



Decolonising Food Security in the UN SDGs: Challenging the Hegemonic Discourse

Ayman Triki

¹London School of Economics and Political Science, a.triki@lse.ac.uk

Abstract

This article aims to decolonise, meaning to critique the ways in which the United Nations (UN) Sustainable Development Goals' (SDGs) Food Security discourse is inculcated with Eurocentric assumptions, arguing that this has the potential to advance the SDGs' Goal 2: Zero Hunger. Employing the postcolonial methodology Provincialising Europe (PE) exposes how the SDGs' Food Security discourse is premised upon a problematic misrepresentation of the Global South and a marginalisation of alternative forms of knowledge. Acknowledging this fact allows us to become sensitised to alternative, and potentially more effective approaches, namely Food Sovereignty, which attempts to decolonise Food Security by acting as a corrective to the Eurocentrism imbued within the SDGs' Food Security discourse. The article concludes that a crucial aspect for how decolonising the SDGs' Food Security discourse strengthens efforts to address global hunger, is that it engenders the prospect of a post-historicist, egalitarian perspective for the future. PE's acknowledgement of the indispensability of European thought and the dangers of Food Sovereignty's essentialism and romanticisation of the traditional, can facilitate and act as a catalyst for a non-hegemonic space. This proposes a future in which the weaknesses of both the Food Security and Food Sovereignty discourses are mediated through each other's strengths.

Keywords: Postcolonial Studies; Development Studies; Food Security; Food Sovereignty; Decolonisation; Provincialising Europe

Introduction:

This article investigates whether decolonising the Food Security discourse in the UN SDGs enhances efforts to achieve the SDGs' Goal 2 Zero Hunger. Despite both disciplines retaining the fervent commitment to improve the situation of the Global South, Development Studies (DS) has largely ignored Postcolonial Studies (PS) with claims that PS "does not tend to concern itself with whether the subaltern eats" (Schoneberg, 2019:97; Sylvester, 1999:703). This implies that PS' defence of the subaltern is abstract and esoteric, unable to construct any meaningful alternative to improve the lives of those it supposedly defends (Sylvester, 1999:703). Employing Dipesh Chakrabarty's postcolonial methodology Provincialising Europe (PE), I dispute this notion. I contend that an attempt to construct an engagement between DS and PS, by decolonising the SDGs' Food Security discourse, which means critiquing the way in which Eurocentric concepts and ideas inform it, does have the capacity to advance attempts to surmount global hunger (Chakrabarty, 2000; Barkawi, 2016:199).

To explore this theme and answer this article's principal research question: "Does decolonising Food Security in the UN SDGs advance efforts to achieve Zero Hunger?", this article proceeds through four sections. The first introduces the concept of PE, outlining how PE can be contextualised and placed within the existing literature that criticises DS and its concept of Food Security. The second argues that by critiquing the ways in which Eurocentric assumptions inform the SDG's Food Security discourse, our attempts to achieve Zero Hunger can be advanced, allowing us to realise the need for greater conceptual engagement with Indigenous Knowledge (IK) approaches, as the Food Security discourse is found to be premised upon a problematic misrepresentation of the Global South, hindering its full potential to eradicate global hunger by marginalising IK. Since PE employs a quasi-Foucauldian approach, remaining in the realm of discourse to investigate the knowledge-power nexus within texts, I will substantiate my contention through a discourse analysis of the Food Security discourse in SDGs documents (Vasilaki, 2012:12). Having critiqued the Eurocentric biases within the SDGs' Food Security discourse, the third section will argue that we can now decentre Food Security and become sensitised to alternative and potentially more effective approaches to eradicating global hunger. I propose the concept of Food Sovereignty as one such approach, arguing through a discourse analysis of La Via Campesina (LVC) documents, that Food Sovereignty acts a process of decolonising the SDGs' Food Security discourse, hence enhancing our attempts to eradicate global hunger by acting as a necessary corrective to Food Security's Eurocentrism. In the fourth and final section, after exploring some criticisms of how an attempt to decolonise the SDG's Food Security discourse may risk perpetuating a binary between Food Security and Food Sovereignty, potentially stifling debates to eradicate

hunger by instigating a deadlock, I reiterate that decolonising the SDGs' Food Security discourse improves our chances of achieving Zero Hunger. This is because PE disbands this binary by acting as a catalyst for a post-historicist future, entailing a non-hegemonic space in which both concepts can learn from each other, and the weaknesses of Food Security and Food Sovereignty can be compensated through each other's strengths (Beling et al. 2018:304). I do this by showing how PE's problematisation of representation and speaking from the Global South reveals weaknesses in the Food Sovereignty discourse and how this can be mediated by Food Security discourses.

To conclude, I then summarise these points into three principal policy recommendations and allude to the wider potential implications of my research.

1. Provincialising Europe and criticisms of DS Discourses:

Chakrabarty develops PE through three stages which pertinently converge with this article's desire to assess whether decolonising Food Security improves efforts to achieve Zero Hunger (Vasilaki, 2012:12). PE's first stage, critiquing historicism, challenges how historicism has enabled Europe and the West to posit a stagist and linear historical time as a supposed measure of cultural distance between the West and non-West (Vasilaki, 2012:12). Applying this insight allows us to identify first whether Food Security is imbued with such Eurocentric concepts and whether these concepts are problematic, potentially stifling Zero Hunger by marginalising non-Western forms of knowledge. The second stage, subaltern pasts, which introduces a new kind of history-writing, provides us with the tools to decentre Food Security as the primary approach for eradicating global hunger, as subaltern pasts' desire to act as a corrective to historicism sensitises us to alternative non-Western concepts and approaches that may enhance Zero Hunger. PE's third stage of superseding historicist thought allows for a post-historicist future which is reimaged in an egalitarian perspective (Vasilaki, 2012:12). In relation to this article's research question, this stage allows us to envision the sort of future that will hold if we were to decolonise Food Security (Vasilaki, 2012:12). For the purposes of this article, I name this third stage post-historicist future. I will now further expand upon PE's three stages below in relation to the existing literature that criticises DS and Food Security.

1.1 Historicism as a transition narrative

Through colonisation, European powers occupied an epistemological space, where the imposition of their theories and concepts awarded them the unprecedented privilege to discursively categorise and define, creating subject positions for themselves and others (Cohn, 1996:4). PE suitably aligns with this contention. Chakrabarty does not reject modernity

or Western thought, regarding it as indispensable, but also at the same time inadequate (Chakrabarty, 2000). This inadequacy resonates from the notion that due to colonialism and its legacy; the ontological and epistemological assumptions of European thought have pervaded the social sciences. As an extension, the West has gained a mythical position as the founder of modernity, creating the illusionary and unwarranted dynamic of a universalising tendency of “a first in Europe, then elsewhere” (Chakrabarty, 2000:237). This created what, Chakrabarty coins as a sub-concept of PE, “historicism/historicism as a transition narrative”, (Chakrabarty, 2000:30), where Europe is taken as the point of reference for progress and a society’s modernity is determined by their ability to progress or transition to the European model of society. When applying Chakrabarty’s critique of historicism to DS, we begin to see how this converges within the existing literature that criticises DS, providing a deeper analysis of its Eurocentric bias.

1.2 Historicism: Truman, Modernisation Theory and Neoliberalism

Goal 2 Zero Hunger’s aim to “end hunger and achieve food security” (UN, 2015:17), means that the concept of Food Security has been implemented as the guiding principle to eradicate global hunger. Nonetheless, despite aiming to achieve this by 2030, Goal 2 Zero Hunger is failing, expounding the criticisms that DS and its concepts such as Food Security are at an impasse. The UN Food and Agricultural Organisation’s 2020 report revealed that 2 billion of the world’s population had suffered from hunger, indicating that despite many initiatives, the condition of the Global South’s populations have yet to significantly improve (FAO, 2020; Sharp and Briggs, 2006:7). Scholars wrestling with this issue identify that a key reason for this is that despite supposedly being an improvement upon its predecessor, the SDGs have maintained much of the mis-framings and gaps of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) (Battersby, 2017). However, the real problem runs much deeper, as the issue is not so much that the SDGs merely share continuities with the MDGs, but that its discursive structures emanate from the overarching structures of the mid-20th Century, precisely the Post-World War Two Developments that are identified within President Truman’s 1949 inaugural speech (Ziai, 2016:199). Those theorists and academics critical of DS argue that Truman’s speech marked not only the advent of the development discourse, but as Kothari posits, the transition from “where colonialism ended, development took over,” (Baaz, 2005:150). It has been argued that development discourse became a mode of neo-colonialism in which, especially during the context of the Cold War, the USA attempted in lieu of force, to exert control over those newly decolonised states whose supposed lack of economic development made them vulnerable to Communism. Within this speech, Truman’s employment of the terms “developed” and “underdeveloped” to describe nations, when seen through the lens of PE, is problematic (Ziai,

2016). This is because it served to reproduce the historicist narrative of the colonial dichotomy of civilised-uncivilised, naturalising a discourse which postulates that those underdeveloped (uncivilised/backward/pre-modern) societies of the Global South, are waiting to be developed by those developed (civilised/advanced/modern) societies of the Global North (Jung, 2015). Koc asserts that despite not being introduced as a concept until the 1970s, Food Security is firmly rooted in this post-World War Two discourse. The dichotomy between developed/underdeveloped nations instigated the Green Revolution, increasing the modernisation of agriculture in the Global South from agricultural experts in the North with supposed technical knowledge, hence creating a one-way flow of knowledge (Koc, 2013; Alcock, 2009:19-20). This suggests that if one identifies the colonial and Eurocentric legacy inherent within DS and Food Security, we may acknowledge that DS has had the tendency to remind the developing world of what it lacks, and how it continues to be dependent on Western initiatives and technology, rather than truly improving the Global South (Omar, 2012:43).

Following Truman's inaugural speech, until the late 1970s DS came to be dominated and guided by Rostow's Modernisation Theory. It took a stagist and linear approach to development, arguing that there were five stages present within the development of nations (Rostow, 1959). The first stage, Traditional Society, represents the agricultural-based economies of underdeveloped nations of the Global South, and the fifth and last stage, Age of High Mass Consumption, is occupied by Western countries, whose mass production and consumerism allows them to flourish in a capitalist system (Rostow, 1959). PE's sub-concept of historicism exposes how this is founded upon a Eurocentric imprint. Rostow employs the ahistorical position of taking all that is progressive and modern as a reflection of what is European or American, which in other words, as PE would state, consigns those supposedly underdeveloped nations to the waiting room of historical progress, waiting for their moment to become like their Western 'superiors' (Chakrabarty, 2000; Phillips, 2019:5). Despite Modernisation Theory's purported death and loss of prominence as a concept in the late 1970s, Phillips has noted how there has been growing scholarship commentating on its revival and reinvention (Phillips, 2019:5). Regarding the SDGs, Weber represents one such scholar, as she asserts that the SDGs remains congruent with Rostow's Modernisation Theory, where it still operates upon a strong affinity to modernist assumptions and the concept of a ladder metaphor for countries aiming to achieve development (Weber, 2014:130). Even if one were to accept the proposed death of the modernisation paradigm, its successor, neoliberalism, has been criticised for being the political and intellectual child of the modernisation school (Krishna, 2009:9). Brohman argues that despite neoliberalism having been lauded within DS

as an innovative new strategy in response to Rostow's Modernisation Theory, neoliberal development approaches are prone to the same criticisms and shortcomings as the modernisation paradigm (Brohman, 1995:121) Neoliberalism retains much of the same gaps and problems associated with universalistic models, Eurocentrism, and ideological biases, as it is predicated on the notion of Homo Oeconomicus, an anthropological concept of modernity asserted by John Stuart Mill (Brohman, 1995:137; Escobar, 1988:437; Read, 2009:27). This concept generalises humans in exclusively individualist and Western terms, conceived as solely rational and self-interested economic agents who conform to market logics in order to disband themselves from the communalist thinking that can be found in the Global South (Escobar, 1988:437; Attick, 2017).

1.3 Subaltern Pasts and Post-Historicism

For remaining in the realm of discourse however, PE invites the criticism that it neglects material practices, as in focusing on analysing texts and representations, it only seems to defend the subaltern in an abstract manner (Ziai, 2012:1). Nonetheless, Ziai and Schoneberg argue that, by exposing the colonial and Eurocentric underpinnings of theories and concepts we hold to be true, PE rests within the strategic orientation to sensitise us to valorising research, and alternative practices and forms of knowledge (Ziai, 2012:10; Schoneberg, 2019:106). Chakrabarty's postulation of subaltern pasts presents this, as it relates to those minority histories and histories from below, which have been marginalised by the grand narratives of Eurocentric historicist thought but can act as alternatives and correctives to Eurocentric historicism by identifying its limits (Chakrabarty, 1998:473; Vasilaki, 2012:12). This sensitivity to subaltern pasts allows us to look to alternative concepts such as Food Sovereignty, an example of subaltern agency that may prove more effective than the concept of Food Security. Chakrabarty argues that by de-centering historicism and superseding it through subaltern pasts, we can then construct a post-historicist, non-hegemonic future in which we seriously engage in the diverse ways of being in the world (Chakrabarty, 2000:21). Having now introduced the concept of PE and placed it sub-concepts and perspectives within the relevant context of existing literature's criticisms of DS, the next section seeks to apply them through a discourse analysis of Food Security and Food Sovereignty documents.

2. Food Security in the SDGs: Historicism as a transition narrative

2.1 Unequal Partnerships

As Gabay and Ilcan note, since the 1990s, an increase in partnerships has become an important aim of international development cooperation with the MDGs and the SDGs

stipulating them as explicit goals (Gabay and Ilcan, 2017:477). Goal 17 of the SDGs states that all the SDGs “can only be realised with a strong commitment to global partnership and cooperation” (McEwan, 2019). When analysing the “United Nations Transforming Our World: The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development document” (UN, 2015) we see an explicit reference to the enhancement of North-South knowledge sharing:

“17.6 Enhance North-South, South-South...international cooperation on and access to science, technology and innovation and enhance knowledge sharing on mutually agreed terms...improved coordination among existing mechanisms, in particular at the United Nations level, and through a global technology facilitation mechanism” (UN, 2015:29-9).

However, through the lens of PE, decolonising the SDGs’ Food Security discourse is more conducive to achieving Zero Hunger, as it enlightens us to how such North-South dialogue and partnerships between difference sources of knowledge must be modified due to their inherent inequality (Rojas, 2007:577). Due to the dominance of Eurocentrism, it naturalises certain discourses to the extent where, as Chakrabarty argues, these dialogical exchanges of different knowledges are already structured from the beginning in favour of certain outcomes (Rojas 2007:577). One can attest to this notion, as when analysing Goal 17 and its relation to the concept of Food Security within Goal 2 Zero Hunger, rather than there being a radical and conceptual engagement with IK to overcome hunger, the Food Security discourse hinders itself by falling within the trope of framing IK in relation to its lack or absence of modern scientific and technical knowledge, reproducing the Eurocentric historicism articulated by the transition narrative (Chakrabarty, 2000;Kangas and Salmenniemi, 2016:20). In the document, reference to IK, termed as traditional knowledge, is only mentioned once throughout the whole document and can be found under Goal 2 Zero Hunger:

“2.5 By 2020, maintain the genetic diversity of seeds...equitable sharing of benefits arising from the utilization of genetic resources and associated traditional knowledge, as internationally agreed” (UN, 2015:17-18).

The fact that the inclusion of IK is limited to being a subset of genetic resources suggests that it lacks the capacity to be efficient on its own and can only be integrated into the Food Security discourse when it accords with, rather than challenges the dominant techno-scientific discourse (McEwan, 2019:259; Cummings et al., 2018). The dominance of this techno-scientific discourse is emphasised further within the SDGs framework as it is constantly

framed within the context of knowledge, suggesting that knowledge is strongly connected to technological advancements:

“The spread of information and communications technology and global interconnectedness has great potential to accelerate human progress...bridge the digital divide...develop knowledge societies, as does scientific and technological innovation across areas as diverse as medicine and energy” (UN, 2015:7).

Regarding Food Security, the reason for the dominance of this techno-scientific knowledge discourse and marginalisation of IK is made much clearer when we see that in Goal 2.3, a fundamental objective of the SDGs in combatting hunger is to:

“By 2030, double the agricultural productivity and incomes of small-scale food producers... opportunities for value addition and non-farm employment” (UN, 2015:17).

In addition, Goal 2.a aims to:

“Increase investment...through...technology development and plant and livestock gene banks in order to enhance agricultural productive capacity in developing countries...” (UN, 2015:18).

Ziai's (2016) contention that DS' strategies and categories have the tendency to naturalise certain discourses can be applied to both Goal 2.3 and Goal 2.a. He argues that one aspect and effect of DS' naturalisation of discourse is that it assumes a consensus of what is progressive and desirable, and PE reveals how the point of reference for reaching such a consensus tends to be European thought and concepts (Chakrabarty, 2000; Ziai, 2016:218-19). By framing the issue of hunger and food insecurity as one of technological development and production, as Goals 2.3 and 2.a state, we begin to see how the Food Security discourse within the SDGs naturalises a Eurocentric techno-science discourse, assuming a consensus that only agricultural modernisation and technological advancements, which increase productivity, are necessary and able to overcome global hunger. The fact that this productivist and modernisation approach dominates the Food Security discourse within the SDGs, despite receiving much criticism for undermining the capacity for autonomy and self-determination of farmers, suggests that it has become a naturalised discourse (Pimbert, 2009:5). This is largely due to its Eurocentrism, as Rist identifies how this productivist approach, and the importance of production and economic growth through technological advancements as the means for

resolving development issues, is an expansion of the ideological position of English colonial mercantilists and capitalists (Rist, 2002:238). This infers that the Food Security discourse still seems to operate upon a modernisation paradigm as indicated, with Heloise Weber arguing that the SDGs' framework is inculcated by an ecological modernisation theory, a mere 'green version' of Rostow's modernisation theory (Weber and Weber, 2020). Returning to Chakrabarty's contention, we can see that this reproduces and naturalises a historicist transition narrative. It maintains the binary divide between supposedly traditional and modern societies by only positing traditional knowledge in relation to its lack to technical knowledge, rather than truly engaging with its benefits, hence selling itself short on achieving Zero Hunger. Jarosz substantiates this arguing that Food Security's discourse and increased focus on production through agricultural modernisation, returns us to the hierarchisation reminiscent of the modernisation theory of the Cold War era (Jarosz, 2011:133).

2.2 Eurocentric Hierarchisation of Knowledge

Nevertheless, other SDG documents have been much more representative of IK and when analysing the "Transforming Food and Agriculture to Achieve the SDGs: Towards Zero Hunger" (2018) document produced by the FAO, we do see more emphasis on the importance of IK in the Food Security discourse, stating that:

"Top-down and technology-oriented systems are progressively being replaced... by often involving multistakeholder participatory processes. Smallholder family farmers, rural women and men, and their organizations are...full partners in situation-analysis and problem-identification..." (FAO, 2018:24).

Seemingly, the Food Security discourse here contains a pluralist-participatory approach, which values the importance of smallholder farmers and their IK by providing greater inclusion and attention. Nonetheless, when analysing the next page of this document through the lens of PE, the need to decolonise Food Security is made apparent as this pluralist-participatory approach's implementation serves to reproduce the notion of peasants in need of modernising. The document states that:

"...Bringing farmers' knowledge together through farmer field schools...strengthening the understanding and awareness on the prospects for rural employment in the context of greener food systems" (FAO, 2018:25).

This implementation of Farmer Field Schools, when conceptualised through PE's problematisation of the discursive representations of the peasant and subaltern classes, alludes us to how the SDGs' Food Security discourse has the potential to reinforce a historicist transition narrative, hierarchising knowledge upon a Eurocentric perspective of a one-way flow of knowledge from North to South. Chakrabarty argues that during colonialism, the peasant and subaltern classes were treated as inadequate, yet to be modernised, and to progress, needed to be educated by a modernised elite (Chakrabarty, 2000:33). The prevailing legacy of this has been that peasant and subaltern classes can only be spoken of and spoken for by a transition narrative which inevitably privileges the modern, underappreciating the value of anything traditional (Chakrabarty, 2000:41). Through this lens, such Farmer Field Schools seem to replicate this dynamic as it reproduces the dynamic of trusteeship, in which experts were entrusted to control colonies (Baaz, 2005). Braun and Duveskog's study into Farmer Field School substantiates this, finding that in Ethiopia, the extension workers employed by the Farmer Field Schools were found to be patronising towards local farmers, with the dynamic being characterised as hierarchical and top-down, where the process was the transfer of technology from the 'expert' with knowledge to the 'student' farmer, rather than there being any reciprocal engagement with IK (Braun and Duveskog, 2008:20-1). They argued that this was misplaced as it was the traditional local farmers who had greater knowledge on the local conditions and had the respect of their community, citing the need for greater appreciation of local IK in Farmer Field Schools (Braun and Duveskog, 2008:20). Maat expands upon this, citing that in Uganda, Farmer Field Schools tend to privilege and favour the uptake of modern initiatives, as biotechnology was predominantly favoured instead of IK to deal with agricultural matters (Maat, 2007:51). This resonates with Chakrabarty's argument of the modern always being privileged, suggesting that, rather than there being a truly radical attempt to engage with traditional farmer knowledge to address global hunger, it has only been integrated in a liberal manner (McEwan, 2019:259).

The reason behind this limited liberal approach to incorporating IK within the Food Security discourse and SDGs framework, can be explained through the lens of historicism, as we see that rather than signalling the death of the modernisation paradigm, it demarcates the democratisation and evolution of its approach. As Chakrabarty argues, modernisation processes have been democratised to the extent where it extends backwards to include more of what is pre-modern to rid the idea and label of modernity being exclusivist and judgemental (Chakrabarty, 2011:665) However, he argues that this is mere presentism, and as Andreotti asserts a mere act of ticking the box of diversity (Chakrabarty, 2011:673; Andreotti, 2006:9). This is evidenced by my analysis of the partnership and participatory discourses of Food

Security within the SDGs, as traditional knowledge has been co-opted and only incorporated as a token gesture, rather than being considered as having any potential to enrich modern knowledge.

Hence, decolonising the SDG's Food Security discourse can bridge initial steps towards achieving Zero Hunger, as it reveals that the Food Security discourse in the SDGs lacks thorough engagement with IK. It places it within the pre-given position of still being in absence of modernisation, consigned to the waiting room of the historicist transition narrative, and this can be changed through a through engagement with IK, treating, rather than just a mere tool (McEwan, 2019:259; Chakrabarty, 2011:664). This can be changed by

2.2 De-politicisation: Neoliberal Gendered Food Security

In addition to analysing IK within the SDGs, the gendered Food Security discourse within the SDGs is an integral part of analysis when it comes to assessing how decolonising Food Security can enhance efforts to achieve Zero Hunger. This is because women tend to comprise the key farmers in the Global South and are identified by the FAO and SDGs as vital actors in eradicating global hunger (FAO, 1997:13; UN, 2015:17). Analysing the way in which gender equality is framed in relation to Food Security is vital as a postcolonial analysis can uncover whether the SDGs' Food Security discourse perpetuates a Eurocentric, orientalist understanding of Global South women, which potentially hinders efforts to achieve Zero Hunger.

Goal 2.3 aims to: "By 2030, double the agricultural productivity and incomes of small-scale food producers, in particular women" (UN, 2015:17). This implies that market access and higher incomes is vital for gender equality, and hence achieving Zero Hunger. There is a strong emphasis on framing gender equality within the parameters of economic empowerment within the document, with the fourth indicator of Goal 1 Zero Poverty stating:

"1.4 By 2030, ensure that all... women, in particular the poor and the vulnerable, have equal rights to economic resources...control over land and other forms of property, inheritance, natural resources, appropriate new technology" (UN, 2015).

In addition, Goal 5.a of the Gender Equality objective aims to:

"5.a Undertake reforms to give women equal rights to economic resources, as well as access to ownership and control over land and other forms of property, financial

services, inheritance and natural resources, in accordance with national laws” (UN, 2015).

Prima facie, empowering women economically and increasing their access to the market seems unproblematic. This is designated upon the assumption that paid labour undisputedly empowers women, and if women have greater access and control over assets and resources, they would be able to exercise greater economic autonomy, freeing themselves from marginalisation and male oppression (Carrasco-Miro, 2020:5). Nonetheless, as Carrasco-Miro argues and PE reveals, the gendered Food security discourse within the SDGs needs to be decolonised, as it is predicated upon a notion of economic empowerment that is undergirded by a neoliberal, capitalist, and modernist narrative (Carrasco-Miro, 2020:5). This constructs the subjectivities of women in the Global South as consistent with market logics, depoliticising their issues by taking the experience and aspirations of the European white female as its point of reference, universalising her as the yardstick for female empowerment (Carrasco-Miro, 2020:5).

As mentioned in the first section, neoliberalism and its meta-narratives of development are considered to act as the contemporary versions of Rostow’s Modernisation Theory. One principal reason for this is due to neoliberalism’s depoliticising effect (McEwan, 2019:139). As Ziai argues, discourse analyses of DS reveal the depoliticising effect of development discourse, as by postulating development as something which benefits everyone, and therefore cannot be objected to, it is removed from the scope of political and economic questions, neglecting the underlying structural causes of issues such as poverty and gender inequality (Ziai, 2016:224). PE alludes to such de-politicisation, as Chakrabarty shares a Marxist perspective on the effects of neoliberal capitalism, holding that contemporary modernist notions of equality have been diffused within the context of increasingly marketised societies, where people’s interchangeability within market access leads to an equality which is translated and assumed as people being composed of and having similar needs (Phillips, 2018:16). However, this neoliberal, capitalist, and technical approach to achieving gender equality, as evidenced by the SDG’s gendered Food Security discourse, depoliticises, and homogenises the different cultural and social contexts that impact the experiences of rural women in the Global South (Agarwal, 1992:126). A postcolonial feminist narrative presents how imagining all women as capitalists, aspiring to modernity and realising their freedom through a notion of consumerist choice, ignores how a lack of access to food for rural women in the Global South predominantly stems from the intersectionality of class, race, and power issues (McCall, 2005:1771; Agarwal, 1992:126; Carrasco-Miro, 2020:5; Simidele, 2015:2). Rather it is increased neoliberal, individualised market access and paid labour that has had

the tendency to lead to exploitation, with Ghumkhor revealing how female oppression in the Global South may stem from other issues such as Western consumer capitalism, the very thing which increased market access would exacerbate (Ghumkhor, 2012:504).

This individualised and depoliticising logic of the SDGs' neoliberal gendered Food Security discourse can be explained through Chakrabarty's problematisation of the peasant and subaltern classes within the historicist transition narrative (Simidele, 2015:2). Chakrabarty argues that colonial rule had the discursive effect of valorising the bourgeois individual, inculcating desires of a legal subject, who, through the historicist transition narrative, departs the binds of communalism that fail to meet the secular ideals of citizenship, hence progressing to attain the status of the modern individual (Chakrabarty, 2000:33). McNamee notes that this has influenced individualism to become the dominant discourse and PE indicates that this very notion of neoliberal, universal individualism must be decolonised within the SDGs' gendered Food Security discourse, as it is only one worldview among many, with many women in indigenous communities subscribing to a communal and communitarian form of feminism to disband the patriarchy (McNamee, 2014:27).

3. Food Sovereignty: Subaltern Pasts

Having critiqued and exposed the flaws of the Eurocentrism inherent within the Food Security discourse, principally how it lacks a thorough conceptual engagement with IK, we are now able to become sensitised to alternative practices. A discourse analysis of La Via Campesina's (LVC) Food Sovereignty documents, through the application of PE's concept of subaltern pasts, demonstrates the importance of learning from the marginalised, and how decolonising the SDGs' Food Security discourse advances our attempts to achieve Zero Hunger. This is because the concept of Food Sovereignty, through its subaltern agency, acts as an important corrective to the limitations of the Food Security discourse's historicist narrative.

3.1 Dismantling Eurocentric sovereignty:

The first way in which Food Sovereignty acts as a new mode of history-making, hence potentially advancing our efforts to achieve Zero Hunger, is that it subverts our notions of the ontological and epistemological naturalisations of Westphalian sovereignty discourses, challenging the statist, top-down approach that DS employs. Chakrabarty's aim to

‘provincialise’ Europe encompasses how he takes issue with the uncritical adoption of the nation-state as the most desirable form of political community (Ziai, 2013). Westphalian notions of sovereignty are imbued with Eurocentric ideas, as not only was the 1648 Peace of Westphalia a European affair, ontologically and epistemologically, it has influenced the social sciences to employ a hierarchical, state-centric valorisation of the great powers (European), privileging territorially bound notions of sovereignty and national interests (Chan, 2014:1). As Sexsmith and McMichael (2015:585) note, such state-centrism has pervaded the SDGs framework, as the 2013 UN High Level Panel Report which planned the SDGs, envisions progress towards its goals in state-centric terms:

“National governments have the central role...They decide on national targets, taxes, policies, plans and regulations that will translate the vision and goals of the post-2015 agenda into practical reality” (UN, 2013:10).

This suggests that the key players in the Food Security discourse and its goal to achieve Zero Hunger will also be states, disseminating a top-down approach to addressing the issue of global hunger. This statist approach is steeped within a notion of de-peasantisation, which PE defines as a historicist transition narrative to view peasants as backwards, hence providing the modern state with a central role in modernising and progressing such peasants (Sexsmith and McMichael, 2015:582). When analysing Food Sovereignty on the other hand, it disbands such state-centric, top-down approaches, as the ‘Historical Overview of La Via Campesina’ document states that:

“La Via Campesina...envisions a very different, more human, rural world, a world based on food sovereignty. Here, agriculture is peasant-driven, based on peasant production, uses local resources and is geared to domestic markets” (LVC, 2009:43).

This shifts the subject from the state to that of small-scale producers, reconstructing new subjectivities for peasants, where rather than in need of aid, they are defenders of their model of production and reproduction, with or without states (Conversi, 2016:485). Food Sovereignty’s re-emphasis on the central position of peasant farmers converges with subaltern pasts’ notion of promoting histories from below (Chakrabarty, 1998). By endorsing grassroots and bottom-up approaches, Food Sovereignty contributes to subaltern pasts’ aim to recover pasts and voices which have been excluded by the Eurocentric historicist narrative’s advocacy of a stagist account of progress (Vasilaki, 2012:15). This does not limit itself to subaltern and minority identities alone, but also other voices and approaches which

have been excluded by the major narrative of historicism (Vasilaki, 2012:15). Therefore, Food Sovereignty has been able to be transnational in its character, as despite originating in Latin America, it has influenced Food Sovereignty movements in the Global North in major European countries such as the UK, opening vital questions about the missing and marginalised voices in UK food governance and policy (Coulson and Milbourne, 2020:56). This presents how decolonising the SDGs' Food Security discourse advances our ability to achieve Zero Hunger, as by subverting the Eurocentric symptom of a one-way flow of knowledge from the North to the South, we become sensitised to how those in the South can spread their knowledge to contribute to social issues in the North.

3.2 Dismantling Food Security's Techno-Science Knowledge

This disruption of the rigid and uneven flow of knowledge from the North to the South, suitably converges with another aspect of how decolonising Food Security progresses attempts to eradicate global hunger. Food Sovereignty's reconstruction of the peasant's subjectivity as the key actor, means that rather than being constructed in relation to a lack of modern technology, the Food Sovereignty discourse provincialises modern technology, placing peasant farmers' traditional knowledge as central in the challenge to surmount hunger. In the "La Via Campesina Policy Documents", it asserts that:

“...many *Vía Campesina* member organizations...have demonstrated that the "Campesino a Campesino" (farmer to farmer) methodology is the best way... to share their own agroecological farming technologies and systems” (LVC, 2009:186).

The discourse of 'farmer to farmer' constructs a more horizontal approach to knowledge-sharing, rather than the top-down hierarchical Farmer Field School approach that the SDGs' Food Security discourse advocates, risking the reproduction of the colonial and historicist transition of the need for elites or experts to educate and modernise peasants (Rosset and Martinez-Torres, 2014:149). This also means that the privileging of modern technology such as biotechnology will not occur as it is peasant praxis and collective action which is valorised (Mann, 2018:5). This allows for a plurality of knowledge to be disseminated between peasants, as by constructing a horizontal discursive narrative, there will be more awareness of how knowledge is produced in society, which sources of knowledge reproduce the power relations that they seek to disband, and which can be transformative (O'Cadiz, Wong and Torres., 1999:89).

3.3 Re-politicising the Gendered Food Security discourse

Food Sovereignty's advocacy of the use of agroecology also shows the importance of decolonising the SDGs' Food Security discourse to achieve Zero Hunger, in that it also acts as a discursively resistive epistemology for women, contributing to the advancement of gender equality (Mann, 2018:4). Rather than taking the aspirations of the European white woman as its reference point, depicting, and homogenising a neoliberal subjectivity of women in the Global South as in need of economic empowerment, Food Sovereignty discourses instead act as modes of re-politicisation. They are grounded in the concerns of peasant women, empowering them by discursively framing their issues within the scope of their vast knowledge of agroecology (Alkon, 2013:2; Deepak, 2014:153). For example, in the LVC (2014) 'Sowers of Struggle and Hope For Feminism and Food Sovereignty' document: "Women are leaders in creating solutions for the family, the community through agroecological peasant farming, peasant seeds, and the dialogue of knowledge" (LVC, 2014). Unlike the Food Security discourse which seems to frame women of the Global South regarding their lack of economic empowerment in relation to women of the Global North, the Food Sovereignty discourse focuses on framing women of the Global South in relation to their capabilities. Through agroecology, women are central. As Kennedy and Cogill have argued, such discourses empower women to have greater leverage and control over agriculture and household income and is proven to influence the improvement of food insecurity (Kennedy and Cogill, 1987:58).

4. From Deadlocks to Dialogue

4.1 Stalemate?

Nevertheless, scholars have argued that an over-valorisation of Food Sovereignty risks creating a rivalrous relationship between Food Sovereignty and Food Security. Clapp and Agarwal have asserted how placing Food Sovereignty and Food Security, and by association, scientific knowledge and IK in binary opposition, valorising one over the other risks stifling debates about ending hunger as rather than advancing our efforts, it creates the potential pitfall of a battle of semantics, a win-or-lose dynamic (Clapp, 2015:1; Agarwal, 1995). This alludes us to issues with the application of postcolonial methodologies, as it may have the tendency to perpetuate the very dichotomies it seeks to disband. Ziai's assertion that post-Development theory has the tendency to slip into a neo-populist variant arouses concerns that the application of Postcolonial methodologies, including PE to development issues, also has the potential to revert into a promotion of uncritical populism and romanticisation of the pre-modern (Ziai, 2004:1049). By attempting to pursue decolonisation by searching for an alternative modernity, postcolonial methodologies pin their hopes on the worldview, cultural

norms, and rationality of subaltern agency to build such a world (Nanda, 2001:171). However, this means that PS and its attempts to decolonise may deprive itself of any meaningful praxis, as rather than constructing any alternatives itself, it begins restricting itself to promoting any alternative social movements which seem to be subaltern or grassroots in their nature, which in this case is Food Sovereignty (To, 2021:4; Ziai, 2004:1049-50). An even greater danger in this, is that in Postcolonialism's arguments and criticisms of Eurocentrism, its valorisation of cultural difference and alterity may serve to deny the subaltern populations of the Global South with aspirations of material equality (Matthews, 2017). What is needed for addressing global hunger is to go beyond such binaries and, as Jarosz argues, construct a dialogue between the Food Security and Food Sovereignty in which we can find common ground and relationality (Jarosz, 2014:17).

4.2 Post-historicism: Beyond the binary

I reiterate however, that decolonising the SDGs' Food Security discourse remains able to provide us with the means to strengthen our efforts to achieve Zero Hunger. PE can break the binds of this binary opposition and facilitate a dialogue and exchange between the Food Security and Food Sovereignty discourses by constructing a post-historicist future, in which a non-hegemonic space exists and both concepts can learn from each other (Chen, 2011:17). Through the de-centering of Europe as supposedly the primary subject of world history and thought, a respect for and thorough engagement with different, marginalised approaches, as I have done by critiquing Food Security and showing how Food Sovereignty can act as a corrective, allows us to aspire to such a future (McEwan, 2019:403, 422; Jackson and Sorensen, 2013:241). As McEwan argues, Chakrabarty's attempts to explain what PE does not entail has broader relevance for our attempts to decolonise concepts, and in this case decolonise Food Security (McEwan, 2019:403). Rather than being an out-of-hand rejection of modernity and European thought, Chakrabarty acknowledges its indispensability, and seeks to reimagine a post-historicist future on equal terms (McEwan, 2019:403). What this entails is a mediation being realised, where we retain the values of political modernity and do not revert to a project of cultural relativism or nativism, which would only serve as reverse ethnocentrism, mirroring the very universalism which PE criticises for not involving a critical self-reflection or questioning of its proposed a priori assumptions (Argyrou, 2001:218; McEwan, 2019:260; Chen, 2011:16). The importance of critical self-reflection crystallises that PE does not solely concern itself with issues of how the North represents the Global South, but how the process of decolonisation also entails problematising movements within the South and questioning whether they fall into uncritical essentialism and romanticism of the traditional. This contrasts with those criticisms that PS would ally itself with any movement which is subaltern or

grassroots in its nature. Rather, Chakrabarty's contends a future in which "I want my Herder constantly challenged by Kant and vice versa" (Chakrabarty, 2008:95). This suggests that PE does not seek to divide Europe and the West from the Global South, but aims to figure their imbrication, where identifying potential overlaps ensures that one does not supersede the other (Chakrabarty, 2008:95). In relation to the purposes of this article, we can rephrase this as "I want my Food Sovereignty constantly challenged by Food Security and vice versa." Seen in this light, decolonising the SDGs' Food Security discourse means allowing for a future on equal terms, where the Food Security discourse is not disregarded, nor is the Food Sovereignty discourse posited as its successor and replacement, but rather, the weaknesses of one are able to be compensated by the strengths of the other, creating a discursive synergy (Beling et al., 2018:304).

Considering this, decolonising the SDGs' Food Security discourse enhances our efforts to achieve Zero Hunger by not only entailing a criticism and examination of the concept of Food Security, but also an engagement with the risks of speaking from the Global South, and the potential pitfalls of an essentialist and romanticist discourse arising from the Food Sovereignty discourse (Andreotti, 2006:8). For example, PE's problematising of representation and essentialism conveys how, with its attempts to reconstruct the subjectivity of the peasant as central to eradicating hunger, the Food Sovereignty discourse has the tendency to essentialise and homogenise heterogenous groups of peasants, as in the LVC Historical Overview of La Via Campesina document, it states that:

"Rather, the struggle is over two competing – and in many ways diametrically opposed – models of social and economic development..." (LVC, 2009:43).

In framing the struggle as one between two diametrically opposed models of development, PE presents how Food Sovereignty oversimplifies not only the dynamics between global industrial agriculture and traditional peasant agriculture, which dangerously homogenises peasants as only wanting localised farming, but also as an extension, it oversimplifies the dynamics of colonialism (Soper, 2020:269). Food Sovereignty seems to be suggesting that the way in which to eradicate hunger is to reject mainstream DS completely. However, as PE contends, due to colonialism, no matter what we do, "it is impossible to think of anywhere in the world without invoking certain intellectual and even theological traditions of Europe. Concepts such as citizenship, the state, civil society... one simply cannot think of a political modernity without these..." (Chakrabarty, 2000). What PE is alluding to here is that it is

impossible to stand outside of dominant and hegemonic discourses such as development. Instead, the decolonisation of concepts entails renewing it from the margins by changing the discourses from within (McEwan, 2019:134). In saying that, PE infers how the SDGs' Food Security discourse may be better in this regard and supplement Food Sovereignty, as since PE does not reject universals, we see how the SDGs' discursive framing of all the SDGs, include Zero Hunger, as universal goals, breeds a sense of inclusivity and equality which goes beyond binaries. This has the potential to break down the developed/underdeveloped dichotomy, as Freistein and Mahler contend that it can arouse a universal understanding of development in which every country is developed or underdeveloped in some respects (Freistein and Mahler, 2016:8). We see this in the SDGs' Food Security discourse as the 2013 UN High Level Panel Report, which planned the SDGs, states that:

“In developed countries, the lack of a nutritious diet in childhood increases the risk of obesity...disease. In all countries, adequate nutrition in childhood improves learning as well as lifelong physical, emotional and cognitive development. It lifts the individual’s potential, and the country’s” (UN, 2013:40).

There is a clear attempt within the SDG's Food Security discourse to present that all nations face development issues, not just those in the Global South, and such an approach is something which Food Sovereignty can heed to, hence advancing attempts to achieve Zero Hunger.

Conclusion

This article has articulated how decolonising the SDGs' Food Security discourse goes a long way in furthering our efforts to achieve Zero Hunger. Its critique of how Eurocentric assumptions inform the Food Security discourse, and how Food Sovereignty, as an example of subaltern agency, has the potential to act as its corrective, stimulates a future in which both the concepts of Food Security and Food Sovereignty can counterbalance each other's weaknesses, working together to eliminate hunger.

As a first policy recommendation to achieve such as a future, the second section urges the SDGs to take a more radical conceptual engagement with IK and the Global South. By employing a discourse analysis through the postcolonial methodology of PE, we are enlightened to how the SDGs' Food Security discourse is imbued with problematic Eurocentric assumptions that marginalise other knowledges. Despite aiming for partnership to enhance North-South knowledge transfers and eradicate global hunger, PE's critique of historicism

presents how this objective is hampered by the fact that the SDGs' Food Security discourse is already structured from the beginning, being steeped in a historicist transition narrative which approaches IK regarding its lack to modern technology and its need to progress. This creates and naturalises a top-down discourse in which a consensus is assumed that technoscience and modernisation is necessary despite its limitations. The gendered Food Security is also problematic, as its neoliberal approach de-politicises the women of the Global South by framing their issues within the scope of economic empowerment. This homogenises women of the Global South, creating neoliberal subjectivities and taking the European white female as its point of reference, universalising her as the yardstick for female empowerment, by suggesting that all women seek market access, irrespective of the underlying structural causes of race, class and power that affect the women of the South.

As a second policy recommendation, the employment of subaltern pasts, identifies how decolonising the SDGs' Food Security discourse enhances our ability to achieve Zero Hunger, as it calls for the inclusion of an alternative concept in the SDGs framework. Food Sovereignty, acts as a corrective to the gaps within the Food Security, challenging our notions of Westphalian sovereignty, thus reinstating the centrality of the peasant subjectivity. This disbands the top-down, historicist, and de-peasantisation narratives of the Food Security discourse, creating a more bottom-up and horizontal discourse, in which we can engage with IK on a more conceptual level, reaping its rewards.

Despite tensions that this may serve to create a stalemate and binary, falling into uncritical romanticism of traditional, pre-modern times, the final section presents that decolonising the SDGs' Food Security discourse can transcend this binary and facilitate a constructive dialogue between Food Security and Food Sovereignty. This is because PE does not seek to reject modernity, also being concerned with how those in the South represent themselves. This means that a third policy recommendation to achieve Zero Hunger is that decolonising Food Security urges us to not romanticise IK, nor discard Food Security as a concept. Instead, the Food Sovereignty discourse is complemented by the Food Security's universal discourse, creating a post-historicist future in which the blind spots of one are complemented by the other (Beling et al., 2018).

Regarding wider implications, by demonstrating how PS' methodologies contribute to policy recommendations to eradicate global hunger, this article urges greater future engagement between PS and DS, quelling assumptions that PS's textual analyses are antithetical to practical disciplines such as DS. As exhibited in this article, discourse analyses that are

sensitive to cultural insights and their ontological and epistemological roots, can complement practical and material initiatives by enlightening them to their biases, hence directing them towards untouched areas.

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