly, Cuba did subscribe to many of these principles after the revolution of 1959, most notably within its agricultural policies. However, in post-1990 Cuba, the very interesting socio-economic and socio-*ecological* changes discussed earlier have given theorists reason to believe that the country has undergone not only a more viable form of socialist transformation, but also the world's first eco-socialist revolution. In what follows, an exploration of the ways in which Cuban society in general, and Cuban *urban* society in particular, has transformed according to eco-socialist principles, will be undertaken. More specifically, the various ways in which the potentialities of autonomy, sociability, aesthetic appreciation, *and* recognition of the inherent value of nature as part of humanity, have been actualised within Cuban society, will be discussed.

3.4 Eco-socialist reflections in post-Soviet Cuba

The socio-economic changes that took place in Cuban urban centres during the Special Period were brought about by a unique set of circumstances, and resulted in the creation of a specific urban model. The most significant feature of this model, and what seems to make it especially eco-socialist, is the urban farming that proliferates in many parts of Cuban cities – not least of all Havana – and the newfound appreciation of nature's economy inherent in these practices.[83]

[83] Pinderhughes indicates that by 2003, thirty percent of Havana's available land was being used for cultivation, while the city itself contained 30 000 people occupied with urban farming (2004: 213).

Moreover, through participation in citizen and community urban agricultural efforts, people's interest in acting autonomously, behaving sociably, appreciating aesthetics, and recognising the intrinsic value of nature as part of their humanity, were all significantly augmented. In what follows, some principal transformations that occurred within these communities, and how they have contributed to the realisation of the eco-socialist human essence, will be discussed.

To start with, autonomous action is indissociable from the eco-socialist revolution, and this has manifested itself at both individual and communal levels throughout Cuban society. Many home gardens (*huertos populares*) within the urban centres are tended to by individuals who wish to increase the food security of their families (Pinderhughes 2004: 213). Admittedly, this stemmed initially from the necessity for survival, which rendered it less autonomous during the beginning of the transformation. However, the subsequent result has been that those involved have effectively taken control of the production of their food – simultaneously negating the role of the state as provider, and revealing the limitations of high-input solutions to food shortages. Referring to the empowering characteristics of growing food gardens, Buchmann maintains that "their limited capital requirements and low labour costs are suitable for small-holder farming situations and thus increase the self-sufficiency of poor households and reduce vulnerability to climatic, biological, or market impacts" (2009: 707). The latter, in particular, as discussed earlier, was one of the principal means by which capitalism limited autonomy. As such, Cuban urban farmers have arguably deepened their levels of autonomy through the backyard production of food, in a way that has led to greater self-reliance in times of change (Clouse 2014: 138). And the same can be said for co-operative efforts, which aim to increase the self-reliance and food security of communities within urban spaces (Swilling, Sebitosi & Loots 2012: 110). As pointed out, within the context of communal gardens, the produce of the gardens is often distributed equally among members of the community, and the excess is sold at neighbourhood markets, or fruit and vegetable kiosks (Solomon 2006: 5; Pfeiffer 2013: 61).[84] Urban farmers who emerged during the Special Period could thus be characterised as the "conscious authors" of their acts, as they have taken steps to secure their autonomy by not externalising the burden of food shortages, and instead finding resilient solutions to their difficult circumstances.

Moreover, these individuals and communities have nurtured their autonomy by learning the craft of food gardening. While Marx suggests that capitalist societies are plagued by mechanisation and the division of labour, both of which diminish people's ability to develop autonomously, Cuban societies have undergone a revolutionary 'regression,' as it were, by

[84] For an image of a fresh produce market, see photograph 8 in the Addendum.

learning how to grow food without significant reliance upon machinery or division of labour. That is, Cuban farmers – both in the cities and rural areas – have learnt how to achieve good productivity largely without the use of mechanisation, such as tractors, and have developed a variety of collective skills, from the propagation of plants to the harvesting of their fruits, which are moreover practised communally.[85]

Indeed, through the establishment of many food gardens throughout Cuban urban centres, an organic adoption of the four categories of resilience-building factors, as described by Folke et al. has occurred (2009: 707). To start with, residents have accepted change as a permanent feature of their society. That is, by recognising the existence of economic and political uncertainty within the country, Cuban urban farmers have created resilient food systems that are capable of transformation, should circumstances require (Friedrichs 2012: 63; Clouse 2014: 178). Their adaptive capabilities are largely owing to their small size, organic characteristics, and minimal capital requirements. Next, Cuban food gardens are quite diverse in nature (Brenner 2008: 159; Levins 2008: 150). They generally contain varieties of vegetables, fruits, and herbaceous perennials and annuals, instead of tending towards monocultural production. Diversification in food gardening is very important, in that it allows for many solutions or options within the context of a food crisis. Following this, Cuban food gardens generally operate by "combining different kinds of knowledge" (Folke et al. 2009: 707). More specifically, home gardens often make use of indigenous knowledge, which in itself is an adaptive form of knowledge, passed down for generations, but which transforms to suit the current conditions of growing (Martusewicz. Edmundson & Lupinacci 2011: 238; Friedrichs 2012: 63). This knowledge is therefore highly resilient in that it is dynamic, and seeks low-input and local solutions to contemporary problems. Finally, and perhaps most significantly, Cuban home gardens allow for self-organisation. Home gardens encourage an economy that is separate from that of the state, and which functions relatively freely from market and external forces (Allen & Atkinson 2002: 62). This point in particular can be related to the fourth and sixth characteristics of an eco-socialist community discussed earlier. That is, the self-organising principles governing Cuban urban food gardens reflect the idea of the eco-socialist self-reliant community, which exists relatively free from market forces, but which is

[85] Farmers in the rural, agricultural regions of Cuba have foregone mechanisation to such a degree that they now make wide use of horses, instead of cars, for transportation (Bwogo 1993: 12; Frederik 2012: 2). In addition, the expense and scarcity of tractors has also led to farmers sharing old models of tractors for heavier work. These tractors are also available for use by inhabitants of the towns. For images of a farmer on horseback and an old tractor in use, see photographs 10 and 11 in the Addendum.

willing to establish links with other communities, with a view to strengthening the resilience of the community.

The latter issue also indicates how autonomous actions on the part of Cuban communities have led to the greater social outcome of *community resilience.* Resilience theory regards as most important the "adaptive capacity of societies to externally imposed change 'without undergoing fundamental changes in its functional characteristics'" (Berkes et al. in Buchmann 2009: 705). This is because, with an increased adaptive capacity, communities are said to stand a better chance of renewal and reorganisation, should they be confronted with natural or economic disaster (Edwards & Wiseman 2011: 196; Mallick 201: 331). According to Buchmann, Cuban urban centres are significantly resilient because of their focus on home and communal gardens. That is, "worldwide, home gardens are a community's most adaptable and accessible land resource and are an important component in reducing vulnerability and ensuring food security" (2009: 705).

Admittedly, one of the major facilitators of this process has been the Cuban State. As Koont explains,

> even with given resource and input constraints, and even if these are made all the more binding due to the blockade imposed on the island by the government of the United States, [the Cuban government has]…every prospect of extending [the country's] success in urban agriculture with the help of innovations and improvements in basic knowledge, technology, and social organization. The basic ingredients of such success were (and are) already present in Cuba: an educated population; a socially concerned and committed, people-oriented central government giving support and organizational backbone to the effort; and ample stimulation of decentralized initiative and decision making by producers at the base, encouraging local solutions to local problems. (2007: 322)

Accordingly, an important factor is also the willingness of the socialist state to allow for decentralised food production and alternative social organisation, an attitude that has aided the growth of this progressive eco-socialist feature of Cuban society (Clausen 2009: 433; Reed 2010). However, the state's role notwithstanding, recognition of the Cuban people, for displaying immensely innovative ways of coping with food shortages, and practising autonomy over the sources and production of their food, must take precedence. While Cubans have awakened to their potentiality of autonomy, they have also displayed a renewed sense of sociability towards each other, owing to their urban farming networks and local economies of reciprocity. That is, the importance of *human relations* in the success of the Cuban urban farming initiatives has been crucial. Within the context of food shortages and urban hardships, increased co-operation between people, requiring compromise by all socio-economic classes,

was one of the results when communities were compelled to adopt a utilitarian approach. As mentioned earlier, according to Marx, capitalism stunts humans' social potentialities in three ways, namely, by encouraging the idea that fellow humans are merely means to ends, by limiting workers' sociable feelings towards their employers because of intolerable working conditions, and through retarding capitalists' sociable sentiments towards their workers whom they regard as sub-human. These three negative results of capitalism, which to some extent continued to be reflected in Soviet-era Cuba, have in many respects been overcome in eco-socialist Cuba. Admittedly, this was in part due to communist ideology and the minimisation of socio-economic class distinction it entailed. But it has also been argued that without the effective establishment of social, reciprocal, community food networks, which integrated abstract philosophical theory into an everyday way of life, requisite remedial change would not have been possible.

During the Special Period, good relations were of necessity nurtured among neighbours and other members of the community, because those who grew food in their enclosed gardens quickly found that a more efficient method of obtaining a variety of produce was to exchange produce with others, who had grown different fruits, vegetables, or herbs (IPGRI 2000: 11). In addition, families were able to supplement their incomes by selling products, such as homemade wines, to those around them. Significantly, though, out of this climate of sociable exchange emerged an alternative economy, based on reciprocity and 'gift giving,' rather than on the capitalistic principles of profit or individual gain at the expense of others. Pointing to the sociable potential of urban farming, Buchmann notes that, within Cuban urban farming networks,

> most plant material is given to home garden owners as a gift from neighbours, family, and friends. But gift giving seems to go further than just sourcing new plant material for propagation. Plant produce is shared frequently: medicinal and ritual plants in case of sickness, and food produce…during a bountiful harvest. (2009: 717)

Thus Cuban urban food gardens are not individualistic efforts at self-sufficiency, as may be found in capitalist states.[86] Rather, home gardens are regarded as extensions of the larger,

[86] This hyper-individualism is apparent in the American television program, *Doomsday Preppers*, which appears on the *National Geographic Channel.* The show focuses on homeowners who are preparing for 'end of the world' scenarios, and consequently store supplies and weapons in their homes in anticipation of disaster. This combative worldview is indicative of a "cultural rhetoric of survivalism based on extreme individualism, social disconnectedness and mistrust, and…preparedness for ultimately inevitable…violence" (Pelizzon 2014: 327), insofar as the 'preppers' rarely, if ever, express intentions of working with other members of the community in

socially facilitated, "community home garden." That is, the concept of the 'community home garden' suggests that food gardens, even if contained in personal gardens or patios, are really parts of the "pool of resources" of that community, whose produce can be distributed and shared among the community. Accordingly, people within such a network understand that their own comfort and access to goods is dependent upon the size and strength of the community's communal home garden, and as a result, all new efforts that could add to this pool of resources receive much support from community members (Buchmann 2009: 717). Within this context, the social network becomes all-important. When people recognise their reliance upon the resilience and health of the community network at large, their perceptions of others tend to change, insofar as they begin to regard them not as 'means to an end,' but rather as potential *partners* (Lewandowski & Streich 2012: 215). By way of corollary, because hostility towards each other is generally unproductive in such a setting, and because alienation from members of the network could result in very negative consequences, the development of conflict management/resolution strategies at interpersonal levels has proved crucial, and this further supports the formation of strong social ties.

This uniquely eco-socialist environment also forms the rules of exchange. That is, the community's network of reciprocity and exchange "provides a more predictable 'market' in the sense of an outlet for products in exchange for what could be called *social capital*, as compared to monetary profit" [own italics] (Buchmann 2009: 718).[87] In sum, sociality has thus been renewed in Cuban communities because of the urban farming activities that sprung from the Special Period. People now tend not to regard each other as mere disposable tools for self-improvement, but rather the community at large is regarded as an extension of oneself (Cole, Lee-Smith & Nasinyama 2008: 38; Costa 2010: 176).

Apart from the establishment of community food networks, a newfound sociability also emerged in Cuban urban spaces as a result of people's partial reclamation of urban commons (Childs 2006: 50; Rowe & Barnes 2013: 42). Harvey explains that the prevailing wants and needs of a society will manifest in its structuring of urban spaces, as well as the extent to which certain aspects of the environment are enclosed or allowed to remain part of the urban commons (2012: 3). A given city could thus potentially be a *creative* expression of the values and insights

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times of crisis. Such an approach to disaster management is arguably characteristic of neoliberal societies, and contrasts starkly with the communal, sustainable, approach to combatting scarcity, which is at play in Cuba.

[87] "Social capital" refers to elements of social organisation that can be of benefit to members of the community. For example, support groups, trust, networks, and norms (Swain 2009: 298; Wright & Webb 2011: 138). Such features of Cuban communities are valuable to their members because they provide a measure of guarantee that they will later receive 'gifts' of produce in exchange for their earlier provision for others.

held by a particular society, rather than an expression of the limited state (or corporate interests) with which that society has been inculcated. And such creative expressions spring from urban commons, which manifest wherever citizens politicise public space. Consequently, it becomes important to draw distinctions between the concepts of 'public space' and 'commons.' In terms of this, Nordahl describes public space as those areas in the city that are freely accessible to people, and which are normally owned and maintained by the municipality; for example, sidewalks, parks, squares, and parking lots (2009: 51). However, while these spaces are necessarily open to public movement and exchange, they cannot automatically be described as commons. In contrast, as Harvey explains, while the government is compelled to supply public space to the people, urban commons only appear when such public space becomes "politically active." As such, commons are created by citizens with political will, who choose to decommodify a public space through communal activities that are exclusionary of market exchanges and valuations. Therefore, commons are not to be regarded "as a particular kind of thing, asset or even social process," but rather "as an unstable and malleable social *relation* between a particular self-defined social group and those aspects of its actually existing or yet-to-be-created social and/or physical environment deemed crucial to its life and livelihood" [own italics] (Harvey 2012: 73). Similarly, Petrescu points to the communal process of creating commons, by showing how "the reinvention of the commons needs space and time for sharing; it needs continual and sustained 'commoning;'" in other words, "the production of social processes to reinvent, maintain, and reproduce the commons. It also needs the contribution of active subjects – agents – to instigate and carefully engineer this process (2013: 262). In Cuban cities, the act of "commoning" occurred organically within communities, as people came together to establish communal gardens, or to create webs of reciprocal exchange within previously disused public space – for example, state-owned plots and parks – and residential spaces, such as balconies and rooftops. To be sure, much of this space became utilised through citizens' initiatives to improve their levels of self-sufficiency, and to discover alternative paths to food security (Loeffler 1989: 65; Fasenfest 2010: 204). But the effects remain powerfully political, insofar as citizens learned to reclaim public space, while simultaneously establishing profound social connections with others, which allowed for the commoning of such space. As Steward remarks, in Cuba, "farming…is not just about producing food. It is a social process by which new visions of democracy and new ways of engaging in politics emerge" (Steward 2006: 93). Furthermore, the process of commoning also transformed what was previously merely *public* space into *productive* space, in a way that has added value to portions of the city that for many years had been regarded as relatively useless. And the re-using of urban spaces that occurred in Cuban cities contributed towards a renewed flexibility and resilience of the urban

space (UN-HABITAT 2012: 24), involving tactically adaptive qualities, rather than those of strategic development. According to Clouse, urban farming "is now so visible and useful that it has a protected role in the city, both physically and culturally" (2014: 154). That is, these practices have come to be recognised as valuable to the city, both at the level of food production, and in terms of their positive socio-cultural attributes. Indeed, because of the widespread commoning of space, those areas occupied by urban agriculture have actually come to be regarded as a new *landscape type* in the city (Clouse 2014: 154), and this classification arguably indicates a novel appreciation for this kind of communal and politicised space.

But apart from merely improving people's relations to themselves (autonomy) and others (sociality), the eco-socialist revolution in Cuba also created space for people to develop their aesthetic appreciation, both for human art, and for the beauty of nature. In terms of the arts, Cuba is renowned for its vibrant musical culture and performing arts (Kopka 2010: 84; Cramer 2010: 196; Boobbyer 2011: 128), and these important elements of the island's culture have played a significant role in the continuation of revolutionary sentiments among the people into the post-Soviet era.[88] Arguably, a connection exists between Cubans' enjoyment of the arts, and the ways in which Cuban society has overcome the four capitalist dynamics which, according to Marx, prevent people from realising their aesthetic potentiality. To start with, Cuban society, historically speaking, placed little emphasis upon acquisition, primarily because the majority of people earned relatively little, such that incomes did not provide much latitude for consumerist activities. But freedom from the pressure to acquire resulted in more time spent pursuing aesthetically pleasing activities, for example, trips to the theatre, parks, and museums. Indeed, one way in which the state facilitated the growth of such aesthetic appreciation among the population entailed the subsidised vacation options available to state employees since the 1960s, "much of which [was] nature oriented: smaller beach resorts, health spas, mountain lodges, fishing clubs, camp-grounds, hiking and bicycle trails" (Honey 1999: 186). By providing this, the state enabled Cubans to appreciate both their own national heritage, and their natural heritage.

Next, Cubans were in certain respects freer to explore their aesthetic inclinations than those people within capitalist systems because the socialist system was structured to eliminate the average citizen's concerns about basic requirements, such as food and housing (Ritter 2004:

[88] Kopka explains that one of the goals of the Cuban Revolution of 1959 was to give citizens the opportunities to develop their talents, which gave rise to notable state support of the performing arts through many institutions. In this regard, the State was able to make the arts accessible to people by making the costs of attending performances or exhibitions very affordable, as well as by establishing "Houses of Culture" in all towns, where exhibitions and performances could be located (2010: 84).

62; Tucker 2012: 449). And the Cuban state continues to provide staple food rations to all members of society, housing, free health care, and free primary, secondary, and tertiary education. Although by no means perfect, this system has often received international recognition for the equitable opportunities and access to essential services it provides to all members of society (Porrata, Rodriguez-Ojea & Jimenez 2000: 53; Griffiths & Millei 2012: 39; Shapiro & Bernal 2014: 152). And it is as a result of these burdens being lifted from society that people became more open to exploring their aesthetic interests; for example, through popular activities such as dance. Dancing in particular is a large part of Cuban culture, and their appreciation for this art form is apparent in the ways in which it is openly expressed (Minahan 2013: 126). Moreover, dancing is said to play a significant role in the creation of "Cuban lives and self-concepts," and in developing a sense of "*cubanismo*," or "Cuban-ness" (John 2012: 45).

Following this, while capitalism, according to Marx, promotes base desires and stunts the development of aesthetic appreciation, within the socialist organisation of Cuban society this is certainly not the case. On the contrary, the urban centres are noticeably anti-consumerist in terms of their landscape. For example, Havana's commercial centre remains drastically different to any comparable space in global consumer society. No advertising, attractive lighting, competitive signage, or 'cutting-edge' architecture is present to entice people to *buy* (Goldman 2013: n.p.). Harris confirms this by explaining that,

> in the North American sense, there is no advertising in Cuba. No products are hyped with the latest models, improvements, and values. No advertisements exhort citizens to shop – as is practically the patriotic duty of U.S. citizens. In the United States, along with soap, clothing, and automobiles, it is capitalism that is marketed. In Cuba what's sold is the Revolution. (2007: 9)

Instead, kiosks selling everyday necessities are found along crowded walkways, while 'supermarkets' display state-made products, which remain very limited in terms of variety. And even these supermarkets are not immediately recognisable because of their lack of signage, advertising, and patronage.[89] Correlatively, the presence of street markets is strong, but

[89] Locals generally do not make use of these supermarkets for their grocery needs because of the high cost of goods, and because of the fact that the prices are charged in Cuban Convertible Peso (CUC), which is equivalent to the U.S. Dollar – rather than the local peso. In fact, even for tourists, shopping in such establishments is unattractive both because of their prices, and because of the high security measures they are subject to. It is required that tourists hand over their backpacks or handbags, along with their passports, before being allowed entrance into the store.

arguably these do not approximate institutionalised consumerism within the urban space. Rather, the only real indication of a consumerist dynamic occurs within the parts of Havana popular with tourists, such as La Habana Vieja and Centro Habana. In these areas, *haut kitsch* dominates, and memorabilia reminiscent of any major tourist city in the world can be found. But these places remain the exception rather than the rule. Even Cuban television negates consumerist principles, with very limited advertising presence or consumer rhetoric (Goldman 2013: n.p.). This absence of both consumer goods and disposable income, is often represented in pejorative terms through the Western media. Yet, the absence of a strong consumerist dynamic in Cuba has meant that people have developed a taste for activities outside of the consumer industry. Their time is thus not filled by the pursuit of those "base desires" underwritten by acquisition, so lamented by Marx, but by more socially meaningful, and aesthetically developed activities.

This is not least because the impossibility of dwelling, which concerned Marx, is overcome by the state's provision of housing. That is, because Cubans are provided with very affordable housing, nearly everyone is secure in the knowledge that they will always have a home. Consequently, they are not faced with the threat of homelessness – as tenants in capitalist states are – should the landlord require them to vacate. Furthermore, there are not massive disparities between living conditions within the socialist state, as one tends to find within a capitalist state. Rather, the majority of Cubans experience similar living conditions, which facilitates the bridging of the socio-economic divide within the country. As Yaffe eloquently shows, while many capitalists discuss the menial salaries of Cubans and the lack of consumer goods, they usually neglect to mention how

> the state provides a basic food basket; that most incomes are not taxed; that most Cubans own their homes or pay very little rent; that utility bills, transport and medicine costs are symbolic; that the opera, cinema, ballet and so on are cheap for all. High-quality education and healthcare are free. They are part of the material wealth of Cuba and cannot be dismissed – as if individual consumption of DVDs and digital cameras were the only measure of economic growth. (Yaffe 2009)

But apart from the above four ways in which Cuban society comes closer to facilitating the realisation of the human potentiality for aesthetic appreciation than capitalist societies, consideration should also be given to how Cubans have filled their cities with aesthetically pleasing greenery – simply out of appreciation for the natural beauty doing so brings to the urban space. Havana is an *extremely* green city, apart from the urban farms that certainly contribute much towards this characteristic. Palms dominate the landscape, while within the suburbs – such as that of Vedado – banyan trees line the sidewalks and banana trees border

properties. Olstad confirms this, explaining that in Vedado, "where the streets are more spacious, *jaguey* and palm trees line the blocks.[90] The trunks and branches of the *jaguey* trees twist and wind together looking like wooden vines, with spindly long hair: aerial roots, hard to the touch." In fact, sometimes "small offerings are placed at the bottoms of the sacred *ceiba* trees: a little brown box of rice and beans one day; another, a soda bottle cut in half and filled with rum" (2011: n.p.).[91] But what is most noticeable is the remarkable enthusiasm shown by citizens to green their patios, balconies, and even the roofs of their garages.[92] Aside from edible plants, those that decorate the homes of people point to a profound urge among many citizens to create a beautiful natural landscape for themselves, which indicates a respect and care for nature that transcends mere utility, and approximates instead the realm of aesthetics. In terms of this, Olstad remarks that even in "Centro Habana and La Habana Vieja, the most compact sections of the city, potted plants reign supreme, with balconies and windowsills full of ferns, cactuses and herbs crammed into impoverished planters and half-cut soda bottles" (2011: n.p.). Many more examples exist of how Cubans have allowed nature to grow, almost unchecked, within the capital. Disused buildings and structures – some within the very centre of the city – have been allowed to be consumed by creeping plants, which add a unique character to the urban space.[93] In many ways, the free reign of nature, in this regard, is representative of Cuba's newfound acceptance of the importance of nature within the city limits, firstly for the purpose of survival, and secondly as a related aesthetically valuable element of society. This dynamic is beautifully encapsulated in Park's eco-socialist assertion that, "indirectly, and without any clear sense of the nature of his task, in making the city man has remade himself" (in Harvey 2012: 4). That is, by coming to recognise both the necessity and aesthetic value of nature, people have not only experienced a transformation themselves, but have also played an active role in transforming their urban environments, for the better. Following from this idea, the fourth eco-

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[90] 'Jaguey' is another name for the banyan tree. For an image of banyan trees lining a street in Vedado, see photograph 16 in the Addendum.

[91] The ceiba tree is a Cuban religious tree, imbued with spiritual powers, especially important to Afro-Cuban heritage. It was under a ceiba tree that the first Catholic mass was held by the Spanish conqueror, Velázquez. Today, those who still subscribe to the Santería religion will leave sacrifices at the foot of the ceiba tree, and worship the ceiba as a female saint. It is said that for practitioners of Santería, the tree is so sacred that they must first ask permission before walking within the tree's shadow (Kunnie 2003: 137; Guiley 2008: 312).

[92] For images of how Cubans have 'greened' the exteriors of their homes, see photographs 14 – 17 in the Addendum.

[93] For images of how nature flourishes in Havana, see photographs 18 – 21 in the Addendum.

socialist human potentiality, namely the recognition of the inherent value of nature as part of humanity, requires consideration in relation to the Cuban context.

The eco-socialist dimensions of the Cuban *Revolución Agrícola* add to Marx's three human potentialities, a fourth potentiality – that of the recognition of the inherent value of nature as part of humanity, and upon consideration, Cuba's restoration of this largely neglected potentiality has been two-fold. Firstly, Cuba has shown a unique sensitivity to the problem of intensive capitalist extractivism for mass-productive ends, and during the Special Period, a corresponding realisation of how unrealistic expectations that nature could continue to produce in this way ultimately were. The food systems that have subsequently been put in place have been revolutionary, not only in their productive success, but also in terms of their eco-socialist leanings. This first element points to a more *general* appreciation of nature within Cuban society, which manifested in the pervasive green aesthetic, discussed above. However, secondly, Cuba has also been remarkable in the way in which its urban centres *in particular* have welcomed nature back within their boundaries. This has not only been evident in the practice of urban farming, but also in cities' promotion of 're-peasantisation,' along with a 'culture of walking,' both of which promote a synchronicity between people and the natural environment. Through these two ways, as will be discussed, during the Special Period Cuban society facilitated the uncovering of its latent and long forgotten relationship with nature and its processes.

In terms of the general transformation of Cubans' perceptions of nature, a documentary entitled *The Power of Community: How Cuba Survived Peak Oil*, emphasizes the reinvestment of value in nature, through organic 'peasant' practices on the island. In this regard, Morgan shows how Cuban farmers have become *conscious* of working in ways that complement nature, and this idea is underscored by a farmer's description of how fertile soil takes thousands of years to be produced by nature, and only a few years to be utterly destroyed by chemicals and large machinery. A statement that evinces a newfound respect for biodiversity, as well as an awareness of the damage that chemicals wreak upon the micro-flora and micro-fauna within the soil. These are not the kind of discussions generally engaged in by farmers invested in agribusiness, and they indicate that Cuban farmers have grown to understand the very small role of humans within the ecosystem. That is, with the perception of the soil as "a living being," farmers in Cuba have begun working in sync with nature, rather than wasting huge amounts of energy on methods that seek to bypass nature's economy. "To take care of the land" is the first principle because, as a Cuban custodian asserts, "if we don't take care of the earth, the earth won't take care of us" (Peréz in Morgan, 2006). Accordingly, in an effort to replenish damaged soil, organic composts have been used, along with organic worm humus, which is richer than

regular compost (Scialabba & Hattam 2002: 114; Viljoen & Howe 2012: 191).[94] Owing to the resounding success of these processes, over eighty percent of Cuban agriculture is now farmed organically (Kamal 2012: 115; Solomon 2006: 6). It is also of great interest that many Cuban farmers have resorted to ploughing the earth with oxen, rather than fuel-operated machinery (Spencer 2010: 126). While slower and more labour-intensive, using the oxen is said to have benefits for the soil in that the animals do not compress the earth to the extent that heavy machinery does.[95]

In many ways, new organic practices, such as those described above, recognise the value of nature's economy and point to a process of decommodification of nature – an immensely important aspect of the eco-socialist paradigm. In contrast, when considering the market economy's denial of the economy of nature, it is possible to see that contemporary urban spaces based on capitalist perspectives of development, are designed to exclude nature, or to disregard its productive value. In terms of this, Shiva mentions how the two words, "economy" and "ecology" share the same root word, derived from the Greek word for household – *oikos*. However, societies based upon market economy principles continuously view the two concepts as being at odds with each other, as though they are incompatible (Common & Stagl 2005: 1; Faber & Manstetten 2009: 20). And she notes that this way of dichotomous thinking serves to further separate humans from nature (Shiva 2000: 15), and render society blind to the way in which the market economy is irreversibly linked to, and reliant upon, the economy of nature. Considered in this light, Cuba's recognition of the primacy of nature's economy indicates an important difference between the approach of an eco-socialist society, and that of societies informed by capitalism. Just as humans within the community food sharing networks of Cuba have transformed their perceptions of each other, in a way that has surmounted the capitalistic "means to ends" mind-set, so too have they come to understand the finite capacity of the earth's resources, and the importance of good relations with nature, for the sustained survival of human societies.

In this way, eco-socialist Cuban communities have significantly overcome the manner in which capitalist society alienates nature through "substitutability" and "remoteness." Firstly, they have ended the trend of substitutability by replacing much previously mechanised labour with human or animal labour, through 'regression' to the use of horses in place of automobiles, and oxen instead of tractors, for tilling land. Moreover, with many people growing food within the urban space, which is subsequently sold at local kiosks, the processing of the food is

[94] For an image of organic compost being used on an urban farm in Havana, see photograph 9 in the Addendum.

[95] For images of rural Cuban land that has been tilled by oxen, see photographs 12 and 13 in the Addendum.

minimal, and requires little, if any, mechanised mediation (Britz 1981: 129). And in terms of these changes, which derived from their experiences during the Special Period, Cuban society has become profoundly aware both of the importance of nature in the production of food, and that high-input models are neither ecologically sound systems of food production, nor sustainable. Secondly, Cuban agriculture has largely negated the concept of 'remoteness,' as most food is locally grown, with little need for transportation from its place of harvest, to the consumer (FAO 2007: 13; Desai 2009: 120; South 2012: 44). And because of this, owing to the high visibility of agriculture both within the cities and in the Cuban countryside, members of the public are widely exposed to the origins of their food, and to the processes to which it is subject.

In addition, a more urban-specific way in which Cuban society has overcome its alienation from nature is through the considerable value, since the early 1990s, that has been placed on agricultural activities, which has been correlative with a newfound respect for those who facilitate them. In fact, farmers have become among the highest paid workers in the country, with some earning more than doctors (Bahnson & Wirzba 2012: 88).[96] Roberto Peréz, of the Foundation for Nature and Humanity, recognizes this rewarding of agricultural activities as a way of dignifying those who produce food for the people (Peréz in Morgan 2006). The renewed recognition of diverse, small-scale, agricultural skills as vital to the survival of communities in Cuba has contributed significantly to the re-peasantisation of Cuban society in general, and (quite remarkably) within urban spaces in particular. This process has meant that large-scale state control of the food system has given way to the creation of small-scale co-operatives and private gardens, which challenge the preconceived notion of a universal – or a "one-size-fits-all" (Campbell 2013: 43) – agricultural model. Instead, the movement towards re-peasantisation has meant that operations previously characterised by intensive agriculture, the rhetoric of high-productivity, multi-functionality, and modernisation in Cuba, have largely been replaced by initiatives that recognise the value of local experimental projects, which pursue "socially, ecologically, and economically sustainable" goals (Campbell 2013: 43).

In many ways, Cuba's development before the 1990s supported the "disappearance thesis," in terms of which it is maintained that capitalist growth leads to the displacement of the peasantry (Robinson 2003: 253; Babones & Chase-Dunn 2012: 317; Vanhaute 2012: 317), insofar as it tends to transform undifferentiated peasant groups into distinct groups of either

[96] This stands in stark contrast to those traditional farmers found in capitalist societies, who struggle to earn a living amidst the encroachment of agribusiness.

capital owners or wage labourers (Vanhaute 2012: 317).[97] And as discussed previously, under both American capitalist dominance and Soviet communist hegemony, Cuba experienced such dichotomisation of the peasantry, which led to significant deruralisation and a definite increase in the wage labour force. That is, the intensive agricultural model that both economic systems enforced on the island led to a distinct decline in the Cuban peasantry, and a degradation of the overall social status of subsistence farmers, within the context of modernisation. This involved "a multi-layered process of erosion of an agrarian way of life, [and] the increasing difficulty to combine subsistence and commodity agricultural production with an internal social organisation based on family labour and village community settlement" (2012: 317-318). Conversely, during the Special Period, a rebirth of the peasant class was necessitated. However, while the peasantry was traditionally associated with the rural space, with wage labour dominating in cities, the new eco-socialist paradigm encourages the growth of a peasant class *within* urban spaces – people who participate in communal or private agricultural projects, with a view to establishing an "alternative agro-food network" that decommodifies the system of food production (Corrado 2010: 20). And the birth of such peasantry within Cuban cities during the 1990s was concomitant with a profound problematisation not only of the role of the city, but also of the uncritical denial of the economy of nature in urban spaces. Today, a growing number of theorists (Enriquez 2003: 202; Corrado 2010: 20) regard the process of re-peasantisation as a "dynamic process" that comprises a "key contributor to the future sustainability of global food relations" (Campbell 2013: 43). Something which is crucial to a transformation of how societies understand the term 'peasant,' from a pejorative term to one that connotes people who work in sync with nature to develop a harmonious system of food production in the city, and who are consequently worthy of respect.

Another way in which Cuban cities are forming a closer relationship with nature is through the encouragement of mobility that does not require fossil fuel. Walking continues to be valourised as the best form of transportation within cities and towns, and Macauley (2000) discusses how walking – as opposed to using an automobile – may grant one a better understanding of the city or surroundings, and may aid the development of increasingly critical insights into the workings of a place. He proposes that there is currently a "recession in walking" because of the way in which auto-centred societies have structured their environments in order to accommodate privatized motors. Yet, walking allows a person to experience the world as "inhabited placescape" (Macauley 2000: 9), which points to a recognition of relations between

[97] Alternatively, in his seminal text, *The Agrarian Question*, Karl Kautsky refers to these two groups as the "rural proletariat" and the "capitalist farmer" (1899: xiii).

the individual and the external world that otherwise go largely unnoticed within an auto-centred universe. That is, when walking, it is possible to

> observe the convergence, collaboration and confluence of the body, mind and place as well as the sense of being seized in the walk by something more-than and other-than oneself. There is an internal proceeding of that externality and perhaps, more exactly, a chiasmatic crossing of inside and outside via the 'living machine' of the body. (Macauley 2000: 8)

This description of the forces at play during a walk illustrates a radically different experience that is undergone by a walker, in contrast to that available to the motorist. In short, the walker is better able to establish a form of kinship or relation with their surrounding environment, than those situated within the privatised space of an automobile. Macauley also depicts walking as an organic practice, when referring to the "living machine" of the body, and the way in which the walker becomes sensitised to different planes of perception – other than the linear, material, plane of the auto – which hints at the capacity of walking to instil ideas of diversity and difference in the walker. And in this regard he is supported by an array of theorists (Huang 2004: 4; Bell & Binnie 2006: 130; Zhang 2010: 4). In principle then, it would seem that walking – or for that matter cycling – within the city has the potential to instil a profound appreciation for natural surroundings and the way in which the human body is in fact part of this environment. And because of the promotion of transport systems that do not require fuel systems, as well as the generally crowded public transport system, many people do choose to walk or cycle to destinations within a reasonable distance. But in Cuba, this is more the rule than the exception. Admittedly, for locals in Havana, the quintessential 1950s shared cabs are affordable and convenient, while informal unlicensed cabs also exist. Locals also make use of crowded Metro Buses, which are a relatively new addition to the city's transportation system. However, the majority of locals choose to walk or cycle to their destinations. Similarly, for tourists, the more expensive and private Cuba Taxi exists, which resembles the American yellow cab, and charges in CUC, rather than in the local Peso. But additionally, the Coco taxi – a three-seater tricycle – is available for private transport, also charging in CUC, while in the tourist centres closed off to automobiles, the most common form of transportation is the Bici-Taxi, which resembles a rickshaw, and is powered by a cyclist.

Over the past twenty years, the social successes of the Cuban urban farming revolution have become increasingly apparent, not least of all owing to the many urban farming blogs and

collaborative websites that have underscored these positive transformations.[98] However, while much conversation has surrounded this topic, few, if any, have recognised the profoundly eco-socialist characteristics of this revolution. Many dissident articles refer to the "Green Revolution" in Cuba, but fail to connect these positive transformations to the eco-socialist paradigm. Yet it is possible that this oversight is itself culturally and socially induced; that is, the idea that eco-socialism may contain some very positive and legitimate answers for those societies around the world facing food scarcity – now or in the future – has been difficult for certain journalists and scholars to recognise, particularly those who have been discursively informed by the anti-communism filter of the U.S. mass media (Herman & Chomsky 1988: 29-30). Indeed, as will be discussed next, there is significant evidence to suggest that impetus for the marginalisation of this revolution derives from the continued pro-capitalist propaganda led by the neoliberal mainstream mass media.

[98] Some examples of websites and blogs that have discussed the successes of Cuban urban farming are reimaginerpe.org, architectural-review.com, and even independent.co.uk.

Chapter Four: The Marginalisation of the *Revolución Agrícola* in Neoliberal Mass Media

4.1 Introduction

Chapter Three explored the immensely positive features of Cuba's agricultural revolution, and how the *Revolución Agrícola* has resulted in a unique form of eco-socialist society, characterised by resilient local economies, populist involvement, and a level of ecological sustainability that has yet to be found elsewhere in urban centres. However, despite these positive attributes, Cuba's ability to play a visible role on the international stage as a model of socio-ecological sustainability has been significantly inhibited through the marginalisation of positive depictions of Cuba in general, and the *Revolución Agrícola* in particular, by the neoliberal mass media. Arguably, this negation of reference to Cuba as exemplar is part of the legacy of Cuba's historical subalternisation in American mass media, and the island's correlative subordination to American hegemony has resulted in the systematic silencing of Cuban voices and actions that contest the legitimacy of such power.

With a view to exploring this issue, in what follows, after elaborating on subaltern theory, how the related prejudice is informed by *différance* and how such dynamics inform the Propaganda Model of the U.S mass media identified by Herman and Chomsky, the historical subversion of Cuba in the American mass media will be established, before the relationship between such representations and the ways in which the contemporary mainstream neoliberal mass media frame Cuba in general, and the *Revolución Agrícola* in particular, will be investigated. That is, against the backdrop of the subaltern theorizations of, among others, Herndl and Bauer (2003), and Pandey (2006), and through the critical lens of the Propaganda Model advanced by Herman and Chomsky in *Manufacturing Consent: the Political Economy of the Mass Media*, American mass media representations of Cuba during the Spanish-American War, Cuba's period of American imperialism, and the years succeeding the Cuban Revolution, will be engaged with. After this, a spectrum of various neoliberal news corporations' treatments of the *Revolución Agrícola* will be considered, in the interest of identifying the dominant attitudes towards the alternative life system which Cuba has come to represent, that are being generated by the mainstream mass media.

4.2 Cuban subalternity and the Propaganda Model

The Cuban *Revolución Agrícola* is arguably one of the most understated catalytic events in recent history. It is not only proof of people's power to conceptualise creative communal solutions in times of hardship. In addition, the eco-socialist nature of the current Cuban food system, and the subsequent local economies that have sprouted from this paradigm shift, also point to the ability of people to regain a degree of autonomy in the production of their food, if sufficiently motivated to do so. Cuba's food revolution thus not only signifies the valorization of the traditional farmer as the major element of resilient, sustainable, and healthy produce, but also serves as a reminder of the finite resources available to humans to feed themselves, and that the status quo of agribusiness cannot realistically be relied upon to produce dependable supplies of food in perpetuity. Yet, while Cuba's eco-socialist turn in the production of food is regarded by many as a source of deep socio-ecological, and indeed, politico-economic, inspiration, it would seem that this revolution has tended to be marginalised in mainstream neoliberal mass media for the very same reason. That is, apart from a few disparate interactions with Cuba's important changes in policy regarding its food system, the mainstream neoliberal mass media have largely refused to frame Cuba in a positive light preferring rather to confine discussion to the island's politics. This obsession with Cuban politics arguably relates to the American-led mission of extending neoliberalism around the globe to the detriment of alternative economic paradigms which might contest its legitimacy. And in this regard, the mainstream neoliberal mass media's preoccupation with Cuba's communist label, and the Castro brothers' refusal to adopt capitalist economic and political principles, serves as an effective blinker to the global public. These limitations effectively restrict Cuba's ability to represent itself, and to be heard, on international platforms, with the consequence that Cuba finds itself firmly situated within the realm of the subaltern. In other words, among those who are neither represented within political domains, nor re-presented within the realms of art or philosophy (Herndl & Bauer 2003: 561), and who are thus relegated to people of "marginalised social position" (Arber 2008: 51). For Spivak, subalternity does not merely concern the economic or political subordination of a group, but rather the impossibility of that group to gain access to the institutions or platforms that would allow the subaltern to express her concerns and to be recognised within the public domain (2010: 228). This "subaltern class" is accordingly composed of those not belonging to groups in a position of dominance (Cherniavsky 1995: 97), but who are instead trapped within a relational situation of subordination (Pandey 2006: 4738). In relation to such circumstance, Spivak declares that the subaltern "has no history and cannot speak" (1988: 28) – not because the subaltern cannot talk, but rather because she cannot access

the structures to have her voice recognised and registered. And while Spivak generally refers to women in the Global South as representing the ultimate subaltern, arguably, within the context of the 'global village' informed by global neoliberal mass media, Cuba can be construed as a subalternised state. As has been shown, the island's access to international media platforms is severely limited, and thus it cannot contest the distorted and/or selective framing of Cuban politics and society within neoliberal mass media. This has arguably led to most aspects of Cuban society – from emergent local socio-cultural dynamics to their nuanced politico-economic effects – not only being unrepresented and unrecognised globally, but also being precluded from emerging from such subordination. The relationship that emerges between the subaltern and the elite is reminiscent of Hegel's master-slave dialectic, which implies a "mutually reinforcing relationship where there can be no master without a slave, and no slave without a master." On the one hand, what this means is that, without mutual recognition of each other, neither the slave nor the master can exist. However, on the other hand, Hegel's focus on the existence of a relationship between the two parties, indicates that the 'master' does not hold that position as a result of "god-like powers" or a natural superiority to the 'slave.' Instead, he is only the 'master' because "he has reasoned himself as such, by pitting the myth of his superiority against the myth of the other's inferiority" (Haleem 2011: 21).

The subaltern class, made up of the traditionally subordinated groups, thus endures a relationship with the dominant group – the colonisers or imperialists – who seek to extend their influence over the subaltern so as to affirm their own status. During this process, the subaltern class is subject to *différance*, which means

> both "to defer" and "to differ." Thus, in relation to any signifier, *différance* may refer not only to the semantic state or quality of being deferred (in the sense of postponed or deflected…), but also to the semantic state or quality of being different from (or not quite the same as). *Différance* may be the condition for that which is deferred, and may be the condition for that which is different. (Dimitriadis & Kamberelis 2006: 107)

Différance was first conceptualised by Jacques Derrida who uses the term to show how "any single meaning of a concept or text arises only by the effacement of other possible meanings, which are themselves only deferred…for their activation in other contexts" (Dimitriadis & Kamberelis 2006: 107). And while Derrida generally associates *différance* with speech and the written word, it is also possible to extend this concept to power relations, specifically the relation between the global elite and subordinated. Indeed, Derrida himself suggested that the term *différance* could mean "the movement by which language, or any code, *any system of reference in general*, becomes 'historically' constituted as a fabric of differences" [own italics]

(1968: 287). As such, the term can be appropriated to signify the process of differing and deferral, which is inextricably linked to power relations, which are themselves linguistically constructed. As such, it could be said that the dominant discourse gains power through the subjugation of other narratives, which must necessarily be sidelined or repressed in order to maintain the status quo. And this is achieved through the creation of the Other – the embodiment of difference – as well as a denial of the Other's legitimacy within the public realm. In this sense, the Other and the subaltern are synonymous with one another. As Pandey asserts, the idea of difference is the "mark of the subordinated or subaltern" (2006: 4740), because of the way in which such groups are continually measured against the normalising yardstick of capitalist culture.

Through the process of *différance*, and the resulting suppression of the subaltern class and its various ways of being, the subaltern finds it increasingly difficult to gain a voice in the public sphere, which includes international platforms within the era of globalization. In terms of this, Herndl and Bauer explain how, "in situations of extreme differences of power, the voice of Spivak's subaltern is typically excluded from the public sphere" (2003: 562), despite their best efforts to make themselves heard. In fact, as Arber maintains, "it is not that the subaltern does not talk or make an insurgent effort. Rather, the struggles of the subaltern are doomed to failure, as he or she remains trapped by the 'epistemic violences,'" which include "the violently appropriate colonising practice…deeply ingrained within the coloniser's words" (2008: 51). Thus, in contrast to Habermas's ideas concerning the possibility of rational debate among differing groups of people within the public sphere, it would seem that, with regard to voicing opinion and making a political impact, the subaltern faces many obstacles. This is because, through the legacy of imperial hegemony that continues to play an active role in the subjugation of certain cultures and groups, "not all cultural subjects enjoy equal access and credibility in the public spheres through which we constitute our identities and social relations" (Herndl & Bauer 2003: 562).[99] And the imposed silence upon these pockets of difference can be a careful and calculated attempt to manage the risk that they represent. Pandey explains how the subaltern

[99] Gray describes Habermas's conceptualisation of the public sphere as featuring "autonomy from state and corporate power; exchange and critique of criticizable validity claims, notably those grounded in something other than personal standpoint; reflexivity; explicit examination of personal and social interests; good faith efforts to understand other perspectives; and discursive inclusion and the social equality of peers" (2009: 93). While idyllic, Habermas's idea of the public sphere has been criticised for failing to consider how certain social groups are implicitly excluded from such a domain as a result of the dominant political and economic systems, with the consequence that they cannot participate freely or fairly within his conceptualisation of the public sphere.

has historically posed a threat to those who wield hegemony, by showing how, "in earlier times too…the subalterns were potential resource and potential danger. On the boundaries of the community and the polis." That is, "whether Barbarians, Huns, Tartars, Mongols, or conquered populations, 'untamed' forest dwellers, women [or]…servants," all were at some point perceived as "people who could, and sometimes did, threaten and even subvert the established order" (2006: 4737).

Since the early 20th century, one of the most effective means of managing this threat has been the ideological appropriation of the mass media. This strategy has been extremely potent in its effects, as the mass media remains the primary way in which modern people receive information about global affairs, and how they form their perceptions of the Other. For many, the perceived openness of various media platforms represents the modern public sphere, in which citizens are granted the space to voice their opinions, and through this process to gain a sense of participation in the democratic proceedings of their communities. However, for others, mainstream mass media have also been co-opted by a few immensely powerful corporations and political parties, whose interests lie in the extension of neoliberalism around the globe. And in such cases, the mass media are viewed as complicit in the preservation of the subaltern's subordinate status. In this regard, Cornel West emphasises how, in the contemporary era,

> the central role of mass media, especially a corporate media beholden to the U.S. neoliberal regime, is to keep public discourse narrow and deodorized…By 'narrow' I mean confining the conversation to conservative Republican and neoliberal Democrats who shut out prophetic voices or radical visions. This fundamental power to define the political terrain and categories attempts to render prophetic voices invisible. (West, 2014)

One of the consequences of this is that the modern subaltern class is doubly dispossessed. Not only do they struggle to maintain their rights to land, culture, and self-determination, but they are also subject to increasingly limited media access. And this negatively affects both the subaltern who struggles for the opportunity to be heard on international platforms, and those who, although they may form part of the historically privileged, may have been conscientized to such injustices through more honest and fair framings of the subordinated class and their alternative ways of life. But while such constraint of information serves the purpose of maintaining the politico-economic power of the dominant classes, through silencing the subjugated, this aggressive movement can result in "a sterile, terminal *involution* of creativity" (Bollier 2013: 112). And such stunting of creativity should not be understood simply in terms of aesthetics, but also in terms of politico-economic and socio-ecological imaginations, and horizons of possibility.

In many respects, the various ways in which the mainstream neoliberal, mass media have suppressed Cuba's voice in international debate, provides strong evidence of a master-slave relationship between the two paradigms. The United States, the dominant power in this sense, has built a steady foundation of prejudice against Cuba, although the efficacy of its efforts to weaken the nation remains an open question. However, of great importance to the U.S. administration in this regard is the ideological threat posed by the island's communist policies. Over the last sixty years, Cuba has played an implicit but important role in America's self-image as the self-appointed guardian of market capitalism and democracy, insofar as the small island serves to remind Americans of the existence of communism, and of the threat this ideology poses to their way of life. Cuba is therefore a rallying force for the continuation of unchecked neoliberal policies in the U.S., and for strengthening nationalist sentiment. Consequently, Cuba cannot be afforded the opportunity for self-representation within American mass media, but must instead continue to be narrated by those sympathetic to the capitalist cause. Through such dynamics, the American mass media restricts the information available to the global public, as well as the diversity of information on display (Bollier 2013: 112) – and as will be discussed, this dynamic has come to be reflected in neoliberal mass media across the board.

The suppression of alternative information is neither random or coincidental, nor the result of censorship, but rather related to variants of a 'Propaganda Model,' and in this regard, it is helpful to consider Edward Herman and Noam Chomsky's *Manufacturing Consent: the Political Economy of the Mass Media.* This is because their text provides crucial insights into the ways in which the American mass media, popularly regarded as objective sources of information, on the contrary often serve the interests of the powerful government and corporate elite. According to Herman and Chomsky, most, if not all, U.S. mainstream news house are subject to external and internal forces, which shape the information they disseminate. That is, as a result of five media filters – the size and ownership of media corporations, the generation of income through advertising, journalists' dependence upon 'expert opinions,' the use of 'flak' as a disciplining mechanism, and the narrative of anticommunism – much of American mass media are shown to ultimately serve the interests of those who wield immense power, and who seek to maintain and extend it through filtering the information that the public receives (Herman & Chomsky 1988: 2). In what follows, a brief explanation of what each media filter entails is offered, in an effort to elaborate upon the various dynamics at play in the production of news information.

The first of the five media filters concerns the size of the dominant media corporations, and their corresponding immense wealth and influence, which historically has rested in the

hands of a few select groups. The origins of this filter lie in the marketization of print media, which began in the early nineteenth century as a means of containing the spread of a working-class press that was emerging at that time. In order to quell the movement, conditions for publication were enforced, including compulsory security bonds and taxes, which working-class initiatives could not afford. As the century progressed, market forces were used to regulate the kinds of press that could emerge, because through the "industrialization of the press" (Herman & Chomsky 1988: 4) increasing capital was needed in order for emerging newspapers to be competitive. Consequently, only those who acquired investments from wealthy businessmen were able to compete within the market, which dealt a heavy blow to the independence of journalists. And as the role of profit became paramount to media companies, the economic bottom line of the media affected news content by steadily marginalizing critical ideas and voices (Devereux 2007: 50; Sandoval 2014: 56).

Secondly, the reality that the surviving mass media corporations generated income through advertising also influenced news content (Vaughn 2007: 7; Proffitt & McAllister 2008: 335; Boyd & Dobrow 2011: 261). This idea is closely linked with that of concentrated media ownership because, since the nineteenth century, those publications that were attractive to advertisers were able to charge lower prices for their products than those which were solely dependent upon newspaper sales. That is, advertisers were drawn to papers whose readers had buying power, and this preference remains a strong determiner of media successes within the contemporary news context. Correlatively, this advertisers' bias has created a formidable cycle, which allows media corporations with considerable advertising income to earn greater profits, with which more advertising can be sought. In contrast, those publications whose readers were not exemplar consumers were not favoured by advertisers. Ultimately, this led to critical, alternative, working-class initiatives being progressively pushed to the periphery in terms of financial viability and appeal, because, as Herman and Chomsky explain, the mass media "are interested in attracting audiences with buying power, not audiences per se" (1988: 16).

Thirdly, that journalists are dependent upon the insights and facts disseminated by governmental and corporate "experts" also constitutes a hindrance to the flow of accurate and critical information. That is, because the mass media cannot afford to place journalists in all the locations of important news events, they are compelled to form relationships with governmental and corporate representatives as sources of information (Herman & Chomsky 1988: 18-19). These sources are used extensively and, because of their high-ranking positions within society, are deemed inherently trustworthy (Hinds 1995: 12; Vaughn 2007: 490; Steel 2013: 164). Audiences are also led to assume that these people are operating from an unbiased perspective, free of ulterior motives, and these assumptions are spurred on by the mass media, who benefit

from the use of such official sources, because they are spared the trouble and administrative burden of producing or verifying the facts themselves.[100] The implication of government and corporations forming the large majority of news sources is that these institutions are able to wield much power over the type of information disseminated to the general public. This is because, through such channels, 'official' information is made readily available to journalists via websites, press releases, copies of speeches, and conferences (Herman & Chomsky 1988: 22), with the consequence that the views of those in power remain prevalent within the mainstream media, and thus are able to enter the everyday informational flows of the public. Correlatively, sources that are critical of the government or corporate agendas are often disciplined through the loss of official news sources. The result of this is that often "the media…feel obliged to carry extremely dubious stories and mute criticism in order not to offend their sources and disturb a close relationship" (1988: 22).

Fourthly, "flak" as a way of disciplining journalists and media bodies comprises another significant media filter. Like the above loss of a news source, "flak" mostly comes in the form of negative responses to news pieces, and it can be either direct or indirect (Herman & Chomsky 1988: 26). Direct flak may take the form of letters or phone calls to the media company – often by important businesspeople with vested interests in certain perspectives – expressing disappointment in the news content. Conversely, indirect flak occurs when investors and constituencies withdraw support because of the dissonance between a news story and their interests (Laughey 2007: 133; Steel 2013: 164). This kind of flak can result in immense pressure from the funders of a news corporation on its journalists to withdraw or 'correct' disseminated information. Herman and Chomsky also indicate that only those institutions and people who wield immense power over informational flows are able to produce flak (1988: 26), and as a consequence of this power, the media continue to be subject to the ideological orientation of these institutions.

Fifthly, the narrative of "anticommunism" is the final tool for controlling the ways in which audiences perceive the ideological 'enemy' of capitalism, which functions to create a sense of unity through the use of dichotomising rhetoric (Nuessel 2013: 538; Schoemaker & Reese 2013: 87; de Burgh 2013: 94). Especially during the Cold War, the discourse of anticommunism was very useful to the capitalist elite because unclear understandings of what

[100] Herman and Chomsky explain that when journalists attempt to source their own information, instead of trusting the official word, they may be confronted with severe criticism if their ideas diverge from mainstream opinion. Moreover, the costs involved in conducting separate research often render such efforts unfeasible to the mass media organisation, which is essentially run according to the principles of business, and thus favours fast, cost-effective news (1988: 22; Franklin, Hamer, Hanna, Kinsey & Richardson 2005: 207).

communism *really* was made it easy for all manner of leftist activities and people to be labelled 'communist,' without much public resistance. This way of discrediting leftist politics meant that critical and liberal characters were constantly placed on the defensive, and made to prove their loyalty to democracy and free-market economics. Moreover, within the context of the Cold War, defectors from communist regimes gained immense importance within the mass media as 'expert sources' of information regarding events within their former countries. In this regard, Herman and Chomsky advance that "when anti-Communist fervour is aroused, the demand for serious evidence in support of claims of 'communist' abuses is suspended, and charlatans can thrive as evidential sources" (1988: 30). The use of such dubious sources points powerfully to the malleable nature of the mass media, and how the information they disseminate is shaped by the interests of the elite. And through such means, the media become complicit in the dichotomisation of society, insofar as their biased reporting of communist countries helps elevate "opposition to communism to a first principle of western ideology and politics" (Herman & Chomsky 1988: 29).

As a consequence of American influence around the globe after World War Two, these five media filters have come to play an important role in the orientation of the international mass media, and thereby strongly influence the type of information that reaches global audiences through the neoliberal mass media. Yet, this should not be construed as a recent dynamic, related to the rise of neoliberalism in America (and Britain) in the 1980s, because a consideration of the ways in which the American mass media treated issues concerning Cuba over the previous century, reveals how the filters have played an incredibly significant historical role in forming the international public's understandings of the island. Indeed, it is possible to trace the ways in which the United States' media have continually shaped the international image of Cuba, from the two countries' first significant interaction in the late 1890s to the present. And in this regard, since the turn of the last century, the American press has arguably played a pivotal role in the subalternisation of Cuba – a trend which has continued into the new century. Consequently, while the representations of Cuba and Cubans in the American mass media during the Spanish-American War, during the period of American imperialism on the island, and during Castro's communist regime, may differ noticeably in form, the underlying theme of American superiority and Cuban inferiority remains constant. Thus, the subalternisation of Cuba could be said to have occurred from the late nineteenth century onward, such that, despite being granted sovereignty, the island continues with its struggle to be heard amidst the din of American hegemonic rhetoric. With a view to exploring the above – and as a precursor to considering how such dynamics continue to inform representations of Cuba in contemporary mainstream neoliberal mass media – in what follows, various U.S. media

artefacts originating from the periods of the Spanish-American War, American imperialism in Cuba, and Soviet Cuba, will be analysed through the critical lens of Herman and Chomsky's Propaganda Model.

4.3 Cuba in the American mass media: 1898 – 1990

By the end of the nineteenth century, the United States had achieved its project of nation building, and after its first century as a sovereign state, the administration turned its attention to expanding its territories. This was partly because the success of American agriculture and industry obliged the state to look for new markets and entrepreneurial opportunities, and "the outbreak of the Cuban conflict in 1895 found the United States ready for overseas adventures" (Lopez-Briones 1990: 165). The Spanish-Cuban tensions that characterised the late 1890s presented the U.S. with a reason to interfere in the island's affairs, and for the first time, America was in a good position to gain considerable influence over Cuba – an ambition that had previously been expressed by American presidents for over a century. Accordingly, in an effort to legitimise U.S. intervention in Cuba, the American media began a widespread campaign to depict Cuba's dire need of such assistance, *vis á vis* the 'brutish' force of the Spanish military. In order to gain the support of American citizens, the U.S. administration had to make the campaign as emotive as possible, and this was achieved very effectively through the depiction of Cuba as a woman being brutalised by Spanish soldiers. Framing Cuba in this way appealed to the moral code of American audiences, who were riled by the idea of the "Spanish brutes" (Hakim 2002: 152) having their way, as it were, with the genteel lady/land. In *Cuba in the American Imagination: Metaphor and the Imperial Ethos*, Pérez explores this illustration of the country in detail, and shows how this particular framing of Cuba-as-woman "strengthened – visually and viscerally – notions of chivalric duty from which to infer gender-scripted obligations and culturally derived codes of conduct to act upon" (2008: 71). In short, the use of this particular metaphor invoked the patriarchal spirit of the American nation, and inspired them to drive out the Spaniards and guide the Cubans to liberty.

Indeed, as the metaphor of Cuba-as-woman became increasingly powerful, the U.S. press in 1897, was able to personify the stereotype through the saga of Evangelina Cossío Cisneros. Cisneros had been imprisoned for her involvement in a conspiracy to assassinate a Spanish official (Roggenkamp 2005: 90; Korrol 2006: 176), but by imprisoning her the Spanish authorities had unwittingly presented America with a golden opportunity to cement the image of Cuba-as-woman within the collective imagination of the American public. In this regard, the American administration, in connection with the *New York Journal*, began a campaign to rescue

Cisneros from the Spaniards, which involved the treatment of Cisneros' situation in the press in highly melodramatic terms.[101] That is, Hearst's *New York Journal* framed Cisneros as

> an innocent young woman who needed saving from the terrible jail and the vile Spaniards. She was a maiden in distress par excellence. Hearst painted her as a poor, helpless damsel who needed men to speak for her and to break her out of jail…[because s]he would not have the savvy to save herself. She would need to place her trust in men to secure her freedom. (Wilcox 2013: 64)

Cisneros was eventually 'liberated' from Cuba, and brought to America as a refugee and national hero, upon her arrival, Cisneros – and especially her rescuers – in an early version of what Herman and Chomsky would later articulate as the third news filter, were considered 'expert witnesses,' whose opinions were widely disseminated as thoroughly accurate and truthful depictions of the situation in Cuba. Accordingly, newspapers reported the story broadly, even though the narratives dealing with Cisneros' rescue monotonously reproduced the same sentiments and imagery – indicating a lack in the diversity of sources on the topic. Interestingly, Evangelina herself, considered an expert on the events in Cuba a few months later after the release of her book,[102] was not widely quoted or referenced within those articles. Instead, her rescuers were trusted to provide the general public with erudite opinion on the matter,[103] and were accordingly neither widely questioned nor suspected of carrying ulterior motives, because of their ties with the *New York Journal*. In this way, the press reproduced the opinions that were

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[101] This story was a good example of 'yellow journalism' that was a major trend at the time, and for which the *New York Journal* was renowned. Yellow journalism was identifiable by six major characteristics, namely, the use of multicolumn headlines across the front page of the paper; a wide variety of topics being dealt with on the front page; the eager use of illustrations and graphics to enhance the story; "bold and experimental layouts" that would often emphasise one story on the front page, sometimes with the use of scare headlines; the anonymity of sources (which were often, in reality, fake); and shameless self-promotion of the paper and its successes in bringing attention to social and political controversies (Chapman & Nuttall 2011: n.p.; Sachsman & Bulla 2013: 5).

[102] Evangelina Cisneros became such an icon in American society that she was able to write a book, entitled *The Story of Evangelina Cisneros* (1897), about her experiences in Cuba. In this way, she remained a potent symbol of the brutalities committed under the Spanish rule in Cuba, and an effective reminder of the worthiness of the American cause to re-shape the island economically, politically, and socially.

[103] Two examples of this trend can be seen in the *Roanoke Times'* "Landed on Free Soil: Evangelina Cossío y Cisneros in New York City" (1897), as well as the *Saint Paul Globe's* "Jailer was willing to be bribed" (1897). Neither article references Cisneros directly, both merely describing her mannerisms and countenance, and they tend to favour the opinions disseminated by those complicit in her immigration to the United States.

available to them, and became complicit in the dissemination of propaganda that strengthened the United States' case for intervention in Cuba.[104]

Apart from the more obvious manifestations of the image of Cuba-as-woman, the attitude of the American press towards Cuba is also apparent in the patriarchal jingoism of the period. That is, for a long time, the American press implied the patriarchal rights and responsibilities of the United States within the context of the Americas in general, and within Cuba in particular. And while this narrative remained prominent throughout discussions concerning the need for American intervention in Cuba, once President McKinley made his sentiments on the issue clear in April 1898 – that America essentially had no choice but to intervene to halt the atrocities being committed by Spain – the Republican papers amplified the perceived importance of commencing military action. For example, in early April 1898, San Francisco's *Call* featured an entire front page of short articles discussing America's approaching role as the liberator of Cuba. The main article, "The President's Message Will Precipitate War: it will be American in every word," supports McKinley's forthcoming decision to intervene militarily on the island, and predicts that this intervention "will be a vigorous arraignment of Spain." Importantly, it is couched in terms of realisation of "the duty of the United States to intervene and end the war in Cuba." The views of the *Call* are certainly pro-war during this period, and supportive of McKinley – a Republican President – who explains in his speech to congress in 1898 that America is both justified in a decision to intervene in Cuba, and compelled to do so,

> first, in the cause of humanity and to put an end to the barbarities, bloodshed, starvation, and horrible miseries now existing [in Cuba], and which the parties to the conflict are either unable or unwilling to stop or mitigate. It is no answer to say this is all in another country, belonging to another nation, and is therefore none of our business. It is specially our duty, for it is right at our door. Second, we owe it to our citizens in Cuba to afford them that protection and indemnity for life and property which no government there can or will afford….Third, the right to intervene may be justified by the very serious injury to commerce, trade, and business of our people, and by the wanton destruction of property and devastation of the island. Fourth, and which is of the utmost importance, the present condition of affairs in Cuba is a constant menace to our peace, and entails upon this Government an enormous expense. (McKinley 1898)

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[104] Similarly, press treatment of the sinking of a U.S. ship, the *Maine* in Havana's harbor – mentioned earlier (see note 47) – was dependent upon 'expert witnesses' and official governmental sources. The official view of the U.S. administration was that the ship had hit an underwater mine, planted by Spanish forces, which had caused her to explode. Conversely, Spain declared that the *Maine* was destroyed as a result of an explosion *on board* the ship. Regardless of the latter contention, for decades the American public believed that the *Maine* debacle had been a result of Spanish aggression, until in 1976 it was proven that Spain's assertions had been accurate all along (Rickover 1976; Villafana 2011: 135; Weiss 2012: 5).

While McKinley's justification for entering the conflict in Cuba is initially framed in terms of the United States' duty to maintain peace and instill democracy, his third and fourth reasons point to more material interests, not embedded within moralistic rhetoric. In this regard, Sabina asserts that it was mainly "in response to pressure from the business community" (2009: 3) that McKinley sent troops into Cuba. And this sentiment is echoed by Kaufman, who explains how "McKinley was elected president in 1896 on a pledge to protect American business," after "American businesses, which had already invested millions of dollars in Cuban sugar, were pushing the government to do something about the instability on the island" (2010: 54). With the Republican president promoting intervention in Cuba, Republican papers – such as the *Call* – whose readership and ownership had vested business interests in Cuba, rallied behind their leader. In fact, Risse shows that the publisher of the *Call* was a local republican businessman named John Spreckles, whose family "had come to San Francisco to promote the sugar trade with the Hawaiian Islands" (2012: n.p.). Consequently, Spreckles' influence led the paper to become a "mouthpiece for its owner's interests in foreign trade and transportation," such that much of the news content that reached the public during this time was largely reflective of corporate and governmental interests.

In addition to the issue of ownership, another aspect of Herman and Chomsky's first media filter, namely how the increasing size of a news company is often concomitant with a decrease in the amount of critical content that is disseminated to the public was also at play in the months preceding the Spanish-American War. That is, through the use of the metaphor of Cuba-as-woman, media owners initiated the process of the subalternisation of Cubans – a policy that agreed with their business policies. But by framing America as the patriarchal savior of the Cuban people, the United States also began a long process of sidelining and silencing critical Cuban sentiments. Cuban voices were rarely heard in American press during this time unless, as in the case of Cisneros, they strengthened the mainstream idea of Cuba as victim. Following this, as Miller points out, the United States created a "spectacular production" of the Spanish-American War, which resulted in American media focusing on the heroic role of the United States during the War, instead of on the Cuban people who were seeking liberation from hegemonic forces (Miller 2011: 120). In this regard, Miller maintains that

> from the moment the war began, it became one fought for and about the United States. The ambivalence toward Cuban liberation in prewar media campaigns manifested itself as the promotion of American military glory [which] supplanted Cuban independence on the media agenda…The fact that the war earned the name the "Spanish-American War," leaving Cuba out entirely, reveals the power of the spectacle to drown out its imperial context. (2011: 120)

In the years following America's successes in the Spanish-American War, the United States' depiction of Cuba began to transform. From an emphasis on the image of Cuba-as-woman, needing to be saved by the American patriarch, the American press moved towards the metaphor of Cuba-as-child. After 1898, the majority of satirical cartoons used the image of a boy to represent Cuba (Murphy 2005: 20; Seymour 2012: n.p.; Bradford 2014: 21).[105] Through such means, in the political cartoons of the time, "Cubans are not only infantilized; they are frequently represented as blacks who are alternately cheerful, irresponsible, lazy, dim, and grotesquely deformed" (Johnson 2003: 135). By representing Cuba in this way within the popular media, the American public was taught various things concerning the island's governance, from its inability to make independent business choices, to the ostensible limited intelligence and maturity of the Cuban people. Consequently, the overarching impression that such representations of Cuba left with the American audience was that Cuba was neither politically nor socially mature enough for self-governance. An understanding that was conducive to successful American investment in and control of the island's agricultural sector. That is, with the press selling the pervasive image of an infantile Cuba, the United States was advanced as justified in its continued imperialism in Cuban politics, and its domination of Cuban agriculture. Accordingly, "Uncle Sam" was often depicted as the "strong fatherly figure bringing civilization to the new U.S. territories in the name of the so-called white man's burden" (Abendroth 2010: 33).

The content of such news and reproductions – in an early form of Herman and Chomsky's second news filter – was also in synergy with advertiser needs. For example, wealthy companies, such as that of J.E. Barlow, were able to generate increasing profits by attracting investors through newspaper advertising.[106] Advertisers preferred those newspapers whose readers would be able to afford their products or buy into investment opportunities, and as a result certain progressive middle-class newspapers were able to attract advertisers, through their accommodating advertising policies, and their readers with disposable income. One of these papers was the *New York Tribune*, which frequently held advertisements for investment

[105] The depiction of states that had been adopted by America often involved the images of children during the early twentieth century. Many satirical cartoons exist which illustrate Cuba, Puerto Rico, and the Philippines as either ignorant or misbehaving children (Halili 2006: 43; Charnon-Deutsch 2008: 102; Laborde & Magill 2009: 70).

[106] J.E. Barlow owned the real estate firm, J.E. Barlow and Company, which opened an office in Havana in 1898. The company attracted considerable business from America, with Pérez indicating that J.E. Barlow and Co. was the "principal agent for the sale of urban real estate to the U.S. government, including office buildings, storage facilities, warehouses, and the one thousand acres on which Camp Columbia was constructed" (2008: 109).

opportunities in Cuba. With corporate propaganda working to convince audiences of the major benefits – for both American businesspeople and Cuba – of investing in the island, new investors eagerly placed their money in Cuba. This trend was increasingly visible in the decade succeeding the Spanish-American War, during which "United States investors acquired a predominant position in the production of sugar in Cuba" (Ayala 1999: 77). Indeed, "U.S. investments in Cuba…soared to half a billion dollars by 1920" (Boyer, Clark, Halttunen, Kett & Salisbury 2010: 622). The corollary of this, though, was that newspapers with dissenting voices critical of America's dealings in Cuba, struggled to find large and well-paying companies to fund their publications, and through this process mass-circulation newspapers were progressively compelled to support America's business interests in Cuba.

While the early 1900s saw Cuba illustrated as a boy child, an interesting trend occurred as the century progressed. Having established the idea of Cuba as a child, from the 1920s onwards another depiction of Cuba as the exotic Other arose. This imagery is predominantly visible in tourism advertising for Cuba, in which the mass media promoted Cuba as an ideal business *and* holiday destination. Advertisements for Cuban tourism and business that appeared in newspapers such as the *New York Tribune* effectively displaced the social, ecological, and political dynamics in the country, and emphasised those functions that were useful to the ends of corporatism. Almost always written from the perspective of American business, these advertisements denied Cubans a say in their own industries. In particular, these advertisements sold Cuba as an exotic holiday destination, filled with romance; a place where the civilised West could go to experience frivolity. As Pérez explains, "Havana was a place for North Americans to enjoy themselves, to do things they would not – or could not – do at home" (2003: 141), and this freedom was particularly attractive during America's prohibition years (Rovner 2009: 20; Sismondo 2011: 219). And in these advertisements, Cubans were for the most part shown to be part of the exotic scenery, which is gazed down upon by the foregrounded American visitors. This is another example of how, throughout American imperialism in Cuba, both the island's natural resources (for the purpose of business) and its people (for the purpose of pleasure) were illustrated as standing reserves for Americans within the U.S. press. This trend has been strongly thematised within subaltern theory, which asserts that the voices of subalterns "are silenced by the official and dominant discourses of colonialism and indigenous nationalism – and that the figure of the subaltern can be found by reading the gaps, the fissures, and the silences in colonial texts" (Hawley 2001: 106). Relegated to the backgrounds of advertisements selling Cuba as a tourism destination, Cubans during this period were certainly silenced by the imperial power of the United States.

Consequently, in the absence of the Cuban perspective within the American press, the general public of the United States were compelled to believe the imagery that was made available to them in the form of corporate advertising. As such, during the height of American imperialism in Cuba, a mélange of informational filters were at work within the mass media, of which advertising was particularly influential during the 1920s and 1930s. While advertisers did not necessarily practise overt control over information disseminated to readers/audiences, "the growing importance of advertising revenue did put advertisers in a position to exercise at least indirect influence over news and editorial content" (Abramowitz 1991: 64), insofar as publishers were very sensitive to the kinds of content that would attract corporate interests. Correlatively, corporations interested in advertising investment opportunities in Cuba tended to avoid supporting papers that disseminated contrasting views to theirs, and whose readers did not have the means to participate in the 'Cuban franchise.' In this way, the communicative dynamics identified by Herman and Chomsky as the second media filter – the effect of advertising revenue on news content – played an important role in the generation of information that, simultaneously, subordinated Cuba and strengthened United States imperialism over the island.

While the first half of the twentieth century witnessed Cuba's subalternisation at the hands of American imperialism, during the late 1950s the island began to develop a dissident voice, which ultimately led to the Revolution in 1959. This voice was critical of U.S. imperialistic interference in Cuba's politics and economy, and its nationalist features sought a genuine *Cuban* answer to how the island could be governed. However, after Castro's successes, the U.S. press was left unsure of how to approach the subject of Cuba and its new leaders. Early treatments of post-revolutionary Cuba exuded caution, while diplomats sought to confirm Castro's allegiance to America and his views of the "long-standing diplomatic and economic ties with the United States" (Welch 1985: 29). This ambivalence is apparent in the famous illustration of Castro on the front cover of *Time* magazine on the 26th of January, 1959. *Time*'s image of Castro characterises him as humble, rational, and a solid leader, and the soft, doe-eyed revolutionary represented on the front cover could lead one to believe that *Time* sympathised with the Cuban revolutionaries, and looked forward to the possibility of continued diplomatic ties with the country, despite the transformations in policy for which Castro's new administration was calling. However, this relatively neutral representation of Castro underwent a radical transformation subsequent to Cuba's confirmation of political ties with the Soviet Union. From 1961 onward, Castro received little sympathy in the U.S. media, and entered symbolically into the Cold War. This shift in approach to Castro is noticeable in the front cover

of *Life*, from the 2nd of June, 1961.[107] This image contrasts sharply with the above depiction of Castro, insofar as *Life*'s illustration of the Cuban leader characterises him as aggressive and menacing, expressed through the high contrast and saturation of the image, as well as the vampiric semblance of the portrait. Castro's skin is a notable shade of red, which serves to remind audiences of his communist ties and the consequent danger he poses to America. This transformation in American media representations of Cuba between 1959 and 1961 is testament to the mass media's deep affiliation with government attitude. As Shaw maintains, "American mass media supported its government's anti-communist stance during the Cold War chiefly because their owners and employees shared Washington's ideological worldview" (2007: 302). The resulting demonisation of communist Cuba during the 1960s in the American mass media was also another way of subalternising the island and its people. By illustrating Castro as a communist villain, American media established Cuban politics as anathema to the American public; communists were, after all, not only a threat to their politico- economic principles, but also to the Christian religion. Cuba was thus constructed as the ultimate Other, and denied more honest and fair representation in American media on politico-economic and moralistic grounds.

Although the subversion of the Cuban voice in American mass media continued throughout the century, it did taper off momentarily in the late 1970s. That is, during the détente between the U.S. and the Soviet Union in the 1970s, America's preoccupation with the Cuban revolution and Castro was briefly postponed. Significantly fewer images and treatments of Cuba appeared during this time, largely owing to "the fact that Latin America's Marxist guerilla movements had been defeated by the end of the 1960s – the result of action by the region's U.S.-aided militaries" (Purcell 1998: 41) – which eased Washington's concerns over Cuba.[108] The ease in tensions between the U.S. and Cuba was short lived though, ending in late 1977 when Castro sent support to Marxist rebels in Ethiopia, and two Marxist insurgencies in South America in 1979. As a result of these events, the U.S. administration once more hardened its views and policies towards Cuba (Purcell 1998: 43). In *The Washington Connection and Third World Fascism: The Political Economy of Human Rights* (1979), Herman and Chomsky discuss the U.S. administration's change of attitude towards Cuba during this time. Here they show how, despite apparent U.S. aggression towards the island nation, as well as various other 'Third

[107] It is important to note that *Life* magazine was, and remains, a subsidiary of *Time* (Time Inc., 2014), and so would have reflected similar perspectives of major events, such as the Cuban Revolution.

[108] The mid-1970s also saw Presidents Ford and Carter attempt to re-establish relations with Havana through partial liberalisations of certain kinds of trade with Cuba, as well as allowing American tourists to visit the country in 1977. Carter also took steps to establish lines of communication via the exchange of ambassadors from both countries (Purcell 1998: 41).

World' countries, America continually depicted itself in its mass media as being righteous in its actions, while those it opposed were persistently characterised as societal menaces (1979: 70). In this regard, it is emphasised how in most media treatments of American-Cuban relations, it was advanced that

> it is *Cuba* that must cease its "aggravating influence" in this hemisphere and refrain from the use of force in international affairs if normal relations are to be established, not the superpower that has instituted subfascist regimes throughout the hemisphere and pounded the countries of Indochina to dust…[President] Carter's reference to the state of civil rights in Cuba under the Batista dictatorship, to which he urges that Cuba should "recommit" itself…elicited neither criticism nor satire. Where such hypocrisy and distortion can pass without comment, it is evident that the mass media are maintaining a system of thought control which can establish and nourish the Big Lie as effectively as any system of state censorship. (Herman & Chomsky 1979: 70)

The power of the American mass media during the seventies to shape and manipulate the information available to the public, was significant in its effects. It succeeded in the Othering of Cuba, as the embodiment of all that opposed American values, while framing the American nation as the vanguard of liberty. And these representations gained momentum through the seventies, and continued into the eighties, which entailed an era of heightened U.S. aggression towards Cuba.

In 1980, Ronald Reagan was elected to the U.S. presidency. His tenure was concomitant with a transformation in American policy and economy, which saw the adoption of neoliberalism as the guiding economic narrative (Peters 2001: 18; Manzetti 2010: 9; Evans & Sewell 2013: 44). The neo-conservatism that Reagan stood for underpinned renewed antagonism towards Cuba, something which appealed to American voters who reelected Reagan in 1984. Arguably, the film industry played a major role in his reelection, because "as the New Right rose to power in the 1980s, films like *Red Dawn* (1984), *Missing in Action* (1984), and *Rambo: First Blood Part II* (1985)" all "helped restore American confidence in the military and generate public support for military actions taken by presidents Ronald Reagan and George H.W. Bush" (Dumenil 2012: 406). In particular, *Red Dawn* (1984) not only disseminated the anticommunist rhetoric that resonated so strongly with supporters of the New Right, but also included Cubans, along with Soviets and Nicaraguans, as the antagonists. Indeed, during the 1980s, representations of Cuba tended to associate the country and its people with the overwhelmingly negative characterisation of all communist states – most notably Russia. And this grossly oversimplified Cuba's unique social, political, and economic circumstances, because by generalizing about communist policies and behaviour, factual

accuracy and political contextualisation were neglected. Consequently, films such as *Red Dawn* are indicative of popularised American attitudes towards the island, and also of how the U.S. media was complicit in the dichotomisation of the globe into capitalist and communist dimensions. The 'us-them' attitude in the film is manifest in the battle between a group of young Americans and the communist forces – composed predominantly of Russians and Cubans – who invade the small town of Calumet. The communist forces are clearly framed as the 'national enemy,' especially through the depiction of their "reeducation camps," and they are opposed by the establishment of a rogue society called "Free America," which seeks the restoration of freedom and capitalism in the United States. Anticommunist sentiments are moreover stirred through provocative statements made by the communists, who describe America as "a whorehouse where the revolutionary ideals of [its] forefathers are corrupted and sold in alleys by vendors of capitalism." Such statements roused a form of black-and-white morality, which was useful to the American administration during the height of the Cold War. In this regard, Palmer maintains that "*Red Dawn*, because it never humanizes the [communists], can only exist as an overt exercise in ideological propaganda," and he suggests, ironically, that "it would play well on the drive-in movie screen of an American reeducation centre if the tables were turned" (1995: 213). In this way, Hollywood, as a major element of American mass media, was also complicit in the dissemination of anticommunist rhetoric, and the concomitant rallying of support for leaders and the military spurred on neoliberal capitalist agendas. Accordingly as the closest communist threat, Cuba was not granted any sympathy, and the American media's anticommunist polemic instead helped to justify even harsher travel restrictions and trade sanctions on the island, which characterised the next decade (Skoug 1996: 24; Purcell 1998: 43; Pérez 2003: 262).[109]

By the late 1980s, America's project of demonising Cuba and all communist states was complete, and with the imminent collapse of the Soviet Bloc, the U.S. needed no further proof of the illegitimacy of communism as a political and economic ideology. Cuba was thus firmly rooted in the status of subaltern as the island's people scrambled to minimise the impact of Russia's withdrawal of financial support. Through the effective application of Herman and Chomsky's fifth media filter, the U.S. mass media succeeded in subverting the radicalism that Cuba offered the Americas, and concomitantly maintaining the United States' status as the great

[109] With Reagan's election as president, Washington renewed and strengthened travel restrictions to the island until "only a narrowly defined group of professionals were permitted to travel to Cuba for research purposes" (Purcell 1998: 43). Moreover, trade embargoes increased in severity in order to limit Castro's aspirations to instil revolutionary spirits in other South American countries and abroad.

Western patriarch and guardian of neoliberal ideals. Once again, the Cuban voice was lost amid the celebrations of capitalist hegemony, as the island's people began the massive endeavor of restructuring their economy, politics, and society, to suit a new era of scarcity.

4.4 The subalternisation of the *Revolución Agrícola* in contemporary mainstream neoliberal mass media

As discussed above, American mass media treatments of Cuba over the last century have feminised, infantilised, and demonised the island, amplifying only those Cuban voices that reproduce the American worldview and marginalising all others. And there is evidence to suggest that the attitude of contemporary mainstream neoliberal mass media towards Cuba remains very similar, insofar as the same media filters that were at work in American treatments of Cuba over the past century remain active within an array of global news corporations' approaches to the island. And this is especially so, the more questions surrounding the sustainability of neoliberal economics are posed. Within this context, control over the production of information has become an increasingly valuable resource, and the very limited treatments of the *Revolución Agrícola* within contemporary American news networks, as well as those of other Western countries driven by neoliberal agendas, is attributable to such realisation. The reporting of Cuba's *Revolución Agrícola* in American news from its conception in the early 1990s to the present, although superficially varied, has remained tied to the conservative ideological leanings of the main news corporations. And through this, the media filters identified by Herman and Chomsky can be understood as having a significant effect not only on the ways in which Cuba's eco-socialism has been represented over the past twenty-five years, but also on the *number* of reports on the topic that have appeared in American and other neoliberal mass media. These treatments range from almost completely ignoring the country as a site of news on platforms such as the Fox News Channel (FNC), to regularly thematising it in discussion in *The Huffington Post*. Interestingly, it seems that news corporations' degree of willingness to explore the subject of Cuba as an alternative socio-economic and ecological model to neoliberalism, is related to the corporation's degree of acceptance of climate change as a very real threat to life on earth. Ultimately, though, as will be shown, the extent to which the eco-socialist revolution in Cuba is granted attention in the neoliberal mass media is dependent upon the strength of the Propaganda Model operative in the production of news. Certainly, within all of the mass media corporations' treatments of Cuba that are discussed below – in order, the Fox News Channel (FNC), Russia Today (RT), Cable News Network

(CNN), the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC), and the *Huffington Post* – the five media filters shape news content.

To begin with, as part of the Rupert Murdoch Empire, Fox News Channel has become one of the loudest mouth pieces for climate change deniers, and this ideological stance has meant that reports on Cuba are limited to myopic discussions of Cuban politics. And the absence of discussion of Cuba's agricultural transitions in the 1990s coincides with the lack of thematisation by the news channel of changes to any agricultural system, unless those changes are aligned with neoliberalization. Arguably, Fox News has become one of the largest obstacles facing climate change advocates, as it is the most-watched news station in America (Mogel 2004: 182; Cushion 2010: 25; Peng 2013: 349). Accordingly, its lack of scientifically based discussions on the issue, and the channel's use of polemical rhetoric tends to relegate the possibility of alternative ideas concerning socio-economic structures, along with ecological concern, to the margins of consideration. In short, the stance of FNC is that climate change, and all its associated issues, are fictitious and largely leftist propaganda. As such, Fox presenters often make controversial statements, such as "I don't believe climate change is real, I think this is global warming hysteria and alarmism," "blizzard versus global warming, who do you believe, Al Gore?" and "another storm could be heading this way next week…global warming, where are you? We want you back" (MMFA, 2011). This denialist perspective on the part of FNC has attracted solid support from American Republicans and Conservatives, and when considering the narratives that Fox News perpetuates, it is possible to recognise a purposeful shaping of news content through the efficient application of Chomsky's five media filters.[110]

The first, and perhaps most overarching filter that has influenced FNC's content has been its ownership by the News Corporation mogul, Rupert Murdoch. Murdoch created Fox News in 1996, and the channel has shown a "consistent conservative bias in [its] news broadcasts and opinion shows" (Streissguth 2006: 40), while representing the views of the Republican Party (Miller 2009: 80; Rackaway 2014: 11). In fact, Streissguth has compared Murdoch's methods to those of Hearst in the late nineteenth century – whose work was discussed in the previous section – when he argues that Hearst also used "sensationalism and conservative politics" to gain support (2006: 40). That is, by creating a news system based on emotion and disinformation, Murdoch has been able to use the channel to rally support for those structures that best suit his business interests. Murdoch owns stakes in the U.S.-Israeli oil and natural gas company, Genie Oil and Gas (Stainsby 2014: 107), and there exists a correlation

[110] Similarly owned by Rupert Murdoch, the *Wall Street Journal* displays the same denialistic tendencies as Fox News towards climate change in general, and Cuba's eco-socialist paradigm, in particular.

between his involvement in these industries and FNC's pejorative coverage of alternative energy endeavours. In fact, Murdoch is listed as a founder and chairman of the Strategic Advisory Board of Genie, which is said to advise "management on strategic, financial, operational and public policy matters" (Genie Oil and Gas, 2014). Murdoch's close ties to oil is not an anomaly within the larger picture of news corporations, and Standlea problematises these links when he expresses concern over the fact that the

> 'old' industrial economy of the oil powers has seemingly combined with the 'new' high-tech virtual information economy of the great media corporations such as General Electric, Disney, and Fox…to deal a serious blow to the future prospects of democratic access to truthful information. The corporate Republican agenda is fueled by the energy corporations, and they have locked up the American avenues to information, the real crime against democracy. The corporate media is shaping hearts and minds, feeding the public with disinformation, and omitting valuable facts of what the public should know about corporations such as the oil giants, shapers of our entire foreign policy. (2012: 43)

Through this, Standlea makes a link between the highly conservative and climate denialist views disseminated by Fox News, and Murdoch's pro-corporate and pro-oil agenda. Correlatively, the views of those who offer alternatives to the neoliberal paradigm, and who seek to earnestly discuss the immense challenges facing humankind in the decades to follow, find little place within the (autocratic) structure of Fox News to voice their concerns.

Related to ownership of Fox News is the second filter, advertising, which has also played an important role in the filtration of the corporation's news information. Fox News Boycott, a website created to inform the public of the "biased and partisan" (Fox News Boycott, 2012) views of Fox News, provides a list of the known advertisers and sponsors of the news network. Although subject to bias itself, between 2010 and 2011 the website listed at least fourteen automotive manufacturers, including BMW, Chevrolet, Dodge, and Mercedes-Benz, as well as Target and Walmart, as sponsors of the news network. It is highly likely that these corporations support the network, considering Fox News' sympathetic attitude towards the oil industry and consumerism – the lifeblood of all automotive manufacturers and multinationals. Arguably, if FNC were to begin problematising the neoliberal paradigm and drawing attention to unsustainable aspects of the related socio-economic model, it would create a major clash of interests, and many of the abovementioned stakeholders would be obliged to reconsider their support of the network.

In this regard, there is considerable evidence to indicate the power that Fox News' advertisers have over the shaping of its content. In particular, the Akre and Wilson fiasco in 2000 points not only to the power of advertisers to influence news content, but also to how

journalist flak works within the structures of the network. In 1996, Fox News reporters Jane Akre and Steve Wilson wrote a news story that implicated Monsanto Corporation in the distribution of an unsafe bovine growth hormone, known as Posilac, for use throughout Florida's milk industry (Wysong 2013: 199).[111] The reporters found that most of the milk produced in Florida involved Posilac, and yet consumers were uninformed about its use and the potential health risks that it carried. However, a day before the story was due to be aired, Monsanto lawyers sent a letter to Fox News, demanding that the story be pulled (Alexander 2009: 170; Hertz 2013: 173). The letter warned of the beginning of a long battle between the journalists and Monsanto – whose requests included that the document be edited to erase negative depictions of Posilac and Monsanto, as well as the use of the word 'cancer.' Following Monsanto's requests, the journalists could not reach an agreement with the corporation or Fox News as to the content of their report, at which point FNC attempted to bribe Akre and Wilson to drop the story and never to mention the results of their research. When they refused, they were fired (Alexander 2009: 171; Hertz 2013: 173). Further research revealed that Monsanto was a major client of Act Media, an advertising company owned by Rupert Murdoch (Andersen & Strate 2000: 11; Demers 2003: 202; Andersen & Gray 2008: 179). Akre explains that Fox News broadcasters were

> afraid of being sued, and they were also afraid of losing advertising dollars at all of the stations owned by Rupert Murdoch, and he owned more television stations than any other group in America…twenty-two television stations, that's a lot of advertising dollars for Roundup, aspartame, NutraSweet, and other products. (Akre, 2007)

While the Monsanto Corporation is synonymous with biotechnology and industrial agriculture, the Akre and Wilson story is arguably representative of Fox News' attitude towards views that offer alternatives to neoliberal economics in general, and neoliberal agriculture in particular. And in this regard, FNC's ties to Monsanto are particularly significant when considering the absence of stories covering alternative agricultural models, not least Cuba's agricultural revolution.

Apart from the well-publicized example of how Akre and Wilson suffered direct and indirect journalistic flak for choosing to report a story that ran contra to the worldview of Fox News and its advertisers, other examples have also occurred over the years. These include Fox

[111] Posilac has been found to be connected with "cancers of the colon, breast, and prostate, and…bacterial and antibiotic residues left in the milk" (Andersen & Gray 2008: 179), which has led to the product being banned in Europe and Canada.

pulling sponsorship from the industry magazine *Hollywood Reporter*, for an article in which it was critical of the film *Fight Club* (Fincher 1999), which was made in Fox studios (Bettig & Hall 2012: 86). In addition, Morgan explains that journalist Sam Kiley resigned from Fox News in 2001 when he was requested to alter his report on the murder of a Palestinian boy by the Israeli army. Kiley was told to change his article so as to reflect more closely the ideas of Murdoch (2007: 96). As such, Fox News has developed a reputation for manipulating information in order to promote the agendas of conservative Republicans in general, and Rupert Murdoch, in particular. And this system of disciplining journalists has arguably played a part in the absence of reports on sustainable agrarian models – such as that of Cuba – which represent resistance to the neoliberal agenda.

A crucial and effective branch of this manipulation is Fox News' use of 'experts' who tend to support the interests of the network, and who represent the conservative Republican worldview. In an interview for the documentary *Outfoxed: Rupert Murdoch's War on Journalism* (Greenwald 2004), David Brock, the CEO of Media Matters for America, discusses how "Murdoch wants all news to be opinion because opinion can't be proven false." The idea that Fox News disseminates opinion rather than fact seems to be widespread (Meehan 2005: 67; McCombs, Holbert, Kiousis & Wanta 2011: 17), and in this regard d'Annibale emphasises how Murdoch "sought to collapse and destroy the distinction between news and opinion" (2011: 158). The purpose of this was so that the ideas of Fox News cannot be rationally challenged – because the ideas themselves are not rational, but rather emotionally-charged. An element of this policy of disinformation is the use of 'experts' who are often contractually bound to express certain views (Chapman 2009: 79), and who have been said to disseminate inaccurate information while passing their own opinions off as news (Hayes-Roth 2011: 8; Skocpol & Williamson 2012: 202; Saleh 2013: 78). Moreover, the news channel is highly selective in terms of liberal Democrat representation on its show. In fact, studies have determined that, generally speaking, 83 percent of the guests or experts on Fox News are Republican, leaving a meagre 17 percent open for the views of Democrat or alternative viewpoints (Chapman 2009: 79). The use by Fox News of Republican experts, however, is arguably not a form of informational dependence – involving journalists' development of relationships with governmental experts in order to access classified information. Rather, relations between Fox News and the Republican Party resemble a partnership, and so their expert witnesses are chosen to disseminate narratives of mutual interest to further the cause of right-wing politics. As a result, the majority of experts used by Fox News tend towards climate change denialism and avoid the promotion, or even mention, of alternatives to the status quo. Conversely, while those experts who comprise the

alternative 17 percent may attempt to spearhead such conversations, they tend to be shot down in a blaze of polemics, and/or drowned out by the 83% deluge of opposing ideas.

Finally, when discussing the role of the five media filters in silencing Fox News' reporting on Cuba's eco-socialist revolution, or indeed any alternative modes of existence, it is important to consider the narrative of anti-communism – along with that of antiterrorism today – and how they have been used to subjugate alternative worldviews. Although only created in 1996, FNC disseminates a very clear anti-communist message, not least when discussing Cuba and Fidel or Raul Castro. Cold War rhetoric manifests in phrases such as the "Castro regime," and references to "Cuban spies," "Communist dictatorship," and the Cubans as "enemies of the United States" (Ros-Lehtinen, 2009). This anticommunist rhetoric is supported by American policies on antiterrorism, with the United States classifying Cuba as a "terrorist state" and a sponsor of terrorism (Ross 1998: 29; Wylie 2010: 94). Arguably, through the constant association of Castro and Cuba with fear and acts of terrorism, Fox News reproduces the identification of capitalism with freedom and the progression of human rights, and of socialism with repression and austerity. This dichotomisation serves the interests of those who wish to safeguard the neoliberal system, such as Rupert Murdoch and the corporate investors of Fox. Doing so also continues to construct Cuba as a national enemy – a role Cuba has played for over half a century now – and thereby endorses many Americans' fear of socialist reforms to their own economy as attacks on their personal liberties. Moreover, dichotomising the world through these models, and emphasising the negative aspects of Cuban society, veils the immensely positive characteristics of Cuba's advances – in terms of its eco-socialist model at local levels, and its great strides towards the conservation and renewal of nature within its urban centres and countryside. In short, with an American population preoccupied with fear of the unknown, it becomes increasingly difficult for them to imagine progress towards alternative and sustainable ways of being.

In view of how the five media filters work to censor and alter the information disseminated by the Fox News Channel, the possibility that the eco-socialist revolution in Cuba has deliberately been left out of news stories becomes quite plausible. Doing so ultimately defends the business interests of Murdoch and his associates, and advances the ideology of the Republican Party. The reductive reasoning and treatment used to describe contemporary Cuban society – when it is alluded to – and more broadly, climate change, is highly concerning given the popularity of the channel. The views expressed by Fox News do contrast with those of other global news corporations, but whether this dissonance amounts to a vastly different view of alternative modes of existence, such as Cuba's green revolution, is questionable. Unlike Fox News, Russia Today (RT) does not entirely deny Cuba's role as a model for alternative

agriculture, and on the level of political relations, RT tends to be sympathetic towards the Cuban economic and political paradigm. But while making slight mention of it, the network does seem to underplay the country's *Revolución Agrícola*, in favour of focusing on Russian-Cuban relations in terms of global politics.[112] In fact, only two articles in RT's database allude to Cuba's high levels of sustainability,[113] one of which mentions that "Cuba is being praised for its urban gardens and energy efficiency" (Maupin, 2014). However, the focus of this article falls primarily on Venezuelan policies towards climate change, and so it does little justice to those expressed and practised by Cuba. The other article mentions how Cuba's economic reforms have continued to "promote food self-sufficiency" through subsidies in "land, seeds, and chemical-free fertilizer for farmers and vegetable growers" (Bowie, 2014). But, while this does hint at some positive aspects of Cuban agriculture, such as self-sufficiency in food production and chemical-free agricultural products, the article ultimately does little to present a holistic perspective of the radically different socio-ecological model that exists on the island.

At first, RT's superficial coverage of the *Revolución Agrícola* may come as a surprise, considering the network's reputation for facilitating debate over issues that are often suppressed in 'mainstream' American mass media. Yet, upon closer inspection, what emerges is that RT has vested interests in downplaying the island's ecological and agricultural successes, interests which are inextricably linked to its Russian State ownership. This ownership operates as the most influential news filter at play within the network's content production. Russia Today was established in 2005, and most of its funding comes from the Kremlin and associated businesses, and it is run by the state-owned RIA Novosti, which is the Russian News and Information Agency (d'Haenens & Saeys 2007: 351). The original intent of the news channel was allegedly to "improve Russia's image in the West" (d'Haenens & Saeys 2007: 351), and in this regard, RT sells itself as a source of alternative critical information on issues of international significance that questions the mainstream views disseminated by conventional American

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[112] Another media outlet that similarly disseminates a very limited view of Cuba's green revolution is the *New York Times*, which has produced a small number of articles that discuss Cuba's agriculture, and hint at the country's alternative food system. But again, it would seem that the publication's neoliberal bias prevents the *New York Times* from discussing Cuba's food system as a possible alternative to the current unsustainable globalised food system. Instead, the publication's articles tend to subjugate the positive characteristics of the revolution, and focus instead on the perceived importance of liberalizing the food system. Two of these liberally-biased articles are the photojournalism article, "Cuban Agriculture Struggles Under Creaky Infrastructure" (*NYT*, 2012), and "Cuba's Free-Market Farm Experiment Yields a Meager Crop" (Damien, 2012).

[113] In this regard, see "Venezuela, capitalism & climate change" (Maupin, 2014), and "Cuba's economic reforms: Socialism with neoliberal characteristics?" (Bowie, 2014).

media. To a large extent, RT does succeed in providing varying perspectives on issues such as the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, the war in Ukraine in mid-2014, and Western interference in the Middle East, among others, such that it acts as a platform for dissenting voices to make themselves heard. However, the news channel has arguably not escaped a certain ownership-derived bias.

Harding reminds readers of how, "in communist times Russia's state-controlled media reported only bad news from the west, and good news from home," and he suggests that "Russia Today operates on the same principle" (Harding 2011: n.p.). And while Harding is highly critical of RT, to the point where he perhaps fails to acknowledge the many positive features of the news channel, his point concerning such bias is a legitimate one. This is because, at times, it could be said that RT displays a lack of self-reflection in terms of Russian policy, not least of all with issues concerning alternatives to the neoliberal agenda. In a report that discusses transnational energy corporations' use of environmental 'front groups,' RT anchor Abby Martin criticizes these companies' attempts to improve their image in the public by employing such groups as a form of green washing – to give the impression of ecological concern – while they continue business pursuits in filthy energy.[114] However, Martin's criticisms of these corporations seems paradoxical within the context of RT's seemingly strong support for Russia's ventures in oil – both in the arctic,[115] and off Cuba's Caribbean shores. Thus, although programs such as *Breaking the Set* do offer valid alternative and insightful opinions on American neoliberal dynamics, it would seem the owner of the channel, the Russian state, uses such emphasis to displace critical attention and prevent it from falling on its own policies. What this could indicate is that the first media filter is largely at play within Russia Today's content formation, and it would thus be reasonable to assume that Russia's plans to tap into Cuban oil would be subverted by positive coverage of Cuba's alternative food model. Accordingly, RT's database instead contains many articles that deal with Russia's interests and investments in Cuban oil, and such reports largely frame these ventures positively, and as a symbol of renewed Russian-Cuban relations. Indeed, Russia is depicted as 'helping' Cuba, whose economy remains stunted as a result of ongoing U.S. sanctions. In an article entitled "Russia's Rosneft to help Cuba explore offshore oil reserves" (RT, 2014), the generous nature of Russia is

[114] Martin's discussion takes place on her show *Breaking the Set*, in an episode called "When SWAT don't knock, pointless ISIS airstrikes & funding climate change disinfo" (Martin, 2014).

[115] In fact, Russia Today has a special report called *Northern Exposure,* in which journalist Murad Gazdiev travels with the crew of the "Russian destroyer class Admiral Levchenko as it carries a military unit from Severomorsk to an unused former-Soviet base in the White Sea" (Gazdiev, 2014). The purpose of the repopulation of this disused base is to begin claiming the Arctic for the oil that is becoming available as the ice caps melt.

underscored through emphasis on how Russian oil company Rosneft is assisting the Cuban State oil company to realise the potential of its energy resources and, for that matter, how such efforts are accompanied by debt relief, with "Russia… writing off 90 percent of Cuba's debt, which amounts to $32 billion."[116] The undeniably optimistic framing of stories dealing with Russia's involvement in Cuban oil is arguably a direct result of RT's state ownership. And these business ventures comprise an important reason why the eco-socialist system that is currently flourishing in Cuba is not dealt with adequately in the news station's reports. In short, it would not be to the benefit of Russian oil business if RT published articles dealing with Cuba's alternative sources of energy, and low oil needs in major sectors such as farming.

In fact, when RT reports Russian-Cuban relations, it tends to entirely disregard Cuba's ecological and social advances over the past quarter-century, even though these are alluded to in separate articles, such as those by Maupin and Bowie, mentioned earlier. For example, in an interview with RT, President Putin admits that Russian and Cuban "bilateral trade slowed down somewhat in the 1990s and foreign partners from various countries gained a lead on us in a number of sectors," before maintaining that "we are ready to make up this lost ground" (RT, 2014). While Putin's eagerness to reclaim Cuban favour is evidentially tied to the island's approximately 4.6 billion barrel oil potential (International Business Publications 2001: 140; Hiscock 2012: 184; Breglia 2013: 258), this statement of his entirely subjugates the ecologically sustainable economic model that Cuban society has developed during the years it was forced to survive without Russian aid. Indeed, as discussed in Chapter Two, the legacy of dependence upon Soviet industrial agriculture and fossil fuel was the main cause of Cuba's socio-economic disaster in 1990. And by Putin suggesting that Russia is once again ready to become one of the island's most prominent partners, he not only disregards Cuba's status, awarded by the World Wildlife Fund in 2006, as one of the most sustainable countries in the world (Sainsbury 2007: 26; Goldsmith & Sargent 2009: 66; Sainsbury 2010: 82). In addition, he declares the interim period an era of deficit to be overcome through the reestablishment of links between the two countries.[117] Arguably, the re-adoption of the former relationship of dependency between the two countries would constitute a major blow to the advances that Cubans have recently made

[116] Additional articles that mention Russia's partnership with Cuba for oil exploration include "Putin's L. America 'big tour,' deals done" (RT, 2014), and "Cooperation with Latin America is key to Russia's foreign policy" (RT, 2014).

[117] Of course, if such policies were to be re-adopted in the coming years, President Raul Castro would be as responsible as Putin for opening Cuba up to the neoliberal agenda, and potentially for undoing the island's progress in terms of sustainability, deriving from the eco-socialist paradigm that exists at a local level.

in terms of autonomy – both politically, and in relation to the socio-economic aspect of food production.[118]

Despite the differences between Fox News and Russia Today's respective coverage of the *Revolución Agrícola*, it would appear that both networks are quite limited in their reports. After all, neither allows for the voices of Cubans to be heard in any meaningful way, especially regarding the eco-socialist transformations of Cuban society. And this treatment of Cuba by RT arguably aligns with its historically silent role in the American mass media, and is characteristic of the dynamic in "mainstream politics of communication that silences or generates one-sided representations" (Bailey, Cammaerts & Carpentier 2007: 95). This trend is also reflected in many other mainstream news outlets, and is arguably a manifestation of the underlying attitude of *différance* that neoliberal mass media reproduce in their coverage of those who have been historically subjugated as a result of their alternative ways of life and worldviews. On the one hand, in the example of Fox News, *différance* manifests mostly in the way the news channel *defers* coverage of eco-socialist Cuba, to the point where barely any information on the topic exists on their database. As discussed, the ownership of the network influences this silencing of radical anti-neoliberal dynamics, in an effort to perpetuate the status quo, orientated around the pursuit of profit in fossil fuels. On the other hand, in terms of Russia Today, it is possible to notice a more specific form of deferral – one that focuses on subverting the positive advances of the *Revolución Agrícola*, while proclaiming Russia's approval of the Cuban state's oil and

[118] Another news broadcaster of ostensibly alternative viewpoints that produces a surprisingly small amount of information on the *Revolución Agrícola* is Al Jazeera. In fact, Al Jazeera's coverage of the Cuban model is very similar to Russia Today's in terms of its scanty treatment of the story, regardless of its apparent sympathy for Cuban politics and its facilitation of relatively balanced discussions concerning the future of Cuba. A handful of reports, such as a story entitled "Cuba's Food Challenge" (Bo, 2012), depict the country as operating along alternative agricultural principles. But these treatments do not frame Cuba's agricultural model as one that holds lessons for the rest of the world, despite many articles in its archives discussing the possibilities of urban farming initiatives in Detroit and elsewhere (Shiva, 2012; Earthrise, 2012; Leahy, 2013). One possible reason for the transformative possibilities of Cuba's urban farming model being overlooked by Al Jazeera journalists is that it actually comprises an example of holistic national change, thematisation of which would run counter to Al Jazeera's economic interests relating to the maintenance of Qatar's own regime, funded by the oil industry. The oil industry contributes over half of Qatar's Gross Domestic Product (Cavendish 2006: 72), and in relation to this context, Phares points out how several "critics…charge that Al Jazeera is entirely funded by the oil industry of Qatar, thus run by a regime" (2010: 140). For the maintenance of Qatar's status quo, it would be important that limited attention be afforded initiatives that not only represent a transition to non-oil society, but also a model for the reclamation of grassroots autonomy. The media filter of ownership is thus a potentially significant factor in terms of Al Jazeera's coverage of the *Revolución Agrícola*, and it is for this reason that, instead, only piecemeal local urban farming initiatives which are not revolutionary, receive attention.

industrial aspirations. In this act of deferral, RT expresses relative lack of interest in the organic, grassroots movement of Cubans towards regaining their food autonomy, and instead symbolically aligns the state with the Russian government, whose main interest in Cuba lies in Caribbean oil.

While these two news sources could thus be said to perpetuate Cuba's subalternity, examples of other neoliberal networks that pay more attention to the significance of the *Revolución Agrícola* do exist, namely CNN, the BBC and *The Huffington Post*. There is evidence to suggest that a more moderate commentator on the *Revolución Agrícola* is Cable News Network (CNN), owned by Time Warner, Incorporated. Neither enthusiastically celebrating the Cuban cause, nor repressing the positive consequences of the urban farming revolution, CNN instead provides a cautious middle-ground view of eco-socialist Cuba. CNN's classification as a moderate observer in this sense is arguably unsurprising, given the common view that the network reproduces a "middle-of-the-road approach by producing content that [appeals] to a politically moderate audience" (Letukas 2014: 95). Moreover, Letukas shows how American moderates often do not have rock solid political ideologies, but tend to be "focused on compromise or integrating diverse approaches." CNN's coverage of climate change similarly reflects this moderate tendency, much to the disappointment of organisations such as the Union of Concerned Scientists, who feel that framing climate change as an issue that can still be debated is both an outdated approach, and harmful in the message it sends to viewers (Robbins, 2014).[119] In addition, the network has been accused of giving very little air time to important international events relating to climate change, such as the United Nations' Climate Summit in New York in late September, 2014. In fact, it was found that even Fox News devoted more time to covering the climate change summit – albeit from a cynical perspective – than CNN (Robbins, 2014). In response to these accusations, CNN chief, Zucker, explains that the network has not been able to identify a way of discussing climate change that engages its viewers, and that instead there "tends to be a tremendous…lack of interest on the audience's part" (Mirkinson, 2014). However, this is perhaps a result of the way in which news stations are compelled to report information that will turn a profit, even if such a policy means

[119] Some articles that imply that climate change is still widely debatable include "U.S. energy revolution transforms climate debate" (Helm, 2012), "Hacked e-mails fuel climate change debate" (Zetter, 2009), and the "Climate-gate Debate" (CNN, 2009). Admittedly, perhaps as a result of recent criticisms of CNN's neutral stance on climate change, the network has recently been seen to confirm its view that climate change is no longer a debatable issue. This view is disseminated through articles such as "Why are we still debating climate change?" (Costello, 2014), "Gore says climate change deniers melting away" (Killough, 2013), and "6 ways to talk climate with Republicans" (Sutter, 2014).

diminishing controversial coverage of significant events. The CNN chief's explanation also supports the moderate image of CNN viewers. That is, in much the same way that audiences who are staunchly disbelieving of climate change would tune into Fox News, and those who are passionate about activism may support alternative media, middle-of-the-road audiences tend to tune into CNN for a framing of climate change that does not contradict their temperate stance.

In accordance with CNN's rather neutral approach to climate change, an analogous tone is be found in its reports on Cuba. That is, consideration of various CNN treatments of Cuba and its urban farming revolution – in comparison with those of Fox News and RT – reveals that CNN presents a relatively moderate image of Cuban agriculture and organic farming, with CNN reporters' circumspect allusions to Cuba's urban agriculture and diverse agricultural pursuits occurring in at least two articles.[120] Importantly, one full article on the subject of Cuban agriculture exists, entitled "Can the West cultivate ideas from Cuba's 'Special Period'?" (Ford, 2009). The fact that time has been taken to give the topic of Cuban agriculture due consideration is in itself significant, as most mainstream press find themselves merely reporting on the more overarching economic and political aspects of Cuba. And through this, CNN shows itself to be relatively open to discussions of Cuba's alternative system of producing food, conceived as a result of its moderate audiences, who stand to be accepting of new ideas to a certain degree. In Ford's article, the Cuban agricultural model is framed as a possible remedial mechanism in the face of peak oil, and in terms of this he writes that, "as worries grow in developed nations about a future without plentiful supplies of oil, the communist republic is proving to be an increasingly popular example of how to cope when the spigots run dry, for the simple reason: they've already been there." In this way, Ford is relatively positive about the advantages that Cuba's model could offer the world in the future, when our dependency on fossil fuels in general, and oil in particular, is checked by insufficient reserves. And recognition such as this from a traditionally pro-American network, is arguably quite significant within the context of mainstream news.

However, it is also important to note that, apart from mention in a few other articles, Ford's report is the only one of its kind that deals specifically with Cuban agriculture in the CNN archives. The fact that little has been done to study in detail the social and ecological successes of the agricultural revolution is also proportional to the network's concern for its moderate audience's interests. That is, in order to minimise the perception of 'taking sides' on the question of Cuba, the rest of Ford's article comes across primarily as a record of events. And, in order to pander to those readers who may take offence at persistently amiable

[120] In this regard, see Shaikh's "Urban farms herald green city 'revolution'" (2010), and "Feeding the future: Saving agricultural biodiversity" (CNN, 2009).

descriptions of Cuba, the article ends on a noticeably negative tone, when Ford quotes Julia Wright as explaining how, although "the crisis that Cuba suffered has made it a better place in certain aspects, as people had to become more resilient and self-sufficient and less wasteful," Cuban people would nevertheless "say that their food shortages and lack of inputs has been a hardship." This negative ending – a reminder of the communist party's failure to distribute wealth to all its people – could be said to effectively counter the original relative optimism mentioned in the article, resulting in a sense of vague neutrality concerning the *Revolución Agrícola.*

Ford's report, which seemingly goes to great lengths to avoid inflammatory rhetoric, arguably reflects Herman and Peterson's claims that one of CNN's major constraints is the "imperative that it attract viewers and keep them watching," and that this objective "impels the network to adopt 'news-making' practices that stress action and visuals while avoiding both in-depth contextual reporting that may bore its audience and the presentation of unconventional points of view that may anger or alienate them" (2000: 112). Indeed, the article itself is quite lacking in analysis, while a link to a relatively unrelated video is offered as an alternative to reading the article. Apart from a brief suggestion of the possibility that Cuban agriculture might be able to function as a model for other countries, in the future, the report does little to challenge readers' prejudices against Cuba, or to convince them of the viability of the model. However, it is possible that CNN's moderate position in terms of its stance on climate change, as well as the Cuban agricultural model, is indicative of more than simply the drive to meet audience's expectations. When discussing CNN's "institutional constraints," Herman and Peterson also point out that

> Time Warner makes no bones about the fact that its 'foremost objective is to create value for [their] shareholders,' that its top managers see cultivating the affluent Baby Boomers as a business imperative, and that increasing their share of the advertising market is a major route to profitability. Neither Time Warner, its major advertisers, nor the major cable systems it supplies with news would be pleased if CNN stepped far out of line by allowing dissenting voices much play. (2000: 112)

This thematisation of how CNN seeks to please the corporate sponsors and shareholders of the corporation above all other objectives, is important in terms of the current argument. This is because CNN maintains its moderate air in order to appease advertisers' and shareholders' interests, in much the same way that Fox News and RT are subject to the views of those who own and fund their networks. In this regard, in an article for *The Guardian*, Greenwald refers to the perceived neutrality of CNN, and quotes Rosen, who asserts that "stability is its own perspective on international events" because "if your primary goal is stability, that's like an

ideology" (in Greenwald, 2012). And, as Greenwald shows, CNN's perceived neutrality is actually very political in nature, in that the network is funded by the U.S. government and the states of various foreign countries, in return for slanted coverage that favours their tourism industries (Herman & Peterson 2000: 112). Moreover, CNN's parent organisation, Time Warner, has been a "business contributor" of America's Council on Foreign Relations, which arguably limits the objectivity of the network's reporting. The Council on Foreign Relations is known to be the "central link that binds the capitalist upper class and its most important financial and multinational corporations," and the objective of the Council has been to "keep public debate regarding U.S. foreign policy within bounds acceptable to the power structure" (Boggs 2005: 109; Council on Foreign Relations, 2014). Thus, how CNN's ownership by Time Warner affects its content cannot be ignored, because it effectively guides the network's choice of information, and the ways in which that information is reported.

That is, the links that CNN shares with foreign states and multi-national corporations through the Council on Foreign Relations tend to influence CNN's coverage of societies with values alternative to those of neoliberalism. And this, in turn, limits CNN's ability to cover stories such as Cuba's agricultural revolution, because of the very real conflict of interest between the neoliberal agendas of advertisers and corporate partners, and the positive eco-socialist features of Cuba's model. In short, for CNN to positively cover a topic that contradicts conventional ideas of business, ecology, agriculture, and on a very basic level, human relations in urban areas, would run counter to the needs of the sponsors of the network, seeing as many – if not all – of those sponsors and associates derive their profits directly from the current exploitative socio-economic model.[121] Indeed, providing deep analyses of Cuban eco-socialist society that point to certain profoundly positive features of such organisation would not only cause a scandal among CNN's moderate audience, but would also in all likelihood precipitate the withdrawal of the network's ultimate prize: corporate sponsors.

The moderatism of CNN should therefore not be viewed as the result of journalistic objectivity. Instead, the middle-of-the-road approach used to discuss the *Revolución Agrícola* should be regarded more as a political stance that continues to facilitate the Othering of the 'Third World.' That is, when CNN neglects to provide in-depth analyses of alternative ways of life, often situated in the Global South, it negates the urgency for societal transformation that

[121] The founders of the Council on Foreign Affairs include the Bank of America, Chevron, Goldman Sachs Group, and PepsiCo, Incorporated, while the next two levels of corporate membership include many powerful multinationals, such as Deutsche Bank, Google, and Shell Oil Company (Council on Foreign Affairs, 2014). With Time Warner's affiliation to these powerful groups, it would be inconceivable for their content not to be affected by these relations.

neoliberal society requires in the face of impending economic and ecological catastrophes. Simultaneously, CNN's moderatism in such stories conveys a sense of doubt as to the ability of the subaltern to develop viable systems independent of Western influence. Thus, through such neutrality, news corporations like CNN also help to subvert the notion of the subaltern class as having the "potential to think beyond current conditions, to achieve a higher level of self-consciousness, and conceive and build new worlds" (Pandey 2006: 4737). Instead, the apathy of CNN does little to raise the voice of the subordinated class, or to bring attention to their cause; moderatism *á la* CNN rather seeks the happy maintenance of the status quo.

Similar to CNN, the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) tends to err on the side of caution in terms of reporting controversial issues, such as Cuba and its *Revolución Agrícola.* The network's archives contain two main articles,[122] which focus specifically on the alternative agricultural paradigm at work in Cuba. In addition, Cuba has received special attention in the BBC Two documentary series, the *Future of Food*, in which the island is tentatively framed as a possible model for future systems of food production. However, there is evidence to suggest that these treatments of the *Revolución Agrícola* have been diluted by the corporation's cautious approach to the subject; an attitude that is arguably derived from the network's overarching corporate policies. In the latter regard, the BBC is a publicly funded (Fleming 2009: 7; Mendel 2013: 205) but independent institution, answerable to a Trust composed of twelve members, and an Executive and non-Executive Board, comprising of seven and six members, respectively (Tait 2009: 186; Wall & Long 2014: 187).[123] For the most part, the BBC's management structure seems to favour the expertise of bankers and businesspeople, rather than that of journalists who may have both different priorities, and a deeper understanding of the challenges facing news broadcasting than those whose backgrounds lie in corporate finance. Referring to the members of the Trust and Board, Hind explains how "most of them, impressive though they are, would not look out of place on the board of a large, conventional corporation" (Hind, 2012). And he goes on to discuss how this trend is part of a much larger ideology that has over the last few decades operated upon British public life, through which institutions have become "defensible to the extent that they [resemble] profit-seeking organisations." As a result of this,

[122] The first article, entitled "Cuba's Organic Revolution" (2001) and written by Greg Morsbach, can be found in the BBC News' Business archives, while the second report, "The Vegetable Gardeners of Havana" (2009), by Sarah Murch, connects the article to the BBC Two series, *The Future of Food.*

[123] The Trust of the BBC is appointed by the Queen, on advice from ministers (Wall & Long 2014: 187). This system is in itself questionable, considering the possibility of bias in the decisions made by ministers. After all, it is unlikely that the ministers would select figures who represent a threat to the British government's status quo and existing corporate relations.

the BBC "has not been under sustained pressure to become more democratic, or to enable more effective political participation in the general population." Rather, "it has been urged to adopt best practice from the private sector, and to promote values of an 'enterprise culture.' Its governance, and indeed its output, reflects that pressure" (Hind, 2012).

The neoliberalism that Hind effectively points to has meant that the network has opened itself up to criticism from those concerned for the legitimacy of the news channel's content. With representatives of banks, energy corporations, and private security in the Trust, there is arguably much need for investigation into possible ways in which the news offered by BBC tends to be co-opted by corporate interests. That is, while the BBC does not seem to disseminate overtly biased information – in the style of Fox News – the network's focus on impartiality and 'balanced' reporting has been suggested as a form of complicity with corporate interests. In this regard, Holmes asserts that, after studying a vast selection of archived BBC Online articles, what emerges is that "the practice of 'balanced' reporting is strongly implicated in facilitating access for…industry-friendly voices" (2009: 97). In particular, he emphasises how the possibility of the image of impartiality doubles as a mask for the progression of corporate interests in the BBC's coverage of, and approach to, climate change and global warming. This criticism also resonates with the argument of Cottle, who maintains that the 'tradition' of impartiality within the BBC has "tamed the corporation's preparedness to actively engage with, rather than simply document, global climate change." Indeed, much like CNN, the BBC is markedly staid in its reporting of climate change, and very careful to exclude any 'radical' sentiments or ideas, either as potential solutions to the problems that the ecological crisis poses to humanity, or as catalysts for debate that might lead to such solutions. Instead, within the BBC, challenges to "taken-for-granted notions of state sovereignty, [and] goals of perpetual economic growth and consumer individualism" are ignored, because they are "felt to be beyond the pale of acceptable environmental concern, tipping over into 'radical politics'" (Cottle 2008: 87).

Within the remaining narrow sphere of ecological consciousness that the BBC expounds, superficial, corporately-sponsored environmental awareness campaigns have been granted much attention in recent times. Brooker describes how the BBC gave considerable airtime to "a global warming publicity stunt involving a giant plastic replica of a polar bear on an iceberg being moored in the Thames next to the palace of Westminster" (2010: 267). However, in contrast, the network consistently neglects to provide deeper analyses of the *socio-economic narratives* that are ultimately reproducing the conditions that have contributed to ecological disintegration. As a result of the criticisms that have been levelled against the BBC, the corporation has consequently had to defend its position on global warming to parliament,

who have questioned the public broadcaster's role in educating the public about climate change, and in providing a platform for public discourse on the topic. In response to questions such as these, the BBC asserted the following:

> the most important principle is that our interest in reporting any subject is journalistic, rather than one of raising awareness. As an Independent news organisation it would not be appropriate for us to give advice on how organisations or individuals might seek to raise awareness, particularly in areas of contested scientific and indeed political debate. Our role is to explain these issues to our audiences so that they understand what the debate is about, and the context in which it is taking place. (BBC in Science and Technology Committee 2014: 225)

The above assertion seems to confirm the BBC's stance in relation to reporting climate change; the network identifies itself neither as an institution responsible for providing solutions to the ecological crisis, nor as a platform for political action.

Although the BBC is purported to be publicly owned, the corporate features of its managerial bodies indicate that the network operates in terms of the principles of privatization and individualism. Of course, the network produces many high quality nature films with celebrated narrators – such as David Attenborough – that inform the public about the various effects of climate change. But the network nevertheless does little to "overcome the evident *disconnect* between journalism's coverage of climate change as a world crisis and what audiences and publics can or should do with this new information and its affective charge" (Cottle 2008: 88). And it is possible that such an individualising stance has affected the BBC's reporting of Cuba and the *Revolución Agrícola.* Being necessarily communal, the eco-socialist transformations of Cuba's green revolution represent an antithesis to the corporatised and individualised society that institutions such as the BBC aspire to construct. Thus, paying close attention to the positive developments of the *Revolución Agrícola* would be counterproductive, not to mention controversial, within the context of the neoliberal franchise. After all, the powerful message behind the story of Cuban food autonomy – namely, the unsustainability of unchecked extractivism in general, and the industrial food system, in particular – would stand to elicit radical reactions from the BBC's audience, and inspire critical debate.

At first, when the BBC's articles on Cuba's urban farming are examined, they come across as quite positive in terms of their promotion of *organic farming* and local food production. Morbach provides many statistics about organic production in Cuba, and offers an overview of the current system of food production, emphasising "Senora Hernandes" who runs an urban farm in Havana. Similarly, Murch explains how Cuba "by necessity had to go back to basics to survive – rediscovering low-input self-reliant farming," and the focus of her article

falls on the act of farming in the city, along with the health benefits that organic produce provides. However, although both articles suggest that Cuba could provide a good model to follow in future years of oil and resource scarcity, the articles do not escape the neoliberal worldview that the BBC expounds. That is, neither Morbach nor Murch frame the *Revolución Agrícola* in terms of an entirely new paradigm, accompanied by a transformation of *consciousness*. Rather, they treat Cuba's urban farming simply as a tentative solution to the problem of oil shortages, without examining the neoliberal system that has created widespread reliance upon fossil fuels to produce food. The reasons behind Cuba's original intensive farming model – the socio-ecological transformations that occurred post-1990 – and even how the green revolution empowered people within the context of a highly bureaucratic state, are also not thematised by any of the authors. Instead, Morbach seems preoccupied with the business aspect of the new food paradigm, explaining that Cuba "still has a long way to go before becoming a major food exporter in the region," even though the island "has overcome the worst of its food supply problems – thanks to organic farming." The neoliberal mindset clearly pervades this statement because 'organic farming' is simply framed as an emergency solution to the problem of food shortages, while Morbach remains critical of Cuba for failing to move beyond subsistence toward profiting on a global scale.

Similarly, while Murch's article seems quite supportive of Cuba's new food system as a whole, the series to which the article is linked – *The Future of Food* – is ultimately dismissive of the food system in Cuban cities. That is, after exploring the urban farming systems in Cuba, the host, George Alagiah, maintains that such "city farms hardly look like they're the answer to a global food crisis – they're just, well, too small really," before alluding briefly to the importance of "the principle that local people [take] some responsibility for their own food needs" (Alagiah, 2009). This statement is problematic on two levels. Firstly, by mentioning that the size of the farms in Cuba is ultimately their downfall, Alagiah contradicts his earlier statement that Havana is ninety percent self-sufficient in its fruit and vegetable needs as a result of these farms. Arguably, the host's own preconceived notions of the characteristics of resilient food systems are at odds with the highly productive small-scale ventures he encounters in Cuba. And he accordingly remains dismissive of their potency, simply because of their decentralised dynamics. In this regard, Alagiah does not seem to understand the collective effort that the farms represent – or veers away from such understanding – because while many small plots exist, their summative value is immense. The host's inability or reluctance to perceive these farms as being ultimately connected, and part of a larger project of food resilience, could be a result of the individualistic principles with which neoliberal society has been inculcated, and which the BBC continues to espouse. Secondly, while Alagiah's allusion to the importance of

the principle of local food autonomy seems to be a very positive observation concerning Cuba, the way the host frames this principle – after casting heavy doubt upon the highly autonomous Cuban food system – is contradictory. That is, after casting aspersions on the long-term efficacy of the local, egalitarian, food systems at play in Cuba, he goes on to promote only the 'principle' that governs them. This is arguably not only a highly patronising attitude towards the radical socio-ecological efforts that are being made by Cubans in their communities. In addition, this way of alerting people to the principle of food autonomy is also confusing, insofar as it suggests that the people who adopt this principle are noble because they do so regardless of how useless it may prove to be in the long run. It could even be suggested that this attitude towards local food autonomy derives from the BBC attitude that "it is absolutely not the job of the BBC to save the planet" (Cottle 2008: 88). That is, the BBC does not consider itself responsible for empowering people to organise themselves politically or to communicate political radicalism, and so for this reason the *Revolución Agrícola* cannot be framed in overly positively terms, or as a solution to corporate control of global food systems.

The treatments of the *Revolución Agrícola* by the mass media corporations of Fox News, Russia Today, CNN, and the BBC, all point to the influence of media filters, in particular those of ownership and advertising, in determining the amount – and kind – of information that the networks may disseminate about the Cuban agricultural model. In contrast, when *The Huffington Post* (*Huffpost*) is considered in terms of its coverage of Cuban agriculture, it seems that relative freedom is afforded journalists to explore the topic. The online publication offers audiences an array of information to do with alternative societies, and is unapologetic in its positive representations of Cuba's socio-ecological model. The openness of *Huffpost* to alternative ideas stems, on the one hand, from the online publication's very liberal roots and editorial committee, and on the other hand, from the publication's status as a collective 'blog.' *Huffpost* was created by Arianna Huffington, Kenneth Lerer, and Jonah Peretti in 2005, and its content consisted mainly of "a few blogs and some basic political news" that was collected from various reputable news sources (Barker, Barker, Bormann & Neher 2013: 98). However, as the website grew in popularity and funding, the editors were able to hire a growing team of staff to contribute regularly to the publication, and provide an investigative journalistic edge to *Huffpost*. The decision to formalize *Huffpost* in this way was a great success, which led to a huge viewership of over 25 million visitors to the site each month in 2012 (Stokes 2012: 295; Barker et al. 2013: 99). What makes *Huffpost* different, though, is its friendly attitude towards bloggers who make use of the publication as a platform for disseminating their own ideas. As a consequences of this policy, *Huffpost* has over 9000 bloggers who contribute to the variety of content made available through the publication (Mattera 2013: 83). Arguably, the publication's

propensity for diversity of content, and information collection from the 'bottom-up,' results in a more honest and democratic news model than other mainstream, corporate, networks.[124] This kind of system allows the views of those who normally inhabit the periphery of mainstream society the opportunity to be foregrounded; a trend that is apparent in *Huffpost*'s sub-categories of news such as "Black Voices" and "Gay Voices."

Consequently, the publication is home to many diverse discussions of Cuba, and its alternative farming model. The grouping of articles that explore the *Revolución Agrícola* in an optimistic light include "Cuba's urban farming program a stunning success" (Price, 2008), "Havana farmers' market teems with people, produce" (AP, 2013), and "Sustainable farming in Cuba ideal job in an isolated country" (Cloos, 2013). Another article, "The Urban Jungle: April Philips has a concrete plan for tasty city landscapes" (Spiegelman, 2013), while it does not allude to Cuba in its title, contains very positive depictions of the island's urban farming model, and frames this model as an example for food-strapped communities around the world to follow. In the article, Philips points to the decentralized nature of Cuba's urban farming efforts, as well as its development of local economies. An observation that comes closer than Fox News, RT, CNN or BBC, to understanding the radically alternative – and globally beneficial – nature of Cuba's food economy, in comparison with neoliberal agriculture. Price's treatment of Cuban urban farming is arguably the most optimistic of the group. The author explains how "Cuba's urban farming program has been a stunning, and surprising, success," because "the farms…provide 350 000 jobs nationwide with relatively high pay," and have moreover "transformed eating habits in a nation accustomed to a less-than-ideal diet of rice and beans and canned goods from Eastern Europe." And to further his case for Cuban agriculture, Price quotes an American sociologist who suggests that Cuba "shows that cities can produce huge amounts of their own food," in a way that is accompanied by "all kinds of social and ecological benefits" (Murphy in Price, 2008). This statement arguably approximates a realisation of the importance of the eco-socialist nature of Cuba's agricultural system. And this makes *Huffpost* an important platform for democratic communications that seek to "recover the peasant as a contemporary of modernity, and a maker of the modern" (Pandey 2006: 4736).

To be sure, *The Huffington Post* cannot always be regarded as an example of consistent journalistic objectivity, or as upholding deep analyses of issues. *Huffpost* in its current form is

[124] While the original model of *Huffpost* operated in this way, it is possible that AOL's purchase of the site in 2011 could in time change this positive feature of the publication (McKercher 2013: 225; Barker et al. 2013: 99). That is, with a new corporate owner – one that is a major player in global media – it is possible that the integrity of the site as an independent source of liberal news could transform in the years to come.

first and foremost a mainstream news source, and a business. As such, the publication's underlying neoliberal rhetoric cannot be ignored because it indicates the publication's mainstream principles and loyalties. And as in other news agencies, the information that appears in *The Huffington Post* must pass through certain filters – such as an editorial board – before being published. But the number of articles displaying critical insight that are allowed to appear about Cuban urban farming does indicate that the publication is more open than other mainstream news agencies to providing a platform for the discussion of societies with alternative economic, social, and political values. Doing so promotes debate among audiences – often appearing as comments beneath the articles – and alerts people to the many possible ways of running a society.

Such debates can moreover act as catalysts for more serious forms of dissenting media, and when this occurs, the monologic tendency of mainstream neoliberal media is problematised, as those opposed to these hegemonic forces gain a collective voice in public – albeit online – domains. And it is within these collective spaces that initiatives to break relations with the 'master class' are being born, and are gaining legitimacy. This is because, when the previously subordinated class is allowed to speak, a bursting forth of creativity occurs – the kind that allows the formation of alternative life systems to become imminently realisable. In such spaces, previously accepted understandings of concepts such as 'progress,' 'backwardness,' and 'justice' are problematised to the point where new intellections of them can emerge organically, from people tired of blinkered lines of thought. And as will be discussed in the next chapter, this process of revolt against mainstream neoliberal mass media hegemony is increasingly being carried out by groups of Cubans through the use of online commons. In this regard, Cubans – as subalterns – are bypassing conventional neoliberal media by making use of online resources to voice their opinions, and to showcase what Cuba can offer the world, in terms of a new socio-ecological and economic model.

Chapter Five: Cuban Voices in Alternative Media

5.1 Introduction

In Chapter Four, the degree to which coverage in mainstream neoliberal mass media of the *Revolución Agrícola* has either been suppressed, or has entailed superficial or pejorative representations of the issue, was explored, through an investigation of how the dominant media corporations – FNC, RT, CNN, BBC, and *The Huffington Post* – handled transformations in the Cuban agricultural paradigm. In short, apart from *Huffpost*, the tendency of the rest of the corporations to either silence or sanitize related stories on Cuba, indicated the operation of neoliberal ideological filters in the production of their news content. Yet, while these filters have consistently led to a negation of the importance of the *Revolución Agrícola*, and correlatively prevented Cubans from being heard on international platforms, Cubans and those sympathetic to their cause have found alternative ways of communicating their socio-ecological accomplishments.

With a view to exploring such discursive resistance, in what follows the theoretical underpinnings of such oppositional media use will be elaborated upon, before examples of how Cubans are finding a voice through such global platforms, will be investigated. Finally, these successes, achieved through the use of alternative media, will be juxtaposed with the challenges facing both the related Cuban movement, and analogous global efforts for socio-ecological transformations. That is, firstly with reference to theorizations of the importance of diversifying and democratising information by, among others, Herman and Chomsky (1988), Shiva (2006), Downing (2011), and Fraser (1990), the ways in which global new media are facilitating such processes, will be discussed. Secondly, against this backdrop, the ways in which the *Revolución Agrícola* is being shown to the world on various new media platforms in general, and in particular via independent YouTube films, such as *The Power of Community: How Cuba Survived Peak Oil*, and local American radio shows, such as KPFA's *La Raza Chronicles*, will be explored. Thirdly, the capacity of these initiatives to facilitate Cubans' expressions of the positive aspects of their island's socio-ecological transformations, as well as how these changes constitute a new culture of resilience and regeneration that holds lessons for the rest of the world, will be considered, along with the obstacles which stand in the way of an analogous global transformation.

5.2 Self-education, alternative citizens' media, and counterpublics

Herman and Chomsky conclude that the neoliberal mass media serve the "societal purpose" of inculcating and defending the "economic, social, and political agenda of the privileged groups that dominate the domestic society and the state" (1988: 298). Consequently, despite giving the impression of inviting debate, criticism, and dissent, the neoliberal mass media in fact confine discourse within perimeters acceptable to the neoliberal agenda (1988: 302; Wheatley 1999: 207; Altheide 2009: 115). From a young age, the 'rules' of participating within these discursive realms are internalised by people, to the extent that "the media are indeed free – for those who adopt the principles required for their 'societal purpose'" (1988: 304). Vandana Shiva builds upon this idea when she describes how capitalist hegemony, spread largely through neoliberal mass media, works to silence diverse alternatives by "elevating itself *above* society and other knowledge systems," and through "excluding other knowledge systems from the domain of reliable and systematic knowledge" (in Henry 2006: 199). In this way, the dominant neoliberal knowledge system maintains control of mainstream information flows, and has the ultimate say in what is, and what is not, considered viable. And the colonising effects of the imposition of the corresponding worldview over the global South include the negation of indigenous systems of thought, and their progressive elimination from common discourse (Fenelon & LeBeau 2006: 22; Shizha 2009: 139-140). The success of the corporate media in negating the diverse opinions originating from the global South, derives from their status as "effective and powerful ideological institutions that carry out a system-supportive propaganda function by reliance on market forces, internalised assumptions, and self-censorship, and without significant coercion" (1988: 306).

However, while applying significant pressure on societies to conform to their worldview, the neoliberal mass media are also being opposed by pockets of resistance, or "counterforces" (1988: 307; Allan 2004: 52), which are retaliating through the development of salient alternative discursive practices. In this regard, Herman and Chomsky point to three possible counterforces to mainstream media: firstly, the potentiality for new telecommunications to open up opportunities for local television channels and stations; secondly, the potential for radio to function as an alternative, local source of information and public discussion; and thirdly, the activism and networking of self-education groups in the community and the workplace. These efforts are described as the "fundamental elements in steps toward the democratization of our social life and any meaningful social change," and they propose that "only to the extent that such developments succeed [can we] hope to see media that are free and independent" (1988: 307). Herman and Chomsky thus underscore the massive importance of grassroots initiatives

that oppose the neoliberal mass media, by establishing alternative paradigms to the neoliberal worldview. In terms of self-education, Alexander and Shelton emphasise how, generally, current education systems deliberately induce docility among people throughout their education, in order to undermine political self-confidence. However, this effect is impermanent, and overcoming it is independent of social or economic class, because "acquiring the high-level knowledge that is necessary for people to govern themselves does not require special intellectual talents found only in the elite" (Alexander & Shelton 2014: 494). This realisation is important in order for people to become motivated to contribute towards a paradigmatic shift away from current global politico-economic and socio-ecological perspectives. Indeed, a movement based upon such a realisation could lead to new communities of "free human beings whose values [are] not accumulation and domination but, rather, free association on terms of equality and sharing and cooperation," where participation "on equal terms to achieve common goals that were democratically conceived" regularly occurs (Chomsky 2000: 39). In this regard, self-education is an essential element of such resistance to capitalist hegemony, because without different and oppositional perspectives, the neoliberal status quo of the mainstream mass media would go unchallenged, and capitalist hegemony – or unfettered neoliberalism – would continue to generate a "monoculture of the mind" (Shiva in Henry 2006: 200). Indeed, Shiva even compares the homogenising forces of neoliberalism with monoculture in industrial agriculture, when she describes how, "by making space for local alternatives to disappear," neoliberalism acts "very much like monocultures of introduced plant varieties leading to the displacement and destruction of local diversity" (in Henry 2006: 200).

But alongside the homogenous discursive space of mainstream neoliberal mass media, there have arisen radical attempts to make diverse subaltern voices heard on a global level. Often making use of new global media, alternative media platforms have emerged and become organic spaces for the coming together of subjects of *différance* (Bennett 2003: 18; Fuchs 2011: 108).[125] Fuchs discusses the apparent paradox of alternative media exponents appropriating new media forms to amplify their messages, by showing how, while the emergence of new media technologies is, in fact,

[125] While new global media facilitate the emergence of alternative media, they simultaneously grant power to multinational corporations, who have appropriated local sites (Dutta 2011: 276), and achieved centralised control of information and communication. A consequence of this has been the creation of "new subalterns," or unrepresented groups. However, while corporate uses of global new media are inevitable within the neoliberal context, the positive, activist possibilities of global new media nevertheless allow for a growing opposition to elite power.

> the result of capital interests and political interests…[such that a] new media technology such as the Internet is under the regime of capitalism [and] always a sphere of capital accumulation, circulation and consumption as well as a sphere of ideology production, circulation and consumption. At the same time, new media technologies also pose potentials for the development of alternative forms of organizing media and alternative media contents that are characterized by transformed conditions of production, circulation and consumption. (2011: 108)

That is, an important aspect of the idea of a new global information and economic order, alternative use of new media is often made by social movements and grassroots organisations when they form their own avenues of communication, in a way that bypasses the "global communication giants." And as a result of the organic characteristics of these initiatives, information dissemination tends to move laterally among those at grassroots level, making possible a 'bottom-up' approach to news production, rather than the traditional 'top-down' structure (Downing 2011: 99). The immense potential that new media have to provide diversity of information deriving from subalterns, also allows for a new conceptualisation of citizenship to emerge, especially for those in politically subordinated positions. This is because the communication platforms that new media offer facilitate increased agency and engagement in issues concerning the subaltern, both on a local and on a global level (Manuel 1993: 4; Olson 1999: 139). And when such subordinated people unite to establish a means of alternative communication and information to that provided by the mainstream neoliberal mass media, a form of "citizens' media" emerges (Vega & Rodríguez in Thussu 2009: 228; Dutta 2011: 273). Vega and Rodríguez explain that such citizens' media "act as catalysts for processes of symbolic appropriation and re-coding of the environment and individuals," and that these processes "help people develop identities strongly tied to local realities and deeply committed to new approaches to shaping the collective future of their communities" (in Thussu 2009: 228). In this regard, Dutta points to the importance of citizens' media in facilitating the definition of identities and narratives, as well as in the creation of a space for counter-hegemonic practices, while situating this potentiality within the realm of global new media technologies. However, while this implies that citizens' media are tools for the subaltern to speak to *herself* within the specific context of local communities, these media can also be significant apparati for the subaltern to communicate with *international* audiences. That is, new media have become excellent communication platforms for networking groups to express alternative political opinions globally, and have thereby allowed "sites for the development, production, and dissemination of political content that resists the mainstream" to emerge (2011: 273). In particular, the value of YouTube as a platform for political resistance should be underscored, because the site has emerged as a means

> for distribution of videos that document the structural and material violence in the subaltern sectors, bringing local stories to global audiences, often narrated by local participants at sites of contention, and thus also documenting the narratives of violence and control enacted by the military industrial complex and its collaborators in the neoliberal project. (Dutta 2011: 274)

In this way, through the use of YouTube and similar new platforms, citizens' media allow people to grapple critically with both the status quo, and their own relation to dominant forces,[126] not least because their ideas can be expressed on, and in, their own terms via these radical media (Downing 2011: 100), through a process which enables subalterns to establish discursive resistance to repressive forces that otherwise seek to maintain *différance.* Indeed, it could be suggested that the dynamics of *différance* in any given socio-political context can be altered through politically empowering activities such as these, which Barbero describes in terms of the subaltern coming to *contar* (in Downing 2011: 100). Here Barbero uses the double meaning of *contar* to signify both 'to narrate' and 'to have a presence.' That is, when the subaltern subject gains a voice in order to express her reality *vis á vis* the dominant discourse, and when she correlatively demands the attention of audiences who have hitherto been oblivious to her existence, she begins the process of challenging her historical subordination in a way that affects the related dynamics of *différance*. However, to be effective, such resistance must be entrenched in the community, because "the power of the subaltern is predicated on the *collective* ability to articulate a vision of the future" that is "expressed via a voice strong enough to become part of the public sphere and to gain political power" [own italics] (Downing 2011: 100). When this occurs, the disparate actors of the resistance become political subjects, and are

[126] Blogs are also an effective tool to voice alternative opinions, and their popularity is immense, considering the ease with which one can join the 'blogging' community, which contains very few informational checks and balances. The power of such means to pose a valid threat to mainstream mass media is reflected in the mainstream media's reactions to the growing trend. In this regard, Macnamara shows how conventional mass media and journalists have spurned blogging as the work of amateurs and "pyjama' journalists" (Franklin, Hogan, Langley, Mosdell & Pill 2009: 29; 2010: 222). That is, the overpowering theme emanating from these institutions when commenting on blogs is that "cultural production belongs to professional media producers…and the rest of society should know their place as passive 'consumers' of what media and artists give them" (2010: 222). Conversely, others have argued that the informal, spontaneous, nature of blogging is what makes this form of citizen journalism so strong and promising within the context of the subaltern's struggle to be heard. In short, because blogging "erases traditional barriers associated with news gathering and publishing" (Douai 2014: 274), effective blogging can successfully challenge mainstream journalism, and provide potent alternative informational flows.

thus able to generate a degree of "agency in the face of severe silence and oppression" (Herndl & Bauer 2003: 560). [127]

While the subaltern's entrance into the public realm through the use of such alternative avenues – for example, YouTube – may seem to improve her political position, Nancy Fraser problematizes the notion of a corresponding 'public sphere,' and suggests that instead of the subaltern seeking assimilation into the norms of the bourgeois public sphere, she should instead create her own "counterpublic" (1990: 70; Biressi & Nunn 2007: 25).[128] This is because Habermas's conception of the public sphere is problematic insofar as it is advanced as "*the* public arena in the singular" (Fraser 1990: 66). Arguably, the idea of one all-encompassing sphere of thought and communication is quite restrictive, because it stands to be exclusionary of discourses that do not resonate with the realities of the bourgeois custodians of the public sphere. In terms of this, Fraser maintains that the traditional understanding of the public sphere "is informed by an underlying evaluative assumption…that the institutional confinement of public life to a single, overarching public sphere is a positive and desirable state of affairs," while the "proliferation of a multiplicity of publics represents a departure from, rather than an advance toward, democracy" (1990: 66). Yet, in contrast, while the dominant class limits debate to its sphere of influence, through the creation of a plurality of publics – or counterpublics – marginalised groups can claim the space to discuss issues of importance to them, in an unmediated way, which entails the extension of democracy. Moreover, the existence of counterpublics is not something new, and certainly not reliant on the rise of new global media. On the contrary, "the bourgeois public was never *the* public;" instead, as Fraser shows, "contemporaneous with the bourgeois public there arose a host of competing counterpublics, including nationalist publics, popular peasant publics, elite women's publics, black publics and

[127] The act of subaltern groups finding a voice through their own media channels resonates with Michel Foucault's ideas on the revolutionary possibilities of writing, or the role of authorship. For Foucault, writing can lead to "the fashioning of discourses, recognised as true, into rational principles of action" (Foucault 1997: 209). This implies the active role of the author who grapples with narratives, because ideas that emerge from this interaction may lead to new ways of perceiving. Foucault explains that the letter is a medium for the exchange of ideas and advice between people, and as this exchange develops, those involved in the narrative become ever more empowered in their abilities to think creatively and to express their opinions to each other (1997: 215). In this way, reciprocal relations are built between the participants, such that the exchange of ideas becomes increasingly egalitarian. In light of this, it is possible to recognise these features taking place within the realm of alternative media. As a platform for debate and the critical analysis of discourse, these media can promote the subaltern to the level of author, and those to whom s/he speaks to the level of respected respondents.

[128] A counterpublic can be understood as a space where "different people debate different issues in different ways" (Biressi & Nunn 2007: 25).

working class publics" [own italics] (Fraser 1997: 75). As such, the recent visibility of counterpublics is not because they have emerged as part of the neoliberal context, but because new media have simply rendered them more salient. After all, such spaces for the proliferation of "counterdiscourses" (Biressi & Nunn 2007: 26) have existed since the very formative years of market capitalism. However, counterpublics that manifest largely within alternative media are identifiable by four main characteristics. Firstly, the alternative media discourse occurs outside of mainstream media; secondly, the alternative media afford the Other space to be heard; thirdly, topics that veer away from the mainstream trajectory are broached in such alternative media; and fourthly, the ways in which discussion is carried out differ from the techniques used in mainstream media (Biressi & Nunn 2007: 26-27).

The advancement of new global media has facilitated many alternative channels that offer the above four-fold features of a counterpublic to the subaltern (Erikson 2007: 32; Gutman & Goldfarb 2010: 500), and when counterpublics intersect with mainstream news, these interactions arguably result in the former having a degree of shaping power over the latter (Gray 2009: 94). That is, as with Hegel's assertion that the 'master' only exists insofar as the 'slave' does, so too, mainstream news at times is dependent on alternative news for its own self-construction. In terms of this, Atton points to the active character of counterdiscourses, by highlighting how "alternative media practices have not simply broken with mainstream practices, they have often sought to radically redefine them" (in Keeble 2006: 16). Such redefinitions take the form of changes to news content and reorientations of the positions from which information is approached. In this way, media that disseminate such forms of resistant information resonate with bell hooks' "oppositional gaze" (hooks 1992: 115), which entails a radical transgression in the face of domination. With reference to Foucault, hooks points to the dynamism between relations of power, and maintains that "even in the worst circumstances of domination, the ability to manipulate one's gaze in the face of structures of domination that would contain it opens up the possibility of agency" (1992: 116). In this sense, the oppositional gaze is a form of direct resistance to neoliberal hegemony, insofar as hooks asserts that the oppositional gaze "stares in the face of domination," while being both "subject and verb – 'looks' and 'looking.'" Accordingly, it is through "asserting control over the images and structures that attempt to marginalize, dominate and exclude [us that] we can transform the image" (in Fleras 2011: 195). The oppositional gaze is thus a conscious form of resistance; a decision to meet the eyes of the 'master,' and in doing so, to gain a degree of ownership of his image and narrative. Arguably, the ability of the subaltern to find this autonomy through the use of alternative citizens' media points to an important democratic element of such technology.

In terms of this, Shiva shows how the democratisation of knowledge is central to the project of human liberation, because

> the contemporary knowledge system excludes the humane by its very structure. Such a process of democratization would involve a redefining of knowledge such that the local and diverse become legitimate as knowledge, and they are viewed as indispensable knowledge because concreteness is the reality, and globalization and universalization are abstractions which have violated the concrete and hence the real. (in Henry 2006: 216)

Alternative media, as counterpublics, insofar as they allow for horizontal communication amongst those groups who have been historically excluded from the bourgeois mainstream, provide radically democratic spaces that can facilitate the communication and formation of diverse opinions and processes of self-education. And it is within such spaces that resistance to the discursive dynamics of the neoliberal mass media is growing, of which alternative accounts of the Cuban *Revolución Agrícola* are an important aspect.

5.3 Cuban voices on the *Revolución Agrícola*

In the previous chapters, the extent to which – over the past century – Cuba has been affected by the homogenising effects of American imperialism and capitalist hegemony, was elaborated upon. Similarly, the recent campaign to blinker neoliberal audiences to the possibility of alternatives to the politico-economic and socio-ecological status quo, has meant that the alternative life system at work in Cuba has not been granted adequate attention in the mass media. However, in the age of increasingly accessible internet and communication technologies, activists on the island have evidently been able to take a more active role in disseminating related news. And this form of discursive resistance has challenged Cuban subalternisation, through the use of democratising instruments such as the internet in general, and platforms like YouTube and SoundCloud, in particular (Kamalipour 2010: 162; Kress & DeGennaro 2011: 486). Arguably, the ability of Cubans to contribute to international discussions via such platforms is an example of how information commons *can* be reappropriated by subordinated groups, in a way that radically democratises information. In response to the dearth of positive treatments of Cuba and the *Revolución Agrícola* within mainstream neoliberal mass media, groups of Cuban activists have effectively formed counterpublics in order to disseminate their counterdiscourses; initiatives which have led to

Cuba gaining increasing credibility among global ecological movements for their innovative practical approach which approximates a new socio-ecological paradigm.[129]

As such, it is not only Cubans who benefit from more open lines of communication amongst subaltern groups. Rather, while Cubans, through such means, provide valuable experiential accounts of the successes and challenges of their own socio-ecological transformations (Rosset & Benjamin 1994: 82; Nichols 2000: 50; Winter 2006: 205), they also help communities all over the world to initiate sustainable food production within city bounds, and motivate them to gain new skills and increasing autonomy through the production of their *own* food (Mark, 2007; Fisher, 2010; Lewis, 2014). In this regard, Cuban cities in particular provide a valuable example not only of the implementation of preventative measures to ensure urban food security, but also of how future oil-stretched communities might respond to analogous crises. In short, Cuba has a very strong message for global communities – one that emphasises the dangers of oil-based agriculture and machines, as well as the problem of growing separation between humans in neoliberal societies, and between humans and nature. And in the latter regard, what Cuba's green revolution shows is that physical and ideological distance from nature, especially in urban spaces, is a threat to the survival of humans within the context of diminishing fossil fuels. Similarly, Naomi Klein warns of how a

> deep sense of interdependence with the natural world…is far less obvious in the densely populated cities where so many of us live and work: where our reliance on nature is well hidden by highways, pipes, electrical lines, and overstocked supermarkets. It is only when something in this elaborately insulated system cracks, or comes under threat, that we catch glimpses of how dependent and vulnerable we really are. (2014: 446)

Cuba provides a valuable example of a country that has already experienced a complete rupture of its 'insulated system,' and should thus be considered a legitimate authority in global

[129] This is at least in part because the discussions that take place on such online platforms are not necessarily politically dogmatic, insofar as Cubans often use tools such as blogs to voice their frustrations with the Cuban State (Kress & DeGennaro 2011: 486). *Havana Times* is one example of this kind of platform, which unifies voices that are critical of the State, and that offer a more cynical view of the country's urban agriculture. One Cuban author who has written about the negative aspects of urban agriculture is Isbel Diaz, who recently published two articles, entitled "Cuba's Urban Gardens: The Other Side of the Coin" and "Cuba's Organic Urban Gardens Now Cater to Private Businesses" (Diaz, 2014), on his blog. But posts such as these are valuable because they point out the weaknesses of Cuba's urban farming model and thereby help create a better understanding of the challenges facing communities seeking to follow the Cuban agricultural model. In this way, they help to ground new initiatives in reality, rather than promoting the idea of a 'green utopia' in Cuba.

discussions of socio-ecological sustainability. However, as thematised in Chapter Four, systematic efforts by the mainstream neoliberal mass media to silence Cuba's unique, local, eco-socialist paradigm, have diminished not only Cuba's ability to be heard by global audiences, but also the capacity for interested groups to access information on the green revolution.

However, despite such difficulties arising from external forces, groups of Cubans involved in grassroots activism are finding ways of disseminating their views of the new Cuban socio-ecological paradigm. And this is no easy feat because, along with external pressures to remain silent, Cubans are also subject to very restrictive internet usage policies, in terms of which private computers and private internet connections are illegal.[130] As a consequence of this, most instances of Cubans gaining a voice on international platforms involve partnerships between Western and Cuban activists. A good example of this is KPFA 94.1, a community radio station based in Berkeley, California, which has been particularly sympathetic towards the crisis in Cuba. With its roots in community and political activism since 1949, KPFA has become a successful site for discussing issues affecting various subaltern groups.[131] In fact, the station is quite representative of Herman and Chomsky's assertion concerning the positive role that community radio can play in the self-education of oppositional groups. With political radio shows such as *Democracy Now!* and *La Raza Chronicles*, as well as the support of a strong community volunteer base, the station constitutes an important counterforce to the mainstream mass media. In particular, the station's focus on diverse content is reflected in the number of

[130] Cubans who wish to access the internet make use of *Correo de Cuba* stations in public buildings, such as the National Hotel, where an hour of connectivity can cost upward of five convertible dollars. Browsing the internet in these stations is also highly monitored, and if a banned word is searched, "an alert system pops up, and closes the application immediately" (Farivar 2011: 158). Conversely, they may utilise illegal connections in private homes, which are often less censored than public connections, but remain expensive to use (Sweig 2009: 221; Geers 2011: 66).

[131] KPFA was launched in 1949 by American poet and pacifist, Lewis Hill, and over the years the station has hosted various well-known alternative thinkers, such as Che Guevara, Noam Chomsky, Bertrand Russell, and Ivan Illich. The station's alternative viewpoints are supported by KPFA's mission statement, which is to "promote cultural diversity and pluralistic community expression; to contribute to a lasting understanding between individuals of all nations…[and] races; to promote freedom of the press and serve as a forum for various viewpoints; [and] to maintain an independent funding base" (KPFA, 2014). KPFA's commitment to community development, diversity of opinion, and independence makes the station a viable branch of citizens' media, discussing alternative issues that often oppose the mainstream media's ideas of newsworthy content.

shows that have featured Cuban voices and issues over the years.[132] In terms of the *Revolución Agrícola*, the station features various archived shows that deal with the green revolution, including promotions of Morgan's *The Power of Community: How Cuba Survived Peak Oil* (2006), and a lengthy interview with Roberto Pérez, a prominent figure in the Cuban Permaculture Movement and a key member of the Antonio Núňez Jiménez Foundation for Nature and Humanity. A major feature of these interactions with Cubans is the space that is afforded them to explain themselves and to speak about what matters to them. For example, in Pérez's interview in *La Raza Chronicles*, forty minutes are devoted to allowing Pérez to discuss the agricultural transformations in Cuba, and the perceived and measured socio-ecological benefits of these changes.[133] The interviewer, Nina Serrano – herself a Columbian-American – adopts a passive role in the interview, during which Pérez is given the active role, and is seldom interrupted. The openness of the interview arguably allows for a more organic discussion to take place, because apart from a few questions posed to him, Pérez does not seem restricted in his speech, and no overt time limits are imposed upon him. This method of interview stands in stark contrast to those used by the mainstream neoliberal mass media, which tend to carry very strict time limitations and to be informed by rigid structures of discourse – partly as a precautionary measure against dissenters, who might otherwise construct convincing arguments opposed to the status quo if given adequate airtime (Straubhaar, Larose & Davenport 2009: 448).[134]

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[132] The variety of shows devoted to Cuban issues ranges from stories on Cuban music and interviews with musicians and poets, to political discussions and explorations of the transformation of Cuba's agricultural paradigm.

[133] This interview appears on SoundCloud under the title "Permaculture in Cuba," and comprises two parts.

[134] A good recent example of a dissenting personality appropriating mainstream media for oppositional causes occurs in an episode of BBC's *Newsnight*, in which Russell Brand, a contemporary political and ecological activist, rhetorically overpowers presenter, Evan Davis, in order to bring attention to various grassroots causes. During the interview, Brand implores Davis to stop interrupting him, in such a way that the presenter is no longer able to steer the conversation along predetermined lines. Brand tells Davis "what a lot of people in your line of work misunderstand is that we don't want pedagogic figures coming in and didactically shouting at us" (Brand, 2014). Instead, Brand promotes organic movements opposed to, and education about, the system responsible for supporting corporations such as the BBC. However, despite the many points Brand elucidates upon in terms of the necessity for change to the current socio-ecological and politico-economic realms, the response to the interview by mainstream media in the subsequent days focused on relatively disparate aspects of Brand's discussions – especially his ideas on controversies surrounding the September 11th attacks in New York. This response is arguably typical of the objectives of mainstream news, namely to limit oppositional ideas from reaching the general public, and to discredit alternative thinkers within the 'public realm.'

A similarly productive interaction takes place in Serrano's interview of Nancy Morejon, an Afro-Cuban poet, during which the poet is able to explicate her imagery and choice of words in selected poems. She reads the poems in Spanish, alongside an English reading by a translator with whom she works. The respect that the radio show offers Morejon by encouraging her to speak about her experiences as an Afro-Cuban woman, expressed through her poetry, in her mother tongue, strongly indicates the oppositional undercurrents that flow through KPFA. More specifically, the format of the show encourages Morejon to engage in the process of *testimonio*, during which the previously suppressed gains power by telling her story in an unadulterated fashion, to an audience willing to listen. Ramalho explains *testimonio* as comprising

> the voice of narrators as of a real, rather than fictional, person and the mark of a desire not to be silenced or defeated, to impose oneself on an institution of power and privilege from the position of the excluded, the marginal, and the subaltern. This is the voice of an organic intellectual, a thinker who emerged from the situation of despair, [and who] creates new meanings, and finds the courage (and a listener) to break with conformity to speak his or her mind. (2007: 1367)

The practice of telling one's story of oppression to a willing audience is a potentially radical experience for both parties, and with Morejon – as well as Pérez – there is much power to be gained through the narration of their own stories, as well as their perceptions of Cuba because the act of *testimonio* facilitates agency within the subaltern (Beverley 2004: xvi; Arkinstall 2014: 40). And it is through the act of narration that those who listen are afforded the opportunity to gain insight into their own conditions, and consequently begin negotiating the complex narratives that affect their own lives. *Testimonio* have tended to be highly effective in alternative media, which are characterised by specialised audiences and community involvement as in the case of KPFA. This is largely due to the fact that the people who tune into these kinds of shows are automatically 'willing listeners,' and therefore complete the "speech act."[135] After all, Spivak's assertion that the "subaltern cannot speak" is not to say that they are unable to speak; rather she points to the "impossibility of them being heard or translated in order to become intelligible in the framework of the hegemonic discourse" (in Rostek & Uffelmann 2010: 313). In this regard, Pattison maintains that the simple act of "listening to the subaltern leads to the possibilities of alternative discourses to that of Western/colonial discourse" (2012: 218). Conversely, *testimonio* have been considered somewhat unreliable, if

[135] Rostek and Uffelmann explain that in order for the "speech act" to gain meaning, it should be understood as comprising both the act of speaking, on the part of the subaltern, and the act of listening, carried out by a willing and interested person (2010: 313).

not redundant, sources of information within mainstream mass media. Firstly, this is because those who are brought onto mainstream news programs to 'testify' to their experiences are selected by various actors within the organisation, who operate with neoliberal agendas in mind. As discussed in Chapter Four, channels such as Fox News tend to call upon 'expert witnesses' who reflect the ideology of the corporation, and thus do not offer opposing ideas to those disseminated by the news team. Secondly, even if subaltern speakers *were* invited onto mainstream programs, mainstream mass media audiences are not necessarily willing listeners, and tend to be threatened by views that challenge the status quo. The consequence of this is that audiences of an elite demographic are often unwilling to listen to the stories of those they deem subordinate (Rostek & Uffelmann 2010: 313; Pattison 2012: 218). In short, without the 'willing listener' to interact with the *testimonio* of the subaltern, the speech act cannot be completed, and it is within this restrictive context that the immense significance of alternative media – such as KPFA – in both amplifying the voice of subverted peoples and providing willing listeners, becomes apparent.

Even more powerful than community radio stations in the above regard is YouTube, because the open nature of the website makes it easy for counterpublics to be established, and to create a sense of community around a cause. In the case of Cuba's socio-ecological transformations, YouTube has provided a platform for a number of 'transgressive' videos to be shown, which form part of an online counterpublic that speaks to those interested in diverse methods of achieving ecological sustainability. And the use of YouTube as a public platform has proved to be an effective means of communicating messages to these 'ecologically concerned' counterpublics, as well as to the mainstream public, in a manner that allows "the actions of Cubans to count in a public way and [to] thus be transformative" (Raun 2012: 179).

One of the most prominent independent documentaries on the *Revolución Agrícola*, appearing on YouTube, is Faith Morgan's *The Power of Community: How Cuba Survived Peak Oil*,[136] a film which depicts the manner in which Cuban cities have integrated urban agriculture into their way of life, in response to food scarcity during the Special Period. In this regard, *The Power of Community* shows the successes of the urban farms not only in terms of people's increased access to fresh produce, but also in terms of the immense social gains of the food system's transformation. In short, the documentary explores the potential of Cuba to serve as a model for oil-scarce communities, and frames the Cuban model as a source of inspiration for those elsewhere who are seeking to implement sustainable food systems within their cities, as

[136] While hardcopies of the documentary are available, the film has received impressive collective viewership of over fifty thousand people on YouTube.

a step towards regenerative urban socio-ecological life systems. Moreover, the documentary entails a significant departure from mainstream framings of Cuba, as it allows Cuban voices to be heard relatively unmediated by Western figures.[137] That is, whereas the mainstream mass media at best provides superficial analyses of the changes that urban farming ushered into the cities, *The Power of Community* allows for a deeper exploration of the values and principles shaping the *Revolución Agrícola*, and thereby constitutes an alternative mode of information, one which affords the viewer real insight into the transformations – from a Cuban perspective – that occurred on social, ecological, and economic levels. Honest representations of grassroots movements of this kind are rare among the mainstream press, because of their covert agenda of obfuscating alternatives to the neoliberal paradigm. In contrast, *The Power of Community* provides a platform for Cubans directly involved in urban farming to discuss their work, and to weave their own narratives.[138] Within the documentary, Cubans thematise two major elements of their *Revolución Agrícola*, which challenge the Western worldview and ideas of 'progress.' The first is the notion of a human partnership with nature, and the second, partnerships between fellow humans, which respectively contrast with the techno-rationalism of neoliberal society, and run counter to the ideology of privatization and hyper-individualism.

The first theme of human partnership with nature is conveyed through various topics of conversation, such as the importance of re-peasantisation, and the re-inclusion of nature in the city. In terms of re-peasantisation, Roberto Pérez shows how, during the Special Period, it became remarkably clear that growing food in a sustainable way should be a priority of all communities, regardless of whether they were within the rural or urban areas. And in order to do so, industrial agriculture had to be minimised, and local low-input solutions were necessitated (Pérez in Morgan, 2006). As a result, farming within the city became a solution, and a chosen career of many professionals, who found that they could earn more money

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[137] On the one hand, it could be argued that Morgan's documentary remains an American production, because it is not filmed or produced by Cubans; the group responsible for its creation is The Community Solution, based in the United States. However, on the other hand, the film's conceptual roots have little effect on the outcome of the documentary. The protagonists throughout the film are Cubans, and each interviewee is afforded the opportunity to contribute significantly to the documentary. In fact, it is possible that the documentary represents a successful partnership between two subordinated groups – The Community Solution *and* Cubans – who both seek to show the immense lessons to be learnt from studying Cuba's reactions to oil and food scarcity.

[138] An interesting observation that can be made from the film is that, given the space to speak about their alternative socio-ecological views, the Cubans are not preoccupied with *politics* per se. That is, the documentary does not disseminate dichotomising rhetoric, or highly pejorative views of Western lifestyles. Instead, the interviewees seem to promote an ethic of co-operation among people and states, and place a strong emphasis on the value of communal solutions, rather than on individualistic responses to crises such as food scarcity.

growing food than in their original lines of work. The fact that Cuban society made this paradigmatic shift – recognizing the important role that the producers of food play for the whole of society – signifies a remarkable flight from neoliberal society's pejorative views of those who choose to work the land. In neoliberal society, the peasantry "is a population struggling for survival, clinging to control over the means of production that are increasingly unable to meet their subsistence needs, and excluded from the system that used to offer hope of development." And as a result of these conditions, they are continually "in search of a sustainable livelihood that will ensure their survival" (Johnson in van der Ploeg 2008: 290). In contrast to this, Pérez explains that when the system shows appreciation for farmers, it dignifies the people who grow food. And when many of the farming methods in both the rural and urban areas make use of resilient, indigenous and traditional knowledge, these practices also gain respect within the community. The idea of re-peasantisation is thus quite prominent within the film, and the way in which this process is valued arguably points to the underlying idea of land stewardship, which often arises in relation to discussions of indigenous knowledge. Many authors position indigenous knowledge *vis á vis* Western knowledge (Maurial 2002: 62; Nakata 2007: 192; Panzironi 2012: 78), but tend to privilege the latter over the former on account of its scientific status. But the depiction of indigenous knowledge as containing regenerative qualities – which occurs in *The Power of Community* – reverses such binary opposition and advances it as important in the process of teaching neoliberal society how to be "ecologically literate or how to read the world in a dialogical relationship with nature" (Maurial 2002: 62). In turn, from the idea of indigenous knowledge as a guide out of socio-ecological disaster, arises the concept of earth stewardship and the realisation that humans are ultimately only a tiny part of the ecosystem, despite their power to destroy it. But with its destruction would come human society's own extinction, and it is in response to such realisations that "many people are remembering their own cultures' stewardship traditions, however deeply buried, and recognizing humanity's role as one of life promotion" (Klein 2014: 445). In particular, such life promotion is emphasised in Morgan's film, especially in connection with the Cuban farmers' methods of cultivating the soil and promoting soil as a *living* being.

The return of farmers to animal husbandry, especially that of oxen, for agricultural purposes also indicates a paradigmatic shift in favour of *life* rather than machines. The use of human and animal labour to produce food, instead of oil-dependent machines that do the work of many, is a choice that contradicts neoliberal logic, which assumes the priority of mechanisation in the production of food and all other industries. But *The Power of Community* shows the creative possibilities that emerge when oil-based machinery is no longer a viable option, and in this way the film transgresses the norms of mainstream neoliberal culture.

Another way in which the *Revolución Agrícola* is framed as promoting life-giving systems is through the detailed explanations of how nature was brought into the city, after Cubans realised that the separation of human society in general, and urban society in particular, from nature is an unsustainable model, because it undermines resilience and food security. In this regard, Morgan shows how through the transformation of their urban landscapes in order to grow food and medicinal plants, Cubans began a successful project of reintegrating nature into the city. But while some would consider this change a form of 'regression' rather than 'progress,' Klein shows how the concept of working with nature is in fact much older than the current 'deodorizing' systems at work in cities, when she explains that the idea

> that we could separate ourselves from nature, that we did not need to be in perpetual partnership with the earth around us, is, after all, a relatively new concept, even in the West. Indeed, it was only once humans came up with the lethal concept of the earth as an inert machine and man its engineer, that some began to forget the duty to protect and promote the natural cycles of regeneration on which we all depend. (Klein 2014: 445)

The film's emphasis on the importance of reinvigorating such healthy relations between humans and nature, especially within cities, in order for resilient systems of food production to be created, is in blatant opposition to the neoliberal mass media's promotion of corporate agriculture as the most viable method of food production (Dorr 2008: 215; Dyer, 2009). Yet, by Cubans utilising online counterpublics, which ultimately spill over into the mainstream via platforms such as YouTube, it has become possible for these groups to show how regenerative food systems can be extremely productive, as part of a new sustainable socio-ecological paradigm. *The Power of Community* effectively disseminates this message of "hegemonic ecology" (Foster, Clark & York 2011: 398), which emerges "through the organization on socialist principles of an ecological and social counter-hegemony, deriving its impetus from various social actors" (2011: 398). Although not explicitly referred to in the documentary, the eco-socialist organisation of Cuban cities that is shown points to the start of a new cultural revolution, characterised by a "new ecological materialism arising in revolt against the global environmental crisis" and *alongside* the "old class-based materialism of socialism." These transformations in Cuban cities arguably serve as an encouragement to communities around the world that are seeking egalitarian and ecologically sustainable solutions to their current realities, and correlatively inspire related social movements to place their faith in the working class to bring about a revolution in socio-ecological and politico-economic values. In terms of this, Foster et al. indicate that in the contemporary context, this revolution will not be led entirely by the "industrial proletariat" per se, but rather by the "wider environmental proletariat,

giving rise to a much broader, and at the same time more unified, material-ecological revolt" (2011: 398). In this regard, Morgan's *The Power of Community* plays an important role in showing discontented audiences around the globe what is indeed possible through alternative means of social organisation, in a way that represents an 'oppositional gaze' in the face of neoliberal elite, who profit from the separation of humans and nature, and who seek the maintenance of ecologically and socially unjust life systems.

The second theme that runs strongly throughout the documentary is partnership between people, both locally and transnationally. The film emphasises the significance of communal work toward the common goal of producing food, without which Cuba's urban farming system would not have materialized. On a basic level, it took teamwork to clear the disused land within the urban centres in order to plant food, and good communication between members of the community in order to establish the autonomous urban farms. One permaculturalist points to this as one of the most important aspects of urban agriculture, when he asserts that "people co-operating with, and caring about, each other are the main factors that we need to encourage" (Allison in Morgan, 2006). This principle of *gemeinschaft* contrasts markedly with the individualistic principles of late capitalism or neoliberalism, which serve to reproduce consumerism and correlatively diminish activism. And in this regard, Maniates suggests that the typical neoliberal response to socio-ecological crisis amounts to the "individualization of responsibility," and the negation of "room to ponder institutions, the nature and exercise of political power, or ways of collectively changing the distribution of power and influence in society." This, Maniates maintains, leads to a narrowing of the environmental imagination of communities, and the underestimation of people's abilities to "react effectively to environmental threats to human well-being" (2001: 33-34). In many ways, the mainstream mass media are entirely complicit in the promotion of such narrowing of environmental imaginations, insofar as they propagate activities such as 'green consumption' and recycling (Haq & Paul 2013: 83). But while these activities may encourage individuals to reconsider their patterns of consumption, they do not necessarily evoke critical thinking surrounding the act of consumption itself. Additionally, because mainstream mass media derive much of their funding from advertising, and consequently consumerism, they tend to "defer to mainstream values and the status quo rather than an objective airing of conflicts surrounding social problems, including the environment" (Corbett 2006: 244). In contrast, *The Power of Community* points to the immense capacity, and indeed necessity, for people to unite when faced with severe ecological threats – such as food shortages – in a way that strengthens the case for Morgan's film as representative of an alternative form of media. That is, through thematisation of strengthening human relations, the documentary depicts the dynamic possibilities that arise when people unite

to claim a say in their own socio-ecological fates, on local, national, and international levels. In particular, the film conveys how, through communal efforts to create resilient food systems, people became more autonomous, insofar as they were no longer dependent upon industrial food production. And it is also emphasised how, in the process of growing their own food, they reclaimed skills that may otherwise have been lost or forgotten among urban populations.

The political effects of this also receive focus in the documentary; in this regard, Pérez explains how the new food system meant a decentralization of power (Allen, You, Meijer & Atkinson 2002: 67; Vanautgaerden, Amerasinghe & Saliez 2004: 219; Adrianto 2012: 90). That is, while before the Special Period, intensive Soviet-style agriculture required centralised food production, with the advent of food scarcity people became more autonomous, and were obliged to establish local 'power hubs' where the production of food could be carried out accessibly and democratically. The new decentralized model of food production also precipitated new forms of co-operation and partnership among people, indicative of the viability of "infinite small solutions" (Pérez in Morgan, 2006), rather than one homogenous industrial answer to socio-ecological threats. In particular, Morgan's film highlights the creation of local economies of food, which include sharing and swapping of produce as legitimate transactions. And by recognizing the value of these local, alternative, economies, *The Power of Community* diverges markedly from mainstream treatments of Cuba's food system which have been largely pejorative and dismissive, insofar as it brings these diverse options to the attention of global publics.

In underscoring the significance of community in the success of the new food paradigm, *The Power of Community* also shows how the socio-ecological transformations of Cuban cities affected the concept and construction of public space. That is, the new ways in which cities had to be organised in order to accommodate low levels of petroleum, partnered with the necessity of human co-operation through the growing of food gardens, meant that the idea of 'public space' changed. In short, egalitarian social order resulted within communities because "everybody [had to] use the same space" (Coyula in Morgan, 2006). Coyula, a member of the Group for the Integral Development of the City, describes how the cities began to find strength in the new publics, and altered their structures accordingly, until "the design provide[d] a common space for everybody." Coyula also adds that this new organisation "is a way to keep your community alive." This is arguably evinced by the way in which public space became politicised, through people being drawn into the public with the common goal of finding a resilient solution to the food crisis. Clouse points to the radical and political character of Cuba's urban farming initiatives, by mentioning how "even in a country with a socialist land policy, farming can serve as a visible and physical means of claiming space" (2014: 26), in a way that

comprises an effective means for citizens to shape the city according to their ethics and needs. The perceived importance of public space since this time has also led to the diminishment of efforts to enclose urban space. That is, because the food crisis of the Special Period was clearly linked to the historically derived policy of enclosure and de-skilling of urban dwellers, the solution to food scarcity necessitated a shift in mindset that challenged the restrictive status quo, by instead 'opening up' relations between urban space and local economies, all of which was vital to the success of the urban farming initiative. This idea permeates Morgan's documentary, and thereby in many respects renders the film an oppositional discursive product. This is because, in contrast, neoliberal mass media continue, overwhelmingly, to promote the privatization and progressive enclosure of both rural and urban land, under the auspices of 'development' rhetoric; principles which are cornerstones of neoliberal ideology (Almeida 2006: 57; Mawuko-Yevugah 2014: 114), and which promote the growth of elite power.

As an alternative source of information, *The Power of Community* is thus arguably quite incisive. In an unaggressive way, the documentary showcases the possibilities of alternative socio-ecological systems and, through its emphasis on human-nature and human-human partnership, it presents a radically different perspective to that of mainstream neoliberal mass media. The film also presents a counterdiscourse, insofar as it avails certain Cubans of the opportunity to respond to the continually negative mainstream mass media depictions of their way of life. One farmer, in particular, shows insight into such misrepresentation of Cuban activities and perspectives, when he explains that "what the people say about Cuba in the States is not what we are doing here. Many people there say 'how can they survive if they don't have anything'?" before he responds by saying, "come here and you can see how we can survive, and this way, we can begin to understand each other and how to think" again (in Morgan, 2006). This kind of co-operative and peaceful attitude resonates strongly with Klein's assertion that, increasingly, "linear, one-way relationships of pure extraction are being replaced with systems that are circular and reciprocal" (2014: 446). And this principle can be applied both to humans' interactions with nature, as well as to their interactions with each other. That is, while growing aggression and tension in geopolitics may indicate an opposite trend, people at grassroots level who are having to deal with increasing scarcity are finding creative communal solutions to their environmental problems. And *The Power of Community* allows the subaltern Cuban voice to make itself heard on this specific issue, both in specialised counterpublics as well as in the mainstream.

5.4 Conclusion

The successes of Cuba's creative responses to economic and energy scarcity are increasingly being recognised globally among people who consider the sustainability of humans – both in terms of our impact upon earth systems, and the feasibility of our own survival – one of the most pertinent issues of our time.[139] But while the impossibility of the coexistence of neoliberal systems and natural systems is being thematised by an increasing number of thinkers (Pepper 1993; Pepper 2010; Princen 2010; Obeng-Odoom 2014: 31; Klein 2014), neoliberal states continue to extend their extractive operations, enclosing people and nature within a system that if left unchanged, will hold catastrophic consequences for future generations (Kovel 2007: 21). With the co-operation of the mass media, the transnational corporations that are complicit in the privatization of our life systems are given multiple platforms to expound propaganda, and to shape the information that the public receives, leaving little space for contrary critical opinions. Cuba, a seat of opposition to capitalist domination for the last sixty-five years, has consequently been misrepresented when it has not been hidden from view and/or silenced within these mainstream spaces. But for many, Cuba has come to serve as a symbol of opposition to global neoliberal hegemony, and a beacon of *différance.* Rebellion in Cuba is not a new theme, with revolts of indigenous people dating back some five centuries, and it was Cuba's recent ability to change the trajectory of its development – from being based upon the principle of infinite 'growth,' to re-valuing indigenous knowledge and those who work the land – that has recently made the island a significant symbol of revolt. As Brock argues, the processes of change that Cubans have undergone in the past century have evinced their desire to reclaim the *future* of Cuba, and in doing so, Cuba has become valuable to communities around the world who are interested in sustainable alternative life systems (Brock, 2014). In this regard, Brock suggests that "the first step to reclaiming the future is finding the courage to look the present in the face," while the second is "envisioning the future that we want, and Cuba [is] a great place to do that," because "they've had a lot of practice in the last several generations" (Brock, 2014). But for the same reasons, the country has arguably been marginalised in the mainstream neoliberal mass media, both for its utterly *different* socio-

[139] Cuba was recently recognised as playing an important role in the movement for socio-ecological sustainability by being made the host country of the International Permaculture Convergence, in November 2013. This decision was testament to how Cuba is perceived to hold a wealth of knowledge for ecological activists. Through the use of video advertisements and interviews on community radio channels, the Convergence was able to draw approximately five hundred permaculturalists to Cuba, for cultural and knowledge exchange.

ecological and politico-economic views, and for the way in which the country is a reminder of the fallibility and limitations of neoliberalism. However, for many of those who venture into the realms of alternative media that focus on community issues and socio-ecological questions, the Cuban paradigm clearly presents an interesting model for the construction of autonomous communities that function outside of neoliberal structures. More specifically, the eco-socialist features of local Cuban economies remain of interest to such groups, inasmuch as the eco-socialist principles at work locally in Cuba emphasise the importance of a strong partnership between humans, and between humans and nature – particularly in the city – along with the necessity for new conceptualisations of wealth and equality.

The recognition of the importance of working together, rather than individually, is effectively the antithesis of neoliberal society, which instead places the rights and importance of individual ventures above those of the community at large. In *The Power of Community*, one farmer's sense of *gemeinschaft* on a local and global level is underscored when he asserts that "the world is changing, and we must change the way we [see] the world," and "one of the things we need is more friendship, more love, because we have only one world…and it's for all of us" (Anonymous in Morgan, 2006). Although phrased in simple terms, the farmer's thoughts resonate with those of Klein, who also points to the increasing importance of movements for *active* communities. In particular, Klein indicates the potential of alternative media to instigate the formation of such oppositional communities, by explaining how

> the new structures built in the rubble of neoliberalism – everything from social media to worker co-ops to farmer's markets to neighbourhood sharing banks – have helped us to find community despite the fragmentation of postmodern life. Indeed, thanks in particular to social media, a great many of us are continually engaged in a cacophonous global conversation that…is unprecedented in its reach and power. (2014: 466)

The power of oppositional media and counterpublics to encourage people to become more aware of their own socio-ecological circumstances, as well as those of others, should not be underestimated. In terms of this, Castells points to the crucial role played by social media during the Arab Spring to organise dissent, and to connect people of shared experiences. And he explains how the uprisings "began on the Internet social networks, as these are spaces of autonomy, largely beyond the control of governments and corporations that [have] monopolized the channels of communications as the foundation of their power, throughout history." Accordingly, these networks gave dissenters hope and a sense of community, inasmuch as "their togetherness helped them to overcome fear;" the "paralyzing emotion upon which the powers that be rely in order to prosper and reproduce, by intimidation or

discouragement, and when necessary by sheer violence" (Castells 2013: 1-2). When used effectively, these new forms of media can be revolutionary platforms for democratic dissemination of information and dialogue, and arguably Morgan's *The Power of Community* is a case in point.[140]

However, despite the many successes of Cuba's socio-ecological transformations – from its active eco-socialist economies to the new-found autonomy of its people – it would be premature to suggest that the country's model is one that can be implemented globally without discretion. The *Revolución Agrícola* offers many lessons in sustainability, community resilience, and community organisation, all of which warrant attention. But this is not to say that the Cuban paradigm does not have its own challenges and flaws. By excluding Cuban perspectives, the mainstream neoliberal mass media have been able to weave an elaborate narrative concerning the island, which has served to make Cuba an international pariah, and a symbol of backwardness. These efforts represent the neoliberal endeavour to destroy "the reality which [Cuba] attempts to represent" (Shiva in Henry 2006: 200), namely a socio-ecologically sound alternative to neoliberal society. And while certain groups of Cubans have made use of alternative media – such as YouTube and community radio stations – to allow international audiences to glimpse the positive transformations that have occurred in the country, the efficacy of these initiatives to conscientise people about the violence of neoliberal systems, hangs in the balance as a result of external and internal factors.

To start with, aside from efforts by the mass media to silence Cuba in mainstream news, the external forces of capitalist hegemony have subverted Cuba's radical significance through the commodification of the country's revolutionary symbols. Jiménez explains the commodification of culture as occurring when "cultural practices are transformed into something whose value is measured by sales in the marketplace" (2008: 153). In this regard, capitalism's appropriation of essential aspects of Cuban identity – from its music and dance, to the image of Che Guevara – has meant that often the truly radical elements of Cuban culture have been displaced by commercialized symbols and themes. As Barnes explains, the West has "thoroughly assimilated the visual iconography of communism into [its] popular culture" in a way that involves "the ultimate irony: the capitalist West has commodified communism" (2014:

[140] For example, organisations such as the Occupy Movement and Anonymous make wide use of social and online media to create alternative platforms of discussion, and to develop counterdiscourses. Similarly, Occupy makes use of Facebook and Twitter as organisational and informational platforms, which enable people from across the globe to participate in debates, and to know details about upcoming demonstrations. Correlatively, while also using Facebook and Twitter as tools, Anonymous makes use of a YouTube channel to disseminate the messages of the group, and to inform interested viewers about demonstrations and their ethical motivations.

176). Significantly, Barnes recognises the West's appropriation of the Che Guevara's image, and asserts that it has now become a "politically-neutralised pop-cultural icon," which no longer carries the weight of revolutionary left-wing politics, but has been subsumed into "capitalist material production" (2014: 176). And the consequence of this is that the radical alterity of Cuba, deriving from its *différance* has been displaced; that is, through such neutralising of these Cuban symbols, the idea of the country as a site of resistance has been diluted. Moreover, through this process, aspects of the Cuban culture born out of *gemeinschaft* are individualised, signaling the continuation of Cuba's neoliberal enclosure.

Following this, an internal limitation of Cubans' efforts to conscientise people around the world to the problems of neoliberalism, is their limited political freedom within their own country. The Cuban government remains highly bureaucratic and 'top-down' in terms of its domestic approach (Kath 2011: 169; Henken 2013: 128; Farazmand 2014: 370), which ultimately diminishes the power of its people to be heard, or to be highly effective within their society. Admittedly, people have gained more power through community organisation of alternative food systems, as already discussed, but the unavoidable presence of the State in the affairs of the people means that the autonomy of those groups remains relatively limited. In this regard, the effect of such bureaucracy becomes evident in the noticeable lack of *purely* Cuban counterpublics, or alternative media on online platforms, such as YouTube. That is, the Cuban State's strict regulations on private access to the internet, and the difficulties involved in securing the equipment necessary to film stories, also restrict people's capacity to show Cuban narratives to the world in an unmediated way. Consequently, while Cuban voices are being heard to a large extent in films such as *The Power of Community* – and for that matter, *Organoponico!*[141] – the creators and initiators of these productions are for the most part not Cuban. And despite Cubans partnering with well-intentioned northern activists, as well as being given much space to discuss their concerns and opinions, in many ways the documentaries remain a 'foreign feat.' The implication of this is that the more subtle aspects of the films, such as the montages, narration, or editing of content, are undertaken at the discretion of foreign participants. With these editorial responsibilities, no matter how pure their motivations may be, the possibility remains of meaning being lost, or concepts being misinterpreted and/or misrepresented. This is because "ironically, even well-intentioned researchers can reinforce

[141] Another popular documentary that appears on platforms such as YouTube and Vimeo is *Organoponico! An Agricultural Revolution* (Foster, 2009). While much shorter than Morgan's film, *Organoponico!* touches on many of the same issues and ideas as *The Power of Community*. Within the documentary, farmers are similarly given a platform to discuss their work and the perceived benefits of the new agricultural paradigm, without noticeable mediation. *Organoponico!* has also been widely watched, as indicated by over fifty thousand views on YouTube.

neo-colonial patterns of domination, exploitation, and social erasure for the very groups they seek to free of those conditions" (Sylvester 2013: 191). It is as a result of this possibility, and in the interests of amplifying Cuban voices, that it is imperative for Cubans to find ways of establishing themselves within the global community – without relying upon foreign assistance in this regard.

Next, as far as the openness and honesty of Cubans in international media is concerned, the internal threat of reprisal from the Cuban State cannot be ignored, and the correlative possibility of self-censorship (Howe 2004: 92; Brenner 2008: 340; Astley 2012: 26), in addition to state censorship, remains a concern. This is, of course, not to say that all information and opinions emanating from Cuba should be looked upon with suspicion; rather, it is to caution that statistics on the success of the new agricultural paradigm should certainly be viewed within the context of Cuba's growing tourism industry – a significant percentage of which is ecotourism (Miller & Henthorne 1997: 13; Spencer 2012: 17) – along with the Cuban State's continuing project of legitimizing the sovereignty of the country for global audiences.

Finally, after conducting research into the various ways in which Cubans are sharing information about the *Revolución Agrícola* on alternative platforms, it becomes apparent that certain personalities have become the 'face' of Cuban permaculture. In particular, Roberto Pérez is a dominant figure in many videos and interviews on the Cuban model. Considering Pérez's status and level of expertise, his appearance in international dialogues, and his interactions with global audiences, are warranted. However, the reification and overuse of one expert can also be problematic if it constitutes a hindrance to diversity of thought and opinion or leads to narrowing of ideas. While Pérez is very articulate and informative, it would also be important for others who are not formally part of the 'green tourism' clique, to be allowed to discuss their experiences of the green revolution. The preferencing of some 'experts' over others resonates with Bartow's explanation that often those voices who enter into discourse consist of the "regional elite-subaltern" – the "ideal subaltern" – who is chosen by the researcher "for reasons of identification and, in the end, legitimation" (2005: 121). In this sense, figures such as Pérez, who appear in many short films and extensive interviews, while very useful sources of information on the events of the *Revolución Agrícola*, remain less effective in representing the Cuban subaltern – the more 'ordinary' people who participate in, and who are affected by, the green revolution each day. That is, the Cubans at grassroots level who continue to negotiate the challenges of the transformed eco-socialist economies, and the legacy of bureaucratic socialist policies, with which they have to regularly contend.

Yet, despite these challenges, the Cuban eco-socialist revolution arguably remains an immensely positive model, as this study has shown. And the values of the *Revolución Agrícola*

are becoming increasingly pertinent in a world that faces major environmental problems within the next few decades – such as 'peak oil,' 'peak water,' and widespread soil degradation (Aleklett & Lardelli 2012; Bell 2012; Engel-Di Mauro 2014). Coupled with rising temperatures and erratic climates, these gargantuan issues require resilient and regenerative food systems to be put in place, in order to offset some of the food scarcity that will certainly occur, as a result of our continuing faith in neoliberal methods to feed the world. Dreschel and Kunze maintain that "an important characteristic of urban and peri-urban agriculture systems is their diversity within relatively confined geographical limits" (Dreschel & Kunze 2001: 177), and it is this flexibility which should be focused on, rather than more attempts to homogenize food systems. The success of Havana in this regard indicates the immense potential for humans to adapt and to be innovative when faced with crisis. For a young movement, the Cuban *Revolución Agrícola* has so far been fruitful, and the process of ironing out the kinks, as it were, is continuous. However, the latter notwithstanding, the most important aspect of the green revolution may be that the movement came about from the proactive concern of local communities, who constructed their own new creative paradigms to alleviate the imminent threat of food shortages, and did so without much help from external donors. Arguably, this proactive mindset could come to be Cuba's greatest export in the years to come. Imagine the possibilities that could emerge with some foresight regarding local food systems, when people of the great Northern cities begin to think and act along principles of resilience and regeneration. But for the moment, it is encouraging that interested people are studying the transformations that took place in Cuban agriculture over the past two decades, and are attempting to implement and adapt relevant aspects of the Cuban model within their own communities. In this sense, Cuba is a valuable resource for ecological activists, but in order for activists to have freer access to information on Cuba's socio-ecological paradigm, the country must develop ways of disseminating its messages more effectively, so that a more diverse pool of knowledge can be developed. Moreover, a greater variety of experts appearing in global discussions would be beneficial to the country's image as a world leader in sustainable community building.

But these challenges that face Cuba are not specific to the island. Indeed, such challenges are characteristic of the shared global movement for the transformation of life systems into those that value life-giving processes instead of the economic bottom line. In many ways, Cuba's new food paradigm and local eco-socialist economies are part of a much wider and more diverse change in consciousness that, through channels of local and global organisation, is spreading. Klein describes this shift in perception as a move away from neoliberal extraction to the creation of a world that protects the "fertility cycle" (2014: 446). And this movement is characterised by collective subaltern initiatives that are vehemently

opposing the encroaching threat of transnational corporations in the structures of their governments, and in their everyday lives. Projects such as Navdanya,[142] La Via Campesina,[143] and Keep Growing Detroit (KGD),[144] are advocating for food sovereignty and more severe restrictions to be applied to neoliberal corporations, which ultimately seek to reproduce the conditions of wage labour, gross social inequality, and ecological disintegration. This global movement for socio-ecological justice correlatively seeks to re-establish value in life-giving processes, such as small-scale agriculture, and in the process, the re-skilling of people who through such empowerment may reclaim a degree of autonomy from the extractive status quo. Klein explains the empowering goal behind this paradigm shift, when she writes that

> living nonextractively does not mean that extraction does not happen: all living things must take from nature to survive. But it does mean the end of the extractivist mindset – of taking without caretaking, of treating land and people as resources to deplete rather than as complex entities with rights to a dignified existence based on renewal and regeneration. (2014: 447)

The neoliberal system, and its mass media mechanisms of propaganda, would have us believe that a world predicated on respect for life and regeneration is idealistic and unrealistic. But this way of trying to delegitimise the movement for socio-ecological justice is losing its momentum *vis á vis* the growing proof – rendered globally accessible through forms of alternative media –

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[142] Navdanya is a "women centred movement for the protection of biological and cultural diversity" (Navdanya, 2014), which is located in India. Vandana Shiva began the program as a research project for the Research Foundation for Science, Technology and Ecology, in an effort to provide support for environmental activism in India. The name 'Navdanya' means 'nine crops,' a reference to India's nine staple crops that are central to the country's food security. Navdanya seeks to promote "nonviolent farming," small-scale farmers, and the conservation of important indigenous Indian crops and plants (Navdanya, 2014).

[143] La Via Campesina is an international peasants' movement that promotes and protects small-scale sustainable agriculture in the face of the corporate food system. It comprises approximately 164 organisations across five continents, and describes itself as an "autonomous, pluralist and multicultural movement, independent from any political, economic, or other type of affiliation" (La Via Campesina, 2014). The movement focuses on decentralisation of power, food sovereignty, and globalising the united voice of peasants (La Via Campesina, 2014).

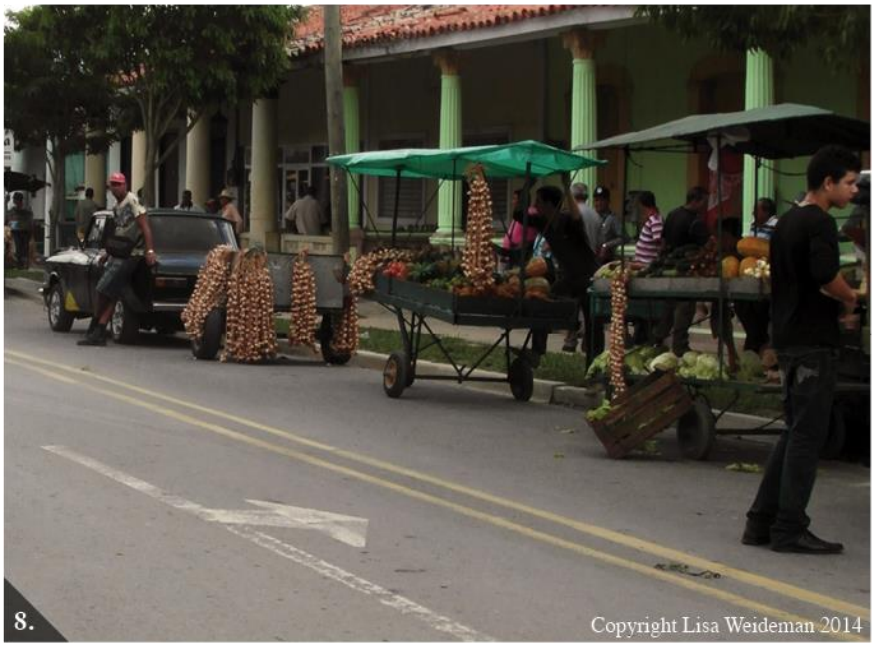
[144] KGD is a local organisation, which aims to strengthen the possibility of food sovereignty in the city of Detroit. The movement hopes to produce enough fruit and vegetables within the city so that the majority of the food consumed by the people of Detroit is produced in the city. KGD facilitates programmes that help "beginner gardeners [to become] engaged community leaders and food entrepreneurs," and in this way addresses "the immediate needs of the community while promoting sustainable change in [their] food system" (KGD, 2014). The organisation has seen much success through co-operation with different initiatives, to the extent that 20 000 residents of Detroit are now growing their own food, or food for the greater community (KGD, 2014).

that regenerative systems are possible, and indeed practical – as evinced by communities such as those in Cuba.

Addendum

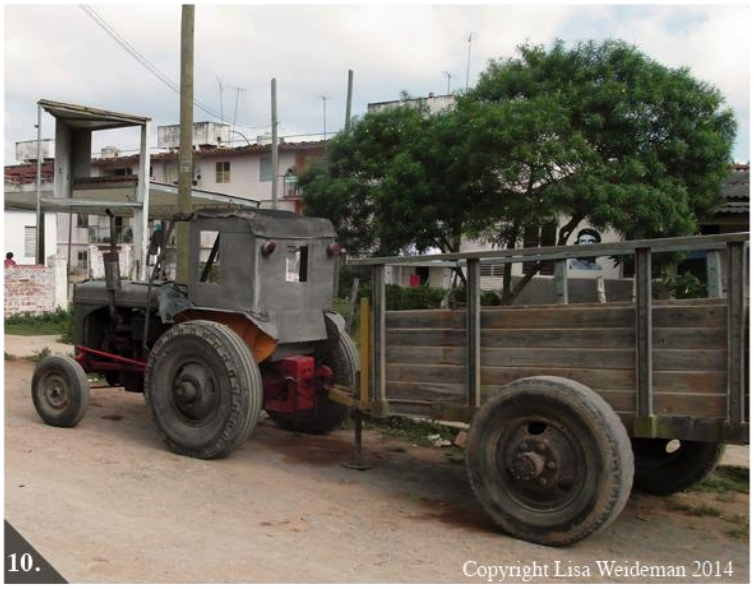
Various organoponicos situated near
the Plaza De La Revolución, Havana.

Organoponico in the agricultural town of Viñales, Pinar del Río.

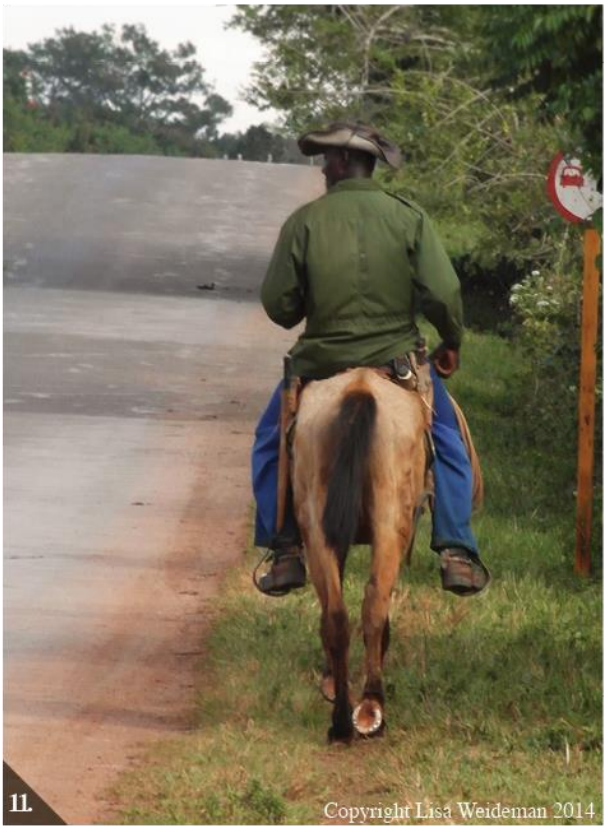


Farmers' market in Viñales on the weekend. The main street is closed to traffic, allowing farmers space to sell their produce in the road.

A mound of organic compost in an urban farm, in Havana.

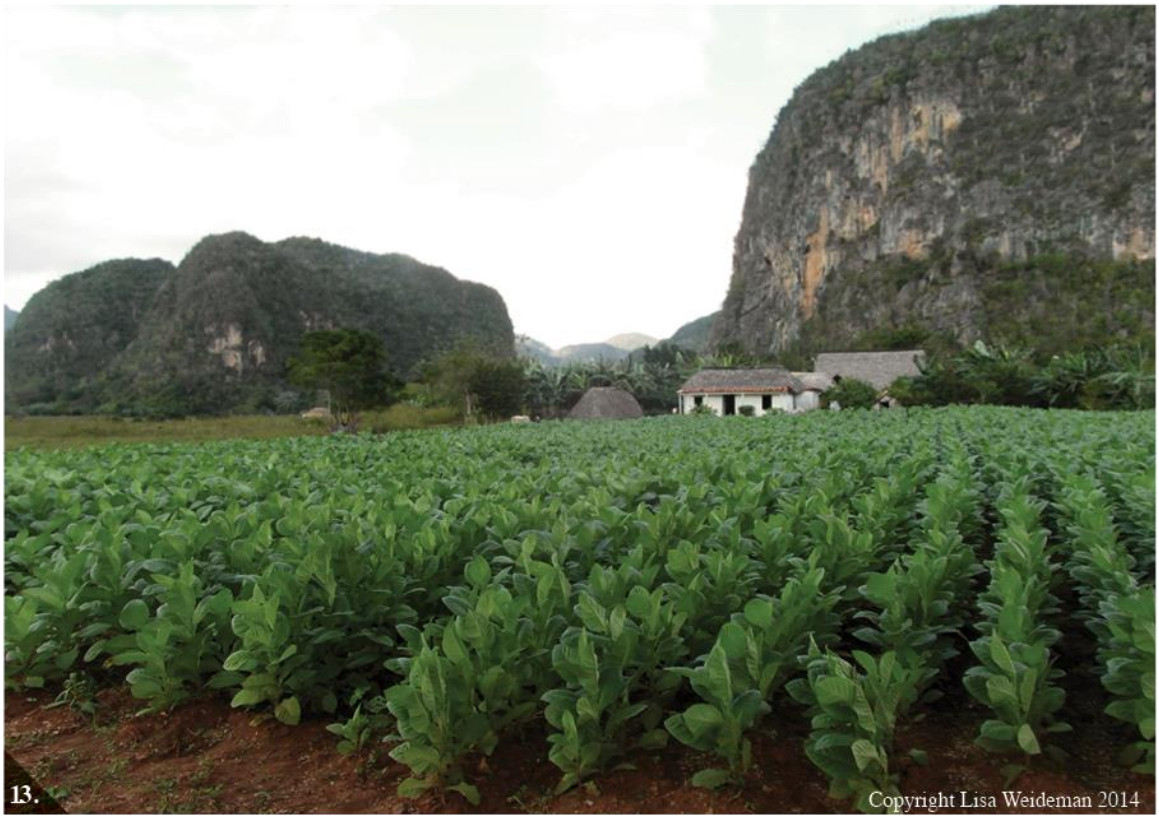


Old tractor used in Viñales by town residents and farmers, alike.

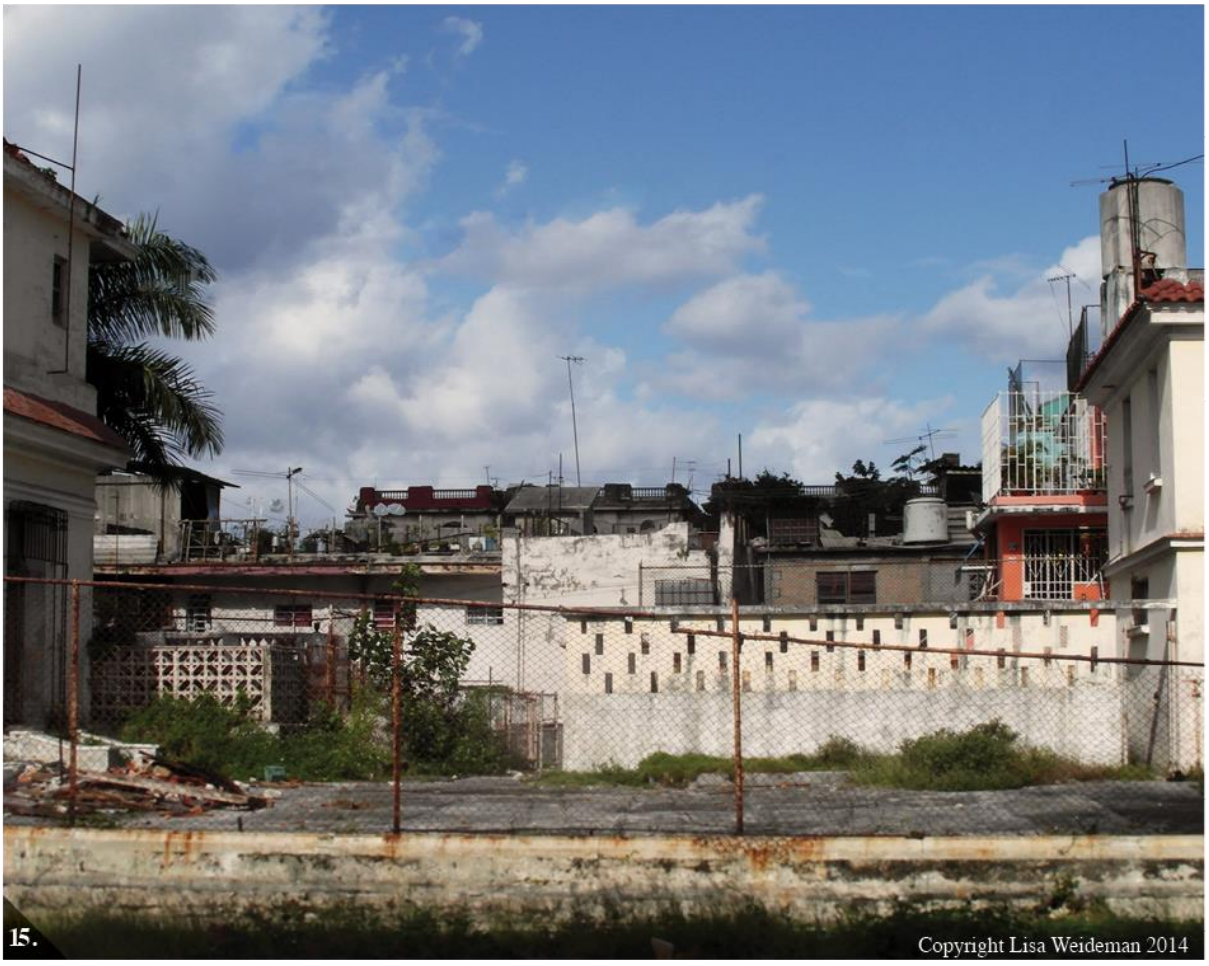


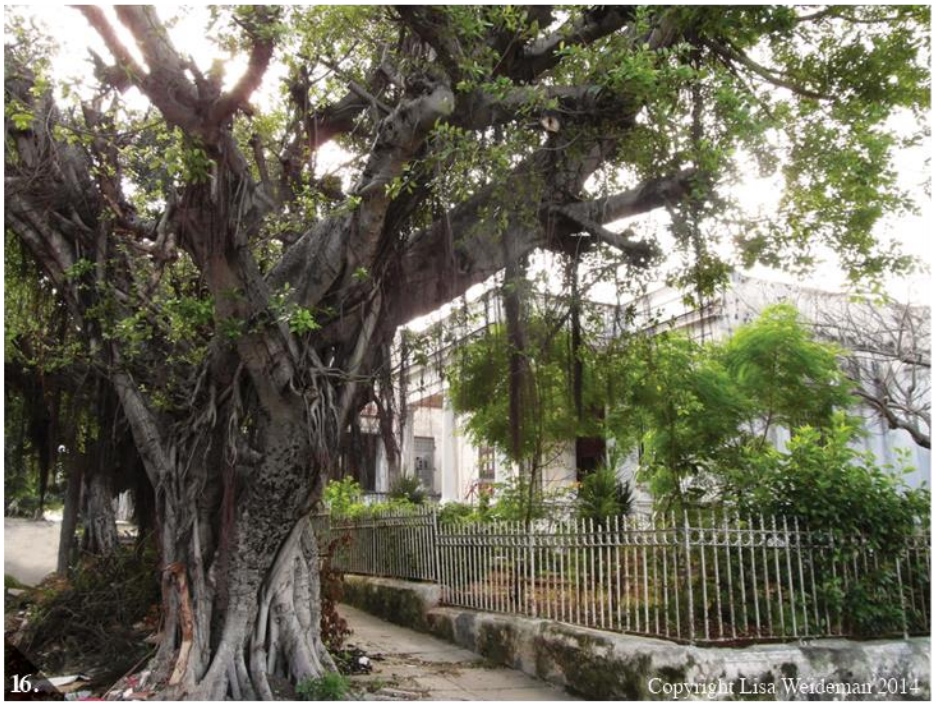
A farmer rides his horse into town, rather than driving a car.

Tobacco farms in Viñales whose soil has been tilled using oxen, in place of conventional methods.



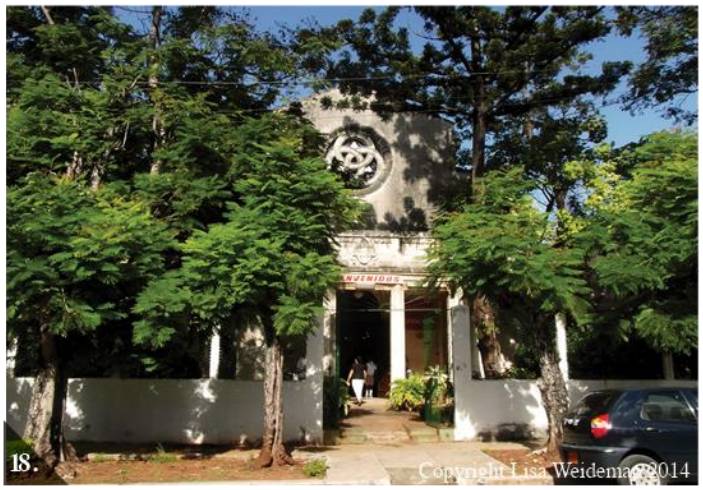
Residents of Havana plant food, medicinal, and decorative plants in every available space, from balconies and patios to the roofs of garages and homes.





Banyan trees line the sidewalks of streets in the Vedado suburb of Havana.

Banana trees are a common sight in private gardens all over Havana.



A church peeks out from behind the lush greenery of Vedado.

Nature is allowed to grow relatively freely within the urban space of Havana. Disused buildings and abandoned building sites are given a unique character through the pervasive presence of greenery, which climbs up their exteriors.

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