PERU’S “GASTRONOMIC BOOM”: CRITICAL PERSPECTIVES ON ELITE
GASTRONOMY AND SOCIAL FOOD JUSTICE

BY
MEGHAN E. BOHARDT

THESIS
Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of Master of Arts in Latin American Studies
in the Graduate College of the
University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, 2014

Urbana, Illinois

Advisor:
Associate Professor Martin Manalansan, IV
ABSTRACT

This thesis is a critical reflection on the contemporary phenomenon of the “Gastronomic Boom” in Peru—a seemingly sudden surge in interest, development, marketing, and exportation of gourmet Peruvian cuisine. I examine this process looking at productions from the top and bottom of the social hierarchy in Peru. For perspectives from the top, I describe and critique the discourse of investment in gastronomy as a means of representing an entire nation in its cuisine, as well as a means of economic development and vehicle of social change. To get the view from below, I conducted ethnographic fieldwork in Cusco, Peru and surrounding areas. The informal interviews and participant observation, especially at community organizations such as Centro Bartolomé de las Casas and El Parque de la Papa, helped to ground this discourse and confirm assumptions about the local affects of the Gastronomic Boom, particularly on farming and indigenous peoples in the region.

After analyzing cultural productions, such as a documentary film, that package the discourse on gastronomy, national identity and economic development as a means to social change, and comparing them to the articulations of resistance to thoroughly elite, neoliberal projects such as this, I take the position that the Gastronomic Boom as it currently stands exacerbates historical racial and economic inequalities in Peru. Using concepts of food justice, including food security, food sovereignty, food regimes, communities of food practice and food gentrification, I think through the Gastronomic Boom and discuss its potential for contributing to a substantive food movement that would take advantage of the success of this elite, upper-class gourmet project in getting food on the national agenda, but shift the meaning-making and production power to the campesino and indigenous peoples who grow the ingredients used to make Peruvian cuisine.
I would like to acknowledge first, all of those who lent their time, insights and personal experiences to this project. I especially would like to thank Claudia at Centro Bartolomé de las Casas in Cusco, who welcomed me with open arms, allowed for me to present at the Martes Campesino forum, and translated the discussion from Quechua to Spanish. I am eternally grateful for her generosity and inspired by her person and the work that she does for her community. By extension, I thank the people in attendance at the Martes Campesino meeting the night that I presented for contributing to the discussion. I am also very grateful to those at El Parque de la Papa who graciously allowed for me to film my tour of the Park and trusted that I would respectfully utilize that footage for the purposes of my research and nothing more. I also acknowledge the contribution of the other people I conversed with in Peru about their cuisine, such as those who own and work in restaurants and those who sell produce in the open-air markets. Without the contribution of all of the above, this project would not have been possible.

I also appreciate greatly the support of the entire staff at the Center for Latin American and Caribbean Studies. Thank you to Alejandra for her unwaveringly sweet disposition and willingness to help with the bureaucratic processes that she made more bearable. Thank you to Gloria for her assistance with university matters, but more importantly, for her wisdom and good humor. A special thanks goes out to Angelina, who made the transition to the University and to the town much smoother. She never wavered in her support and was one of the few people I knew I could count on during my time here. I also reserve a very special recognition for Yachachiq Clodo. I am honored to have studied the Quechua language under his expertise, and grateful for the warm environment that he created for my class. It was always a joy to work with him.

I would be remiss not to mention my gratitude for the support of advisor, Dr. Martin Manalansan, IV. I thank him for his patience and advice to “keep it simple”. I also thank my family and friends, especially those at UIUC. Where my biological family was not able to understand the difficulties of graduate life, my Chambana family (they know who they are) consoled me and lifted me up when I needed it. Though, it goes without saying, that I am very grateful to my mother and father who supported me as best as they could.
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF FIGURES...........................................................................................................v

I. INTRODUCTION...............................................................................................................1

1.1 Settler colonialism and the “Gastronomic Boom”: Structural violence and erasure.........7

II. FOOD JUSTICE LITERATURE REVIEW: SOCIAL CHANGE THROUGH FOOD........................................19

2.1 Food and social justice..............................................................................................22
2.2 Food security vs. Food sovereignty.............................................................................25
2.3 Food regimes and communities of food practice.......................................................36
2.4 Summary....................................................................................................................38

III. FIELDWORK............................................................................................................40

3.1 Gastronomic Boom discourse and De ollas y sueños................................................43
3.2 Discussion of film at Casa Campesina.......................................................................49
3.3 One-day excursion at El Parque de la Papa...............................................................51

IV. CONCLUSION..........................................................................................................56

REFERENCES...............................................................................................................61

APPENDIX A: Video File (Food Sovereignty.m4v).........................................................65
LIST OF FIGURES

Figures

Figure 1: Gastón Acurio’s books on display, Arequipa, Peru.................................1
Figure 2: Rocoto relleno, pastel de papa in Arequipa, Peru.................................4
Figure 3: Title, De ollas y sueños.................................................................42
Figure 4: Cook pot, De ollas y sueños...........................................................44
Figure 5: Chefs, De ollas y sueños.................................................................47
Figure 6: Magaly Solier, Lamula.pe...............................................................58
I. INTRODUCTION

In a 1994 interview with Peruvian periodical *Hueso Humero*, Chef Claudio Meneses stated his doubts about the ability of Peruvian cuisine to “internationalize” itself—it’s too regionally specific and dependent on ingredients that can only be found in Peru.¹ Twenty years later, Peruvian cuisine is recognized worldwide for its richness, fusion of diverse culinary traditions, and complexity of flavors. What changed from 1994 to 2014? By 1994, Peruvian products, such as potatoes and peanuts, had already been “international” for many centuries, but at what point was Peruvian food born as a cuisine to be exported to the global marketplace?

Some trace the origins of Peruvian gastronomy back thousands of years to pre-Columbian cultures², while others, referring to the apparent explosion of interest in Peruvian cuisine as a “boom gastronómico,” see it as a recent, wholly modern phenomenon that can demonstrate Peru’s modernity, creativity, cosmopolitanism, and entrepreneurship. In both perspectives, however, Peru and its cuisine are simultaneously traditional and modern, pushing forward while looking back. The location of the indigenous Peruvian traditions in the past, despite the millions of indigenous Andean and Amazonian that continue to inhabit Peru today, represents one aspect of the myopia of the current proponents of Peruvian gastronomy. They seek to find their roots in an essentialized, harmonious, apolitical past choosing to overlook the complexities of the Indigeneities of the present day.

Many such contradictions are apparent in this contemporary gastronomic project. Gastón Acurio, Peru’s most famous and critically

²http://www.nutricionyrecetas.com/andino/elperupartidenacimiento.htm
acclaimed chef who is credited with doing the brunt of the work to globalize Peruvian cuisine, is frequently asked in interviews about the paradox of an emphasis on high cuisine and gastronomy in a country where millions do not have enough to eat. He famous states, “La gastronomía y el hambre son incompatibles,” (“Gastronomy and hunger are incompatible.”) Acurio has demonstrated in such interviews an intention to make the commercialization of Peruvian gastronomy more equal for the campesinos and artisanal fisherman who supply the ingredients for the cuisine. However, this emphasis on commerce and mechanisms of the market to transfer profits to the producers shows his project for Peruvian gastronomy to be a highly neoliberal endeavor. As I found out during a brief stint of fieldwork in Cusco and surrounding areas in July and August 2013, Acurio’s faith in the market to make Peruvian gastronomy, and by extension, Peruvian society more equitable makes the rhetoric of the Gastronomic Boom suspect for many Peruvians who have already suffered the consequences of decades of neoliberalism and structural development which began in Peru near the time of the publication of the Hueso Humero article in 1994.

Unfortunately, Acurio and the rest of the gastronomic, Limeño elite fail to see the contradictions in making a couture high-class cuisine that is priced out of the reach of most Peruvians, especially those who produce the ingredients. Two thousand thirteen proved to be yet another year of social climbing and accolades for Peruvian gastronomy. In March of that year, Gaston Acurio, was awarded the Global Gastronomy Award by Sweden’s White Guide. Acurio’s restaurant, Astrid y Gastón, with various locations in Peru and throughout the Americas, just one brand of Acurio’s 30 or so restaurants around the world, was ranked number fourteen in the World’s Best Restaurants list (sponsored by Pellegrino and Acqua Panna) up from position

---

thirty-five last year. In continuing with this ascendancy, two Peruvian restaurants made the list in 2014. Astrid y Gastón fell slightly to number 18, but Chef Virgilio Martínez’s Central gained the “Highest Climber” distinction, moving to place 15 from last year’s number 50. Though it may seem that Perú’s rise to the top in the world of gourmet cuisine is rather sudden, it is more likely the result of years of strategic promotion and planning, a great deal of which has been credited to Acurio himself. Acurio is certainly the most visible of the actors in the “Gastronomic Boom”; however, the production of the final dishes relies on a chain of diverse actors and ingredients behind him who enjoy differing levels of visibility, prestige and accessibility to economic benefits.

The phrase, “gastronomic boom” or in Spanish, “el boom gastronómico”, conveys a great deal of information about the phenomena it represents. The word, “boom” implies an explosion, a sudden increase in the presence and intensity of the marketing, production and capital investment and gain of Peruvian cuisine not only in the domestic but also the global market place. The choice to use the label of gastronomy, which refers to the “art and science of cooking and eating fine cuisine”, indicates the desire to represent Peruvian cuisine as a modern, gourmet production. Acurio and other chefs like Miguel Schiaffino are reconceptualizing and repackaging traditional Peruvian dishes like ceviche, lomo saltado and aji de gallina not only for upscale Limeño palates, but also for exportation to and consumption by equally high class appetites abroad. This branding of Peruvian cuisine as high cuisine produced in an artisanal fashion with fresh and exotic ingredients from every corner of the country, that represents the mixture of all of the diverse ethnic groups, has artfully taken advantage of the highly prized, positive aspects of the discourse of globalization. This language of globalization also allows for chefs in Lima to justify their lucrative private culinary enterprises as a means of stimulating the economy of Peru.

5 http://www.theworlds50best.com/list/1-50-winners/central
by taking the cuisine to the entire world. Also thanks to the powers of globalization and the melting pot that is Peru and its cuisine, Acurio claims that the food he and other chefs are creating brings together Peruvians from all backgrounds and therefore has the potential to eliminate racial discrimination. These claims of economic prosperity and social change lay a thick, sticky glaze over the problems of inequality and racism that comprise the food system in Peru and directly favor the ambitious chefs of Lima who are the driving force behind the commoditization of Peruvian cuisine in what they have christened the “gastronomic boom”.

While Lima is the center of cuisine production and conceptualization in Peru, there are many gastronomic capitals throughout the country. Arequipa, a city in the Andes of Southern Peru about three hours inland from the coast (from where Acurio hails), is home to a regional cuisine that has long enjoyed a reputation of gustatory superiority. In contrast with the gastronomic discourse in Lima, Arequipa promotes a more traditional, rustic brand. Though there are many fine eateries in the city, the space in which to enjoy the finest examples of Arequipeño fare are in the picanterías. Picanterías traditionally are humble, family owned restaurants that serve spicy dishes that patrons wash down with a good beer or chicha. The oldest of these picanterías is Nuevo Palomino in Yanahuara, a 15-minute’s walk from the city’s center. Nuevo Palomino has been serving its famous rocoto relleno and pastel de papa for over 100 years, passed down from father to son for generations. This insistence on tradition and history in Arequipa’s cuisine is perhaps a manner of

![Figure 2: rocoto relleno, pastel de papa in Arequipa, Peru](image)
distinguishing the city’s gastronomy from that of the coast and keeping intact the path that led to its culinary greatness.

Peru is enjoying not only a gastronomic boom, but also a boom in tourism. These are not independent phenomena. The promotion of Peruvian cuisine on the world scale not only attracts consumers to Peruvian restaurants in Europe and North America, but also to Peru itself, yet it appears that many tourists are unaware of Peru’s recent rise to culinary greatness. However, the hegemony of Peruvian cuisine weighs more heavily in Latin America where many, upon the mentioning of Peru, remark on the favorable reputation of Peru’s very rich gastronomy (“dicen que la comida allá es muy rica”). Regardless of the high culinary accolades, Machu Picchu and the Sacred Valley of the Incas remains the main tourist attraction in Peru with about 750,000 tourists coming from abroad every year (mincetur.gob.pe). Though there are many routes the geography of the region almost requires that the first stop in the journey to Machu Picchu be the city of Cusco. Cusco has a population of approximately 1.3 million inhabitants, and was home to the imperial authority of the Incan empire prior to Pizarro’s invasion of Peru in 1532. Cusco’s tourist industry has grown and intensified greatly over the past few years and one of the most notable ways in which the city caters to the tastes of citizens from all over globe is through its restaurants. There are many restaurants that serve pizza, hamburgers and shawarma, and many others that serve traditional Peruvian fare in a fine dining setting. Whereas Arequipa has managed to maintain its unique culinary heritage, Cusco has conformed to the hegemony of the gastronomic boom. The case of Cusco also represents an interesting shift of cultural centers from Lima on the coast to Cusco in the highlands. This is demonstrated by the reverse migration from Lima to Cusco, which two of my chef informants did to open restaurants in Cusco. Cusco has also attracted many foreign restaurateurs, primarily from the US and Europe but also from other
Latin American countries, who often primarily feature Peruvian cuisine on their menus. While Cusco may not be the culinary destination that Lima or Arequipa is, it offers to tourists a gastronomic environment that is on par with them. Cusco offers accommodation of global tastes as well as creativity and innovation thanks to its alignment with the culture of the Gastronomic Boom.

The first section of this thesis will provide a deeper look at the history of food in Peru, in particular as it was utilized for the Spanish colonial project and subsequent settler colonial Republic. The Gastronomic Boom will be framed as a form of structural elimination and violence against indigenous peoples in Peru. In the Literature Review section, I will think through the Gastronomic Boom using the major concepts of the food justice paradigm, including food security, food sovereignty, food regimes, communities of food practice, and food gentrification. Given the global(ized) quality of this rise of Peruvian cuisine, it is also necessary to discuss the Gastronomic Boom as it relates to global food trends and movements, taking into consideration other scholarly interpretations of Peruvian gastronomy and cuisine. In addition to data collected in the field, this thesis draws upon the significant digital and print documentation of the Boom, especially on social media, news media, and films from Peru. I will present data from my fieldwork period, specifically from visits to El Parque de la Papa (Potato Park), Centro Bartolomé de las Casas. I will also attempt a discourse analysis of De ollas y sueños (2009), reportedly the first documentary film about the Gastronomic Boom. In the concluding section, I will present final critical perspectives and possibilities for future research on the Gastronomic Boom in Peru.
1.1 Settler Colonialism and the “Gastronomic Boom”: Structural violence and erasure

The discourse, restaurants, culinary festivals and institutes created by the people and forces behind Gastronomic Boom in Peru, contribute to the making of a gustatory settler colonial space. Though the Spanish invasion of the area now known as the Americas was certainly a colonial enterprise, with objectives of domination and exploitation of indigenous populations for subsequent looting and establishment of extractive mining and agricultural industries, the colonization of the region by the Spanish quickly took on a markedly settler characteristic. As the conquistadores, including Columbus himself, touted the richness of their “discoveries” in letters, and upon returning home from their bloody sojourns, more and more disenfranchised, illiterate, and penniless Spaniards traveled to the colonies to stay and propagate a rich society of their own making. At least that’s how the old story goes. Though the rule of the metropole was well established by the Cortes de las Indias back in Europe, the first settlers and their American-born progeny asserted their sovereignty, citing the oft quoted phrase, “obedezco pero no cumplo,” (I obey but I do not comply) when new laws and regulations were proclaimed by the Cortes. The criollo (American-born Spanish persons) elite subsequently made its own settler society, predicated on the elimination of the indigenous civilizations, enslavement of indigenous and African peoples, and the establishment of a new American order. Their intention to inhabit the land rather than merely explore, missionize or extract, and their sense of entitlement to create their own rootedness to the land, that makes settlers of the colonos in Latin America.

Veracini’s theoretical review of settler colonialism works to make the distinction between colonialism and settler colonialism, though, the two often overlap in ambiguous ways. This overlapping is complicated by Veracini’s argument that colonialism and settler colonialism, in

---


7 ibid., p. 4.
fact, “operate in dialectical tension and specific contradistinction.” As he and many other scholars perceive it, such dialectical tension arises when conceiving of Latin America as a settler colonial society, where hybridity would seem to upset the settler colonial-colonial binary. That is, the settler colonial ideology of extermination or marginalization of the indigenous and exogenous Other, respectively, would be antithetical to the cultural and biological hybridity evident in Latin America. In agreement with Richard Gott, I see the tendency to absolve Latin America of settler colonial status due to cultural hybridity as a fetishized idealization of the Conquest and subsequent state of affairs, particularly as they took and continue to take form in Peru.

The mestizaje discourse in Peru is a rhetorical tool, a foundational myth that tells of the great intermixing that took place subsequent to the optimistically glossed “encuentro de las dos culturas” (meeting of the two cultures). It tells of the making of the mestizo race—a majority group that claims Spanish, Indigenous, and less often, African ancestry—a result of the campaign to intermix the Spanish colonos with the Indigenous colonized. Though I recognize that I neglect and dismiss a large body of work on hybridity in Latin America here, I see the mestizaje myth as it takes shape in Peru, as itself a function of settler colonialism, which serves to indigenize the settler and legitimize the existence of the Peruvian state. The minority population of the mostly European descended elite gets off on this hybridity, (its culinary counterpart being “fusion”) which it cites selectively as part of the national characteristic. This indigenization through hybridization allows for the non-indigenous to claim roots, but also

---

makes distinguishing the dominant class as white, or ethnically distinct, more difficult.\textsuperscript{10} It simultaneously served as a means to whiten the population, making more equal the ratio of European to Indigenous.

By downplaying the role that racism has historically played in Peruvian politics, the tendency to celebrate the mestizaje as positive result that led to the construction of a modern, mestizo nation that is at once European and Indigenous, is similar to the melting pot myth of the United States. In both national myths, the violence of the process of intermixing by miscegenation in Latin America as opposed to policies of mostly cultural and linguistic assimilation in North America, proceeded in each case by outright genocide, is strategically underplayed. Though, as Veracini notes, some have cited the possibilities for cultural hybridity to undermine colonial authority, the narrative of hybridity via mestizaje in many ways legitimates the existence of the settler body politic. \textsuperscript{11} The Latin American hybridized mestizo case makes the situation more complex, but does not preclude the formation of settler colonial society structures in the same vein as occurs in the United States, Canada, or Australia. The mestizaje narrative, besides contributing to a foundational myth for the Peruvian settler nation, provides an important background and metaphor for framing the contemporary project of Peruvian cuisine construction, the Gastronomic Boom.

The Gastronomic Boom discourse is a key example of settler colonial society systems and space making at work in contemporary Peru. Analyzing this discourse of literal and metaphoric melting pot through the lens of settler colonialism allows for a more critical

\textsuperscript{10} Gott emphasizes that the white European dominant class established a settler colonial order that was inherited by following generations, and that this makes, despite what the narrative of mestizaje claims, the situation in Latin America a particularly white, settler colonial one. Gott, Richard. “Latin America as a White Settler Society.” \textit{Bulletin of Latin American Research}, 26, No. 2, (2007): 287.

investigation of contemporary politics in Peru and much of Latin America than merely looking at it through the lenses of neoliberal capitalism, US imperialism, and globalization.

The colonial period in Peru did not end with the Battle of Ayacucho in 1825. With the republican period and the establishment of what are the current geopolitical nation states of Latin America, the settler colonization intensified in terms of population, and more importantly, as a state apparatus to carry out political, genocidal, and assimilative forms of extermination of the Indigenous peoples. As Peter Wolfe states, “settler colonialism [is] a structure rather than an event.” The extension of the colonial period in Peru to the present day implicates the State and elite settler population in this process, holding them accountable and opening up a line of criticism to contribute to already formed resistance movements, such as those asserting their food sovereignty at El Parque de la Papa (to be discussed more in depth in the Fieldwork section).

The settler colonial situation is also more than the physical presence of conquistadores-come-settlers. Settler colonialism takes many forms, carried out in many state policies and in everyday personal interactions. One of the most quotidian arenas in which politics become very personal is the site of the dinner table, more specifically, the dinner plate. Food is not only a means of sustenance but also a vehicle of affective and political meaning making, likewise tangled up in relationships of production and economy. Most discussions of colonial extraction in Latin America focus on Spanish interests in the mining of precious metals, sugar and tobacco plantations or the production of leather, but few emphasize the crucial role that food played in the establishment of the populations of settlers and laborers upon which these activities depended. One of the most important foods for the Spanish colonial efforts, as well as those of the British, was the potato.

---

The merits of the potato come from its widely varied use value, which ranges from subsistence crop to industrial applications. Domesticated at least 2,000 years ago, up to 7,000 years ago according to many (Stevenson; Krogel; Pollan), the potato as a crop indispensable to the spread of civilization in Peru in pre-Inca times and certainly during the Incario. The cultivated tuber that we now know as the potato (Solanum tuberosum), is a hybrid form of wild potato varieties, selected for naturally and artificially.\(^{13}\) Cultivated in gardens resembling little the organized surcos of industrialized agriculture, Indigenous and campesino farmers have allowed for deliberately planted varieties to mingle with wild varieties that invade garden plots. This process originally gave rise to the cultigen that became the potato. The choice to allow for weed-like, wild potatoes to coexist with the selected tubers in their gardens was likely taken consciously with knowledge of the hybridization that would occur.\(^{14}\) Contemporary Quechua farmers continue this practice, knowing that genetic diversity ultimately strengthens their crop and allows for the creation of more varieties that are perhaps better suited for harsher, climate change-induced environmental events. These types of farming practices have allowed for the number of cultivable potato varieties in Peru to climb to nearly 3,000, while in Europe and the United States where potatoes are grown mostly in industrialized settings, there are only about 150 varieties. However, some of the Peruvian varieties, such as the exotic blues, are now being cultivated in the North. The potato provides a unique lens through which to view the construction of settler colonial space and structures at play in the Gastronomic Boom, particularly those of cultural appropriation and assimilation. The potato, though part of the diet of nearly every Peruvian, is associated with the Andean region and fetishized as an essential artifact of indigenous and campesino peoples’ food culture. Once merely a mundane dietary staple,


\(^{14}\) Ibid.
potatoes have been remade to be included in that which is gourmet, especially varieties unique in color, size and shape. In looking at the potato this way, we can follow its trajectory from the colonial period to the present day, and its entanglements with colonial and settler colonial interests.

The potato arrived in Europe via the Columbian exchange shortly after the Spanish invasion of Peru in 1537. Though it took a century or so for the potato to catch on in continental Europe, in England and Ireland the potato was an instant success. The introduction of the potato to England is the subject of legend; for much time Sir Francis Drake was credited with the dissemination of the plant. Though it is uncertain who introduced the tuber to Britain, they began to cultivate it in botanical gardens eventually leading to widespread cultivation once the cultigen was adapted to the ecology of the Isle. The British then introduced it to its colonies abroad. The potato made its way from Bermuda to the American colonies in 1621.\textsuperscript{15}

In the UK and the United States, the potato gained popularity and became a staple crop for human consumption; whereas continental Europe lagged in its acceptance of the plant, largely due to the plant’s botanical categorization as genus Solanum, a cousin of deadly nightshade. To date, the attribution of food value to the potato in the Anglophone world surpasses that of the rest of the global North where the potato is exploited for many industrial applications, such as the production of starch, alcohol (for consumption and industry), and livestock feed.\textsuperscript{16} In the United States, the abundance of corn, which is a cheaper form of calories, is preferred for many of the same industrial applications and also used as feed for livestock. Whether as food or industrial input, the potato’s widely applicable utility makes it at once highly valued and inexpensively priced. Despite this attribution of high value, since the colonial


\textsuperscript{16} Ibid, 166-168.
invasion in Peru and its arrival to Europe, the potato has been relegated a subpar food status, a food of the masses, a bread for the poor. Nonetheless, as Krogel points out,

[...]the potato helped to sustain many of the workers who fueled the industrializing societies of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Europe, while the monetary value of potato harvests obtained in Europe over the past 150 years have been calculated as surpassing more than three times over the value of all the precious metals extracted from Perú and send back to the Old World (Horkheimer 1973, 170). Thus, the seemingly humble potato can clearly be considered as one of Perú’s most valuable natural resources and its most significant agricultural gift to the world.  

While Krogel puts the value of the potato into market terms, the Indigenous cultures of Peru also recognize the potato as a food resource that allows for their civilizations to flourish and expand.

The potato played an important role for the Inca Empire and subsequently aided the Spanish in expanding their settlement in the Andes. The most salient case is illustrated by the exploitation of the mines of Potosí (now located in Bolivia, but at the time of the Spanish colony, was situated in Upper Peru). As proposed by Super and Krogel, control of food supplies, as well as the production of taste and food status, are essential to the project of colonial domination. Though Andean populations have persistently resisted this control and negotiated this relationship by maintaining a thriving subsistence agricultural economy, the Spanish were successful in disrupting the preexisting economic organization of the Andes, mainly through monetization and market exchange. It is generally accepted by Andeanist scholars that there were no market spaces or relationships in Peru prior to the arrival of the Spanish, though non-monetary trade relationships and barter activity through kin relationships, assumed by Murra’s verticality, were commonplace. With the Spanish invasion came the complete reorganization of

18 The concept of verticality describes the organization of the Inca economy as based on reciprocal and redistributive kinship relationships, exchange and barter between and within groups at different altitudes or ecological niches. Through these relationships, the Inca had access to a great diversity of goods, such as hot
commodity flows from one ecological niche to another, to one that moved people onto reducciones in ecological niches to concentrate and intensify the production of certain commodities such as grains, cloth, and livestock. As Murra put it, “[e]ach of these separate microclimates was turned over to a different European, to the great detriment of food supply and of the traditional complementary linking this mosaic into one production whole.” 19 Much of this reorganization and diversion of the traditional path of commodities was in service of the newly established mining community of Potosí. As Sempat Assadourian and Van Buren claim, “[k]ey to any discussion of [colonial] Andean society is the establishment and growth of Potosí.” 20

The development of Potosí led to big changes in the lives of the Indigenous people, who were drafted for slave and wage labor in the mines. Not all of the Indigenous people of the area were forced to work in the mines; some volunteered with the promise of wage payment. Others were allowed to remain in service to their kuracas and produce food products that would then be paid as tribute to the Spanish. 21 Salaman describes that one of the most important food products at this time was chuñu, or freeze dried potatoes, as “these slave-workers [at Potosí] were maintained almost exclusively on chuño, and bitter is the complaint raised by Cieza de León against the middlemen who swarmed out of Spain, bought chuño cheaply from the producer and, peppers, tropical fruits and coca, which they could not produce in the higher altitudes of Cusco. As Brush describes it, these ecological zones include from highest altitude to lowest: the puna, where vegetation consists of grasses upon which llamas and sheep graze; the jalka, also called (lower) puna, where potatoes and other tubers flourish; the kichwa zone, where grains like wheat and corn are grown; and the yunka, or ceja de selva, where tropical crops like coca, manioc, and citrus fruits are cultivated. 18 The lower puna region is where potatoes and other tubers were domesticated and cultivated until the present.


21 Ibid.
after selling it at a high price to the native workers, returned home with their ill-gotten
fortunes”.

Sempat Assadourian’s work is significant in that it focuses on the regional economy of
the Andes, especially the southern region around Potosí. In emphasizing the economy and trade
within the colonial space, he shows the importance of the flow of commodities in organizing this
space. He looks at silver production in Potosí and traces backward linkages to products like
mules and cloth that became essential to existence at Potosí. While he doesn’t spend much time
on food in his book, it can be assumed that the consumption of food products by indigenous mine
workers, who would have otherwise attained their sustenance by producing food in their own
plots, played a large role in the development of the internal colonial economy. He argues that the
internal economy proved to be more economically significant for the Spanish than the
international silver trade itself.

The potato’s introduction into Europe soon after colonial contact made for any early
separation of the potato from its Peruvian source, though problems with disease and low crop
yields have since kept scientists interested in the biological diversity and success of the potato in
the Andes. Though the economy of Peru since independence in 1821 has been largely export
oriented, until recently, the potato has not experienced a directly global trajectory from Peru in
any significant, market sense. With the rise of the demand for natural and “super” foods in the
North, the exoticized native varieties of potato have gained popularity and are imported as potato
chips or cultivated on organic farms in places like Blue Moon Farm in Urbana, IL. Within Peru,
the potato has continued to occupy a significant place in what Krogel calls the food landscape of

---

22 Redcliffe Salaman. The History and the Social Influence of the Potato. (Cambridge: Cambridge University
Press, 1985), 40-41; also cited Stevenson.

23 Stern, Steve J. “New Directions in Andean Economic History: A Critical Dialogue with Carlos Sempat
the Andes. In her book, *Food, Power and Resistance in the Andes*, Krogel analyzes verbal and visual Quechua narratives that subtly subvert dominant discourses and assert *lo andino* in the national imaginary.\(^\text{24}\)

Krogel shows that due to the export orientation of the Peruvian economy, there has been a food supply crisis for much of the past 150 years in Peru, which has necessitated the importation of foodstuffs that could be produced in Peru.\(^\text{25}\) The main agricultural export form Peru is coffee, but the Northern demands for Andean super foods like quinua, maca, and native blue potatoes has deepened the export links into regions that were perhaps excluded or participated little in the production of food products for export. As these markets are nascent, and mining and other extractive resources have historically been the most important export industries in Peru, much of the agricultural production in Peru is small scale and for subsistence. Another consequence of the export orientation is the reliance on food imports, which have created differences in the food landscapes of the Andes and Coast. In the sierra, the potato and other Andean crops like quinua and oca are considered staples, where as white rice and bread make up the base of the diet on the coast. Krogel is among scholars who believe that a refocus of agriculture in Peru to producing Andean crops for local and national consumption could put an end to problems of food insecurity and malnutrition while simultaneously increasing the prestige of such foods among the indigenous populations. Ironically, in the midst of the national food project of the Gastronomic Boom, led by Chef Gastón Acurio, elites and middle classes are enjoying a new felt sense of pride in *lo andino* represented in their cuisine, as demonstrated in the fashionable *novoandino* trend in dishes that feature colorful potatoes, *quinua*, and *maca* now.


\(^{25}\) Ibid.
all the rage in Peruvian restaurants from Cusco, Arequipa and Lima to New York and Oregon. As the Gastronomic Boom attempts to market Peruvian cuisine as artisanal and natural, these products, once for local consumption only, gain currency and prestige in the national and global markets. Many report that, for many small producers, this has led to a preference to sell their crops rather than consume them themselves, increasing the dependency on imported, industrialized food products and contributing to malnutrition and hunger. Many also reject this as a simplification of the situation and a moralistic response of academics and conscious consumers who have idealized, essentialized notions of Andean culture they would rather have undisturbed by capitalism and globalization.

Regardless of the debates on the effects of market capitalism in the Andes, the Gastronomic Boom does not exist without Peruvian ingredients like the potato, which are utilized with little recognition of the contribution of the campesino, though there are some efforts taken to engage in direct trade with campesino producers and events like Día del Campesino at Mistura, the massive food festival held in Lima every year. As in the times of the Spanish occupation, Andean staple foods have once again become a cite of expansion of settler colonial interests, this time at the hands of elite Peruvian chefs.

Where the Andean crops and Indigenous labor were pivotal to the Spanish colonial regime in Peru, they were equally important to the ideational formation of the Peruvian state, which continues to be “under construction”, as it were. The settler elites who fought against the Spanish crown for independence had another charge to build a Peruvian nation state. The Native as a figure played an important role in constructing the national imaginary, as it continues to do

---

26 http://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2013/jan/16/vegans-stomach-unpalatable-truth-quinoa
27 According to my interview with a female Peruvian restaurateur in Cusco who moved to there to open and manage the local franchise of Chi Cha, this and other restaurants that are part of the Acurio brand, have committed to sourcing their ingredients from local campesinos without the interference of a middleman.
so today. The agents of the Gastronomic Boom have an interest in constructing a distinctly Peruvian cuisine, made for and by Peruvians, using Peruvian ingredients and the labor of Peruvian workers in the kitchens, the fields, and fishing boats. The discourse that accompanies this great mobilization of industry around the production of Peruvian cuisine calls upon the foundational tropes of national identity, such as the mestizaje, and reinterprets them into a gastronomic metaphor. The mestizaje becomes la olla, la cocina, la mesa. As the Liberals wanted an independent, modern América distinguished from the Spanish colonial metropole, the ideologues of the Gastronomic Boom seek a modern Peruvian gastronomy distinct from others in the Americas and Europe. The Native is what provides this distinction. Though, the multi-ethnicity of the cuisine as partly Chinese, Japanese, Afro, Italian, and Spanish, is also emphasized. Gastón Acurio claims that the most Peruvian dish is papa con ají, potato with spicy pepper sauce. Both items are indigenous to Peru, distinctly Peruvian, even. Without the Native, the most Peruvian of meals would not be possible, and neither would be the state of Peru itself. However, it would be difficult to find a space for the Native beyond the level of the symbolic, at the proverbial and literal table in the national discussion of politics and gastronomy with the chefs, politicians, and foreign investors. And where he/she is present, it is by means of appropriation and mistrel-esque displays of multicultural inclusion. The Gastronomic Boom counter intuitively requires the presence and the erasure of the Indigenous population in Peru in order to grow. In this way, it perpetuates the structure of settler colonialism and (re)produces a settler colonial space almented by a multicultural discourse.
II. FOOD JUSTICE LITERATURE REVIEW: SOCIAL CHANGE THROUGH FOOD

In this section, I will think through the contradictions and complexities of the Gastronomic Boom in Peru using the lens of food justice. I will consider major concepts in the food justice literature, namely, those of food security, food sovereignty, food regimes, communities of food practice, and food gentrification. I will discuss these in terms of their applicability to the current situation in Peru, as well as their potentialities for redirecting the interest in food and cuisine in Peru from elite gastronomy and neoliberal development to a food movement fighting for access to land, producer control over food production, and equal distribution of food and all profits made from its sale, whether as a primary good or as a $30 plate at a five star restaurant. Nonetheless, I do not intend to propose definite solutions to the issues of racial and economic inequality created and perpetuated by this phenomenon in Peru. Rather, I suggest looking at the Gastronomic Boom through a social justice lens so that the small farmers and fisherman, indigenous communities, and urban working class are made more visible at the proverbial table. The power to reorganize the food system and interpret what “Peruvian” cuisine means should rest in their hands.

The social relations of the food economy in Peru are messy. Given the immense pride in the national cuisine shared by most Peruvians, the global attention garnered for Peru’s extreme biodiversity and skilled cooks and chefs appear to be welcomed by all—the fact that only an elite few Peruvians are capitalizing on the interest in the food culture of marginalized Andean and Amazonian regions is what leaves a bad taste in the mouths of many. Adding to this messiness is the fact that a national food movement that would move the center of power from the bourgeois class to the campesinado and urban working class, would benefit greatly from the galvanizing, mobilizing capabilities of the Gastronomic Boom. However, the Gastronomic Boom
exacerbates many social problems in Peru through structural forms of violence and must therefore be resisted.

There are already many pockets of resistance in Peru where communities have worked to take control over their access to and production of food. The Comedores Populares, a woman-led movement of community kitchens started in during the food crises of the 1970s, are still in existence today. Though, over the years, many interests—from CARITAS to USAID to the Peruvian neoliberal populist state—have coopted the effort to make it fit their imperial and clientelistic aims, the comedores populares have been an important space not only for collectivization and community control over access to food, but also for women to move into the public sphere. Unfortunately, the Peruvian government is less and less interested in continuing to provide the meager support for the comedores populares (mostly dried beans, rice, and oil), effectively starving out these community kitchens. Academic interest in the comedores populares has also waned since the 1990s and early 2000s. But, the mothers and wives who collectively run these comedores populares take to the streets whenever the government threatens to cut their benefits. The space of resistance and community organizing that the comedor popular provides must not be overlooked nor forgotten.\(^{28}\)

Another important sector of resistance as it relates to food is at Parque de la Papa, Potato Park, in Pisac, Cusco, Peru. Parque de la Papa is an association of five indigenous communities, which lay at different ecological niches in the Andes mountains about an hour from the urban center of Cusco. The aim of the Park is for the five communities to live and work following their traditions focusing on the production and conservation of native varieties of potato. The community members use the term food sovereignty to describe the motivation behind their

\(^{28}\) As an undergraduate student, I was awarded a grant to do research at a comedor popular in Lurín, Lima, Peru. The information provided here are reflections from this research conducted in 2009.
efforts. In the face of external forces such as climate change and intensified exportation of heritage food products, the communities of El Parque de la Papa are determining for themselves a stable livelihood rooted in their own culture. I visited El Parque de la Papa during my fieldwork and will discuss it in the Fieldwork section of the thesis. The point in providing these examples, is that in Peru, there are already spaces where communities are resisting, albeit indirectly, the Gastronomic Boom and its systematic perpetuation of the historical processes of exploitation of land and labor, cultural appropriation and precarity of dependence on low priced food for survival. This demonstrates that food justice is desired and needed by the marginalized populations of Peru. These efforts must be in communication and work in solidarity for widespread change to be made to the food system in Peru. The hyper presence of food in the national discourse, thanks in large part to the Gastronomic Boom, provides the preconditions for a substantive food movement to gain national attention and, hopefully, national mobilization. But as the fight for food justice in the United States and other countries has shown, the disparate interests in the food economy make a coherent movement with common goals difficult to form. Thinking of the contemporary context of Peru as one that is saturated by a political discourse revolving around food, allows for the food justice paradigm to be applied to the case of the Gastronomic Boom. I will now move on to discuss specific concepts and their applicability to the situation in Peru, and their possibilities for creating change through social food movement there.
2.1 Food and social justice

Food justice is a general frame for the intersection of food—it’s production, consumption, associated values and cultures—and social justice imperatives of rights for workers, women, marginalized racial and ethnic groups, and low-income families to accessible, environmentally sustainable, high quality, affordable food. The global food system and food systems of individual countries are increasingly industrialized, corporate, inaccessible, and gentrified. Increasingly throughout the globe, highly processed foods are prized for their convenience and their prestige; industrialized agriculture practices create preferences for environmentally destructive genetically modified monocrops; and middle class consumer demands for fast food chains and exoticized “super foods” (like purple potatoes) result in displacement of small business and producers, and price increases that make once humble staples suddenly unaffordable for most. Food justice, as a concept and practice, seeks to create changes that would result in an accessible, environmentally friendly, healthy and affordable food system. In the generality of food justice, as with social justice, lies its strength and its potential weakness—any and all initiatives that resemble these aims to be lumped under the food justice umbrella.

Robert Gottlieb and Anupama Joshi in their book, *Food Justice*, argue that the broadness of this conceptual framework allows for advocates to navigate and negotiate the food system to create system-wide and policy changes.29 They propose that this broad approach also creates a space for links to form between “different kinds of advocates, including those concerned with health, the environment, food quality, globalization, workers’ rights and working conditions, access to fresh and affordable food, and more sustainable land use.”30 Food justice, then, is a

---

30 ibid.
broadly defined, guiding framework under which many different communities and activists function, though they have different interests and tactics for achieving their goals. Just as with the social justice paradigm, a majority of the food justice advocates would appear to have left leaning political views, though some are certainly more center or radical on the spectrum than others. Food justice, at least in the United States, frequently is coopted by the center-left-liberal agenda that seeks to create change incrementally through institutional channels and those that conform to the developmentalist, paternalistic charity-based status quo, with hopes of making capitalism slightly more “human”. Such coopted projects would be those of SNAP Education programs (Supplemental Nutritional Assistance Program, formerly “food stamps”) and food assistance and nutrition education provided by organizations such as the World Health Organization and USAID. Though the participants in these programs may experience a short-term improvement in their quality of life, the long-term costs of state surveillance and dependency may affect local autonomy and health for generations to come.

By contrast, food justice projects that operate at the grassroots level, such as the oft-cited case of the Coalition of Immokalee Workers (CIW), undermine the status quo as they are organized by and based in local communities. The CIW is a farmworker-led movement started in Immokalee, Florida in the late 1990s, where many migrant farmworkers picked tomatoes for fast food corporations such as Taco Bell, McDonald’s and Wendy’s under slave-like conditions. The workers of Immokalee organized and brought to light the injustices of their living and working conditions, winning cases in the Department of Justice against employers who abused workers physically. With their penny per pound campaign, they won better wages from Taco Bell and McDonald’s, the fight with Wendy’s for better wages and fairer treatment continues to today. Though grassroots organizations like the CIW have made great steps in advancing food justice,

---

the question of labor still presents a huge conundrum to the food activist community that has emphasized environmentalism through organics and sustainability while neglecting those who work in the fields, factories and restaurants to produce that food. This problem is not unique to the United States. However, in Peru, the problem lies not in an outright neglect or refusal to see the contradictions of the juxtaposition of a high-priced gourmet food production with low-wage farm labor and hunger. Rather, it is the fetishization of that labor as the necessary basis of an artisanal, haute cuisine. Its an exploitation that is not hidden by the relations of production but celebrated by those who idealize and essentialized small producers as wanting to live off the land, closer to nature, without the creature comforts of the bourgeois city life. Clearly, labor is a serious global food justice issue.

This is why, I and other radical food justice activists, believe that for real change to occur, food justice must address the root causes of the problems, lying in capitalist imperialism, settler, neo- and post-colonialism, and heteropatriarchy. Reforms to agricultural policy sought through governmental or institutional channels take too long and run the risk of cooptation by more powerful interests. Real changes to the food system and larger status quo must include those who give their hard labor in the fields to produce the cuisines that sustain us all.
2.2 Food security vs. Food sovereignty

The concept of food security was born of a concern over accessibility to food, mostly in Third World nations but also in communities of People of Color, where many do not enjoy, “a situation that exists when all people, at all times, have physical, social and economic access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food that meets their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life.” Food security has framed the discourse of international agencies, non-governmental organizations and governments in food related development projects. It is a neoliberal construction that apolitically assigns the responsibility for resolving hunger and accessibility to market forces. Achieving or restoring food security through targeted programs is often a goal or stipulation of structural adjustment programs for World Bank and International Monetary Fund loans. Food security is also one of the primary mandates of the United Nations’ Food and Agriculture Organization and USAID. These imperial, neocolonial project-oriented agencies that make up the dominant food regime monopolize the construction of food (in)security and utilize this discourse for furthering their objectives.

Fairbairn (2010) frames food security in this way, and as such, finds that food sovereignty is a reaction to neoliberal economics and an oppositional antidote to food security and its goals of legitimating the capitalist imperial development paradigm. La Vía Campesina (LVC), an international movement comprised of “about 164 local and national organizations in 73 countries from Africa, Asia, Europe and the Americas,” first coined the term food sovereignty

---


in a presentation at the World Food Summit of 1996.\textsuperscript{34} As the name would suggest, the movement sprang from roots in Latin America where peasant mobilizations had begun to take form in an organized fashion starting in the 1980s.\textsuperscript{35} Food sovereignty as La Vía Campesina defines it on their current website, is “the right of peoples to healthy and culturally appropriate food produced through sustainable methods and their right to define their own food and agriculture systems.”\textsuperscript{36} As reported in other sources, LVC previously framed sovereignty in terms of the nation; the rephrasing of it as the “people’s” right to farming, is a move away from “emphasizing the a nation’s right to decide food policy to stressing the rights of local communities and peoples, who may not be represented by the nation-state.”\textsuperscript{37}

Many organizations have been working toward food security goals for decades in Peru. Food sovereignty, as proposed by La Vía Campesina, is seen by many as the antidote to the unbalanced power relations of food security programs as it situates the power to resist the neoliberal, globalized food system in the hands of peasants (campesina) and/or small producers who utilize their traditional ways (la vía) to grow food. This represents a majority of the food production in Peru. However, nothing is ever so easy. La Vía Campesina and its concept of food sovereignty have been around since the mid-1990s. It has gained popularity and currency all over the world. As food sovereignty movements grow and gain recognition from international agencies and governments, they run the risk of cooptation by other interests. We must always cast a critical eye on these concepts and their implications.

\textsuperscript{34} http://viacampesina.org/en/index.php/organisation-mainmenu-44
\textsuperscript{36} http://viacampesina.org/en/index.php/organisation-mainmenu-44
Often times, the concept of food sovereignty proposes a monolithic approach to conceptualizing the notion of sovereignty, despite the fact that at each local site there are undoubtedly multiple sovereignties at stake when it comes to food production and way of life.\textsuperscript{38} The food sovereignty proposed by La Vía Campesina or other organizations may or may not coincide with or represent indigenous concepts of sovereignty. (Food) sovereignty struggles are more complex than these definitions would make it seem.

In critiquing oversimplified conceptualizations of food sovereignty, it is important to note that different peoples have different stakes in the fight for it. Each of its iterations constructs food sovereignty as a response to neoliberalism, globalization, and developmentalist approaches to addressing the unequal food system through food security goals.\textsuperscript{39} None appear to directly address continuing situations of colonialism and the need for decolonization. For many indigenous communities, sovereignty is an assertion of self-governance and self-determination within the context of settler colonialism, which continues often by way of neoliberal economic policies, but also entails a larger list of affronts to indigenous survivance. This could certainly apply to the Peruvian case. Therefore, in a discussion of food sovereignty, there must be a closer look at what sovereignty means, as well as, whom it is for.

In his book, \textit{Peace, Power, and Righteousness: An Indigenous Manifesto}, Taiaiake Alfred, a Kahnawake Mohawk scholar-activist, provides a critical view on the notion of indigenous sovereignty. He is altogether suspicious of sovereignty as a goal for Native peoples as it is linked so closely with the settler state’s legal framework and treatment of indigenous

\begin{footnotesize}
\bibitem{Iles2013}

\bibitem{Fairbairn2010}
\end{footnotesize}
peoples as “self-governed” but not self-determined. For Alfred, “sovereignty as it is currently understood and applied in indigenous-state relations cannot be seen as an appropriate goal or framework, because it has no relevance to indigenous values”. Alfred would likely prefer the promotion of “traditional” foods within indigenous communities, produced and prepared in a traditional manner, but not linked to the politics of sovereignty, as that would bring a state-oriented presence to the effort. Though thoroughly binary in his approach, Alfred makes important distinctions between what is sovereignty and what is self-determination. Fairbairn also would seem to agree that self-determination is indigenous in contrast to sovereignty; she highlights indigenous persons making up a part of the food sovereignty movement just as much as those who want to reinstate the control of the state over food production. As food sovereignty is a mainly a response to neoliberalism, there is a great appeal among activists to bring the state back as a major actor in the food system. It is here where food sovereignty would be possible incongruous with indigenous actors and theorists such as Alfred, who assert indigenous nationhood and advocate for disengagement with the state.

Also made apparent in the aforementioned LVC definitions of food sovereignty is that the discourse of food sovereignty locates the nation as the space where rights can be asserted. However, later iterations (since 1996) of the food sovereignty concept such as this one on La Vía Campesina’s current website, reframe the movement as one for “the right of peoples to healthy and culturally appropriate food produced through sustainable methods and their right to define

41 ibid.
their own food and agriculture systems." This move away from "emphasizing the a nation’s right to decide food policy to stressing the rights of local communities and peoples, who may not be represented by the nation-state;" demonstrates an important refocus on the small producers as the movement’s main constituents rather than nation-states, but also shows that indigenous peoples are not treated as sovereign nations by within the realm of food sovereignty. This relates with the movements’ preoccupation with recognition, which will be discussed shortly.

Martinez-Torres and Rosset tout the transnational nature of the LVC movement, as it spread from Latin America to Africa, Asia, North American and Europe. For them, the transnational links forged by food sovereignty have the potential to alleviate tensions between the global North and South. The linkages they celebrate between farming people (North) and peasants (South) are fomented by the notion of peasant identity, presented as an umbrella term that seems to include indigenous peoples who also form part of the larger nation state, though it seems that indigenous persons are considered part of the Latin American peasantry, not the North American. However, the glossed term of peasant, or in Latin America, campesino, in effect erases Indigeneity and indigenous persons as part of the struggle for a different food system and new rights. Though peasants can be indigenous and indigenous peoples can be peasants, this is not the case for all. The LVC concept of peasant rights, at least at it would play out in Latin America, lumps indigenous subjectivities in the same category with peasants of African descent and European descent. Likewise, the association of food sovereignty with the

46 In the summer of 2013, I attended a talk at Casa Campesina at Centro Bartolomé de las Casas in Cuzco, Peru on the Ley de Consulta Previa (Law of Previous Consent). The discussion was translated from Spanish to Quechua and was lead by a lawyer from Peru who works at the Interamerican Court of Human Rights in Costa Rica. He highlighted the requirement for indigenous groups to be registered for the law to apply to them, and that campesino communities do not automatically qualify, they must auto-identify themselves as indigenous.
peasant way complicates the claims of indigenous peoples who are not strictly farming oriented, as in the case of urban or Amazonian indigenous peoples. Clearly, the concept of food sovereignty does not recognize the multiple subjectivities and multiple iterations of sovereignty that could comprise the actors within the movement.

The politics of sovereignty in relation to recognition is another potential point of contention as some indigenous groups refuse the necessity of recognition by the state or any other settler colonial body. For many scholars of food sovereignty, the recognition of the concept by NGOs and governments, such as in Correa’s Ecuador, is a signal of success. However, success defined as recognition of the existence and goals of food sovereignty, rather than in terms of the movement’s effectiveness in organizing, uprising and global efforts of solidarity misses the point of the movement. In their paper presented 2013’s international conference, Food Sovereignty: A Critical Dialogue, organized by Yale University’s Program in Agrarian Studies, Iles and Montenegro advocate for the necessity to gain more recognition in order for food sovereignty to be more successful. They find that recognition of sovereignty, especially of indigenous peoples, from within and outside of the movement is key to “having and exerting sovereignty.” They see formal recognition granted by international law as “central to the right of self-determination,” as well as a way to help fortify a people’s sense of identity. Alfred’s skepticism of sovereignty complicates this facile interpretation of the positive aspects of recognition.

49 ibid.
Audra Simpson, a contemporary of Alfred’s in the Mohawk community and professor of Anthropology at Columbia University also complicates the notion of recognition as empowerment. In her book, *Mohawk Interruptus*, she presents ethnographic data that shows recognition as a function of the settler colonial state. Settler colonial state recognition takes form in the burden of proof of identity and citizenship, and facilitates state “surveillance, regulation, scrutiny, and possible intervention.” Iles and Montenegro’s preoccupation with recognition as a necessary path on the path to success, therefore, shows their complicity with the settler colonial, state-centered order. They also contradict themselves in that they see recognition as pivotal in the acquisition of sovereignty, but also view that the concept of sovereignty as presented up to this point as exclusionary and not serving the interests of food sovereignty. This clearly plays into stereotypical settler fears of insular, exclusive, antagonistic Natives.

Their purpose in this article is also to point out food sovereignty’s issue of scale, seeing that the food sovereignty movement focuses too much on the small, local context and should rather “scale up” to be more successful. That is, the concept and practice of food sovereignty should be recognized by those at the top in order to be taken seriously and really have a chance at changing the entire global food system. This scaling up would include making food sovereignty more a palatable to a wider audience by moving from its grounding in alternative epistemologies towards a more scientific, technological one. Success, then, would look very similar to the existing food system status quo by way of recognition international and state governing bodies, which is indeed the way that the food sovereignty movement is going.

---

52 Ibid.
However, this begs the question of why the burden to reorganize the entire food economy must fall onto the peasants and indigenous populations who seem to embody essentialized notions of pre-market or anti-market modes of production? In Peru, this kind of essentialism by the upper classes and food sovereignty activists themselves has already caused problems. The essentialized peasant and indigenous portrait of farming life and technology is fetishized by the Gastronomic Boom and appropriated as a means of showing solidarity and concern for their wellbeing and access to upward social mobility. By contrast, the point of La Vía’s promotion of peasant identity is exactly to counter the idea that campesinos need to assimilate to normative notions of development and progress. But the essentialism takes the same form, plays with the same tropes in each case. This makes distinguishing the two difficult at times. As chefs and upper and middle class Peruvians see it, tradition lies inherently, essentially within the hearts of campesinos and indigenous peoples, therefore, the presence of their bodies in person at gastronomic festivals, and in print or in digital representations, is necessary to show the rootedness of Peruvian gastronomy. This cultural appropriation is easy to call out when its perpetrated at the hands of the elite, but food activists hoping for a grassroots, bottom-up approach to change need to be ever more self-critical to make sure that their desires do not likewise appropriate cultural tropes or impose further burdens.

At the onset of the food sovereignty movement, La Vía Campesina mobilized thanks to grassroots organizing strategies and orientations. As the movement strives to be a voice for the voiceless peasants, “La Vía Campesina from the very beginning clearly staked out its differences from NGOs and will not allow the membership of organizations that are not true, grassroots-based peasant organizations.” Though member organizations must be grassroots, the movement

---

does accept financial support from “the contributions of its members, by private donations and by the financial support of some NGOs, foundations and local and national authorities.”\textsuperscript{54} Since the publication of Martinez-Torres and Rosset’s 2010 article, it seems as though the movement has relaxed its stance regarding involvement with NGOs, foundations and aid agencies that were previously perceived as “external interference in its internal decisions,” which could jeopardize the movement’s “independence and autonomy.”\textsuperscript{55} The website suspiciously does not list the funding organizations. It would appear that La Vía Campesina has cozied up to some of the interests they previously fought.

While members of LVC continue to protest the United Nations, World Trade Organization, International Monetary Fund, and World Bank, the concept of food sovereignty has been adopted by many NGOs and organizations similar to La Vía Campesina. Though almost every work on food sovereignty cites the definitions and examples of La Vía Campesina, the organization no longer has a monopoly on the movement. That other actors around the globe have taken up the concept of food sovereignty is not in and of itself problematic, but the institutionalization of the concept in state governments and NGOs leads to what Claeys sees is the “paradox of institutionalization.”\textsuperscript{56} This paradox has to do with the institutionalization of the movement, a movement’s engagement with institutions and the threat to the movement’s subversive potential.\textsuperscript{57} Claeys’ article, based on ethnographic research, finds that as the food sovereignty movement engages more and more with institutions and advocates for recognition of rights to food sovereignty and rights of peasants as human rights, the movement becomes

\textsuperscript{54} http://viacampesina.org/en/index.php/organisation-mainmenu-44
\textsuperscript{57} ibid.
complacent with the reformist approach to fixing the food system that food sovereignty originally rose against. Food sovereignty’s recent appeal to the human rights discourse led the movement in this direction. Though Claeys sees the right for food sovereignty as, “kin to the right to autonomy or self-government which has been recognized in the International Declaration on the rights of Indigenous Peoples,” decolonization, when it appears in the literature, does not necessarily have the same meaning for food sovereignty activists as it does for indigenous peoples. According to a French Vía Campesina activist she interviewed, in the movement “[They] are not talking about a political independence but economic independence. Today, decolonization is not about state in relation to another, but about a state in relation to transnational corporations.” So long as the food sovereignty movement takes on neoliberal global capitalism through reformist, institutional channels the place of indigenous peoples will be relegated to the multicultural space carved out for them in spaces like the UN. If indigenous people already have a declaration of rights that use similar language, why should they be included in efforts toward food sovereignty? The paradox of institutionalization relates back to anxieties about global recognition of the food sovereignty movement, which go back to questions of sovereignty and the interests of whom it ultimately serves.

The purpose of this discussion is not to detract from the food sovereignty movement’s achievements organizing countless communities in resistance to the injustices of the globalized, neoliberal food system, through organizations like La Vía Campesina. It is simply an exercise in critical engagement with the food sovereignty literature and discourse in light of their generally positive depictions of this most radical of food justice paradigms. The concept of food sovereignty is beneficial for framing the kind of change that needs to take place in the food

systems, especially in places like Peru; however, the discourse is being coopted by liberal multicultural reformers, and chefs, who idealize peasant modes of production. Food activists are also guilty of placing a burden upon those who follow the “peasant way” to change the entire food system from the bottom up, while the rest of us continue business as usual. In spite of food sovereignty’s forays into community change, its messiness neither untangles the complexities of the global food system at large, nor in Peru.
2.3 Food regimes and communities of food practice

Food regimes analysis developed by Canadian food scholar-activist, Harriet Friedmann (with Phillip McMichael), combines commodity chain studies with world-systems approach to ascertain an understanding of “agri-food systems”. In her contribution to an anthology of, *Critical Perspectives in Food Studies*, Friedmann incorporates actor-network theory, “which tracks human and non-human ‘actants’ from below.” In combining these approaches, she brings the top-down approach of world-systems theory to meet the bottom-up approaches of commodity chain studies and actor-network theory. Food regimes, then, are “the link between ‘international relations of production and consumption of food’ and ‘periods of capital accumulation’ (which are also periods whose rules are set by hegemonic powers).” Following this definition, the mechanisms behind the Gastronomic Boom are the current neoliberal, global food regime, expressed locally through the settler colonial, multicultural, developmental discourse of the Peruvian elite. The contemporary food regime is also predicated on the flow of commodities from South to North, which the chefs of Peru are all too happy to facilitate. Purple potatoes and quinoa now grace the plates of many restaurants and households in the United States.

The food regimes framework is also helpful for thinking through the effect of these commodity flows and interests in gastronomy on processes of gentrification of food products. Food gentrification is a relatively recent concern in food justice circles, that does not carry much conceptual weight but describes accurately the phenomenon of a product like quinoa going from a staple crop of the Andean regions of Peru, Bolivia and Ecuador that elites would have regarded

---

60 ibid. p. 16
61 ibid. p. 21
as one of the foods with the lowest prestige possible, to a very lucrative “super food” presented to middle and upper class consumers in Peru in gourmet dishes, and to the same sector in the global North. Native varieties of potato, such as the “exotic blues” are now following a similar trajectory; though, thanks to food sovereignty activists there are efforts to protect the intellectual property rights of indigenous communities that grow these potatoes and prefer not to export them to avoid the risk of biopiracy (more on this in the Fieldwork section). Food regimes analysis, coupled with studies of food gentrification, perhaps presents the best framework for conceptualizing and framing what is happening in Peru with the Gastronomic Boom.

Friedmann’s framework is very strong in this regard, but fails to make the case for the use of actor-network theory to describe how social movements create food regime change. However, in her discussion of “Communities of Food Practice,” Friedmann ascertains a means to link the seemingly disparate goals of food justice activists. As presented by Freidmann, communities of food practice in where the most effective agents of change to the food system are small, community-based, values-oriented organizations, see change to food regimes as occurring within a larger community. As part of a general food community, which creates a space for all organizations and individuals within it to build ties and form coalitions is conceptually very promising, so long as none are expected to conform to the status quo of center left politics.62 This notion of communities of food practice could potentially provide the link that the various grassroots, food justice activities need to build a multiclass, multi-actor resistance to the food regime of the Gastronomic Boom.

---

2.4 Summary

In this section, I have critically engaged with food justice as a general framework, and specific concepts of food security, food sovereignty, food regimes, communities of food practice, and food gentrification. In seeing how these concepts relate to the food system of Peru, some have shown better their potentiality for creating radical change. Food security was born of developmental organizations and as such, has not a transformational power, but one that furthers settler colonial and imperial interests of the US and Europe. Food sovereignty, is most promising in that it has already mobilized millions against the neoliberal, development state and international organizations and the power dynamics of the globalized market, though the literature lacks a self-critical edge. It also lends itself to cooptation by the same institutions it once fought. Food regimes analysis provides a holistic picture of the interests of the top and the power differentials that lead to actors at the bottom to create social movements in resistance. Communities of food practice also successfully conceptualizes, though rather abstractly, the ways in which links can form between different food justice oriented grassroots organizations and actors, creating an even larger community of practice in the process. This also has a great potential to usher in a food regime change. Food gentrification, though lacking a theoretical framework, is helpful in describing the process of how a low-status food becomes one of prestige. Upon thinking the Gastronomic Boom in light of these concepts, I find that food justice as a frame for this discussion is very useful, though overly broad and vague. The idea of communities of food practice perhaps best describes the lacking of food justice in finding that there is a great deal of work that needs to be done in getting agents with similar politics to be in communication and form coalitions to bring change to food regimes. In describing this
potentiality, a new framework is proposed that could foment the shift from an elite project to a food movement in Peru.
III. FIELDWORK

During a seven-week stay in Cusco, with visits to surrounding towns and cities, I conducted an ethnographic study of the local food landscape, encountering actors at every node in the production chain of Peruvian cuisine. I initially proposed to focus my research on questions of identity (re)formation by eating in fancy restaurants to experience the food and space first hand, and to interview front and back-of-the-house staff. I also planned to interview tourists to gain insight about their perspectives on what Peruvian food is and what they thought about it before and after their arrival to Peru. However, after a few weeks dining at overpriced restaurants and clumsily making my way through informal interviews with Peruvians in the food service industry, it became clear to me that questions of identity and representation were not very relevant and were perhaps missing the point. For instance, during my one-day visit to El Parque de la Papa, an association of five communities working for food sovereignty that also welcomes agrotourists, I asked one of the local community members and tour guide if he felt that dishes like lomo saltado and ají de gallina, classic examples of costal comida criolla, represented him and the Andean region. He looked at me blankly responding, “Of course, those are some of my favorite dishes.” It was clear that being represented in the national cuisine was not a concern for him.

Generally, when I attempted to describe what it was I was going to ask about in an interview, I would use the term “boom gastronómico” which also got me many blank stares. Once I explained that I was investigating the “cocina peruana” (Peruvian cuisine) I got better

---

reception. People seemed genuinely interested in the topic, but were confused by the phrase “gastronomic boom”. I found time and again that when I asked if the most well known Peruvian dishes were truly representative of all Peruvians, people responded that, “yes, they do”, and seemed confused about why I would ask such a question. By contrast, mentioning concerns about the equitable distribution of economic benefits reaped by the new interest in Peruvian cuisine were well received and hotly commented upon. It became clear to me that what would be most relevant for most of the people I spoke with, would be to shift my focus to gathering perspectives from actors at each link in the food chain, so to speak.

To get the perspective of the farmers who grow the ingredients for the cuisine, I spent many hours at Centro Bartolomé de las Casas’ (CBC) Martes Campesino, a weekly discussion forum that takes place every Tuesday at their shelter for Quechua-speaking campesinos. The presentations and discussions were bilingual (Spanish and Quechua) and attended by campesinos as well as urban Cusqueños, volunteers at the CBC and other travelers, researchers or students passing through Cusco. I also spoke with vendors in the open-air markets as well as restaurant owners to get perspectives from the middle and top of the chain, respectively. Though I admittedly lack data from the mayoristas, the middlemen, who according to those I spoke with, make the most money from the sale of agricultural products. As the Gastronomic Boom most directly affects Peruvian citizens, I decided to drop the tourist perception aspect of my project. Focusing on the actors in the chain of commodity production also allowed for me to investigate the validity of the discourse of Acurio and other chefs in Lima who promote Peruvian gastronomy, specifically the aforementioned claims of economic prosperity and social change for all Peruvians. The conversations I had with many people indicated to me that Acurio has few people fooled.
However, Acurio’s expertly delivered discourse echoes populist politicians’ appeals to the Peruvian populace to such a degree that many have called for him to run for the presidency. Acurio’s message has captivated many in Peru, including filmmaker Ernesto Cabellos. His 2009 film, *De Ollas y Sueños* (*Cooking Up Dreams*), is a documentary that encapsulates the discourse about the Gastronomic Boom in a neat one and a half hour package, which titillates the senses and plucks the heartstrings. Thanks to my connections at the Casa Campesina, I was able to show *De Ollas y Sueños* at one of the Martes Campesino evening discussions. I showed the film dubbed in Quechua with Spanish subtitles. I used the film as an elicitation device to get the conversation going about the local affects of the Gastronomic Boom. I had expected to get an immediate strong, critical response from the film. As it turned out, the audience at Martes Campesino also was captivated by the film’s narrative and photography. Little by little, though, the critiques came about as we talked as a group for almost two hours after the showing. I will report on these critical reflections later, first, more on the film itself.

---

3.1 Gastronomic Boom discourse and *De ollas y sueños*

According to Acurio, *De ollas y sueños* is the first documentary about contemporary Peruvian gastronomy.\(^{65}\) Though independently produced, the film contributes to the national project of promoting Peruvian cuisine by constructing a new image of Peru as a destination for backpackers *and* foodies alike, an ethnically diverse country that is home to both the traditional and the ultramodern. The main question Cabellos explores in the film, “Can an entire nation be represented by its cuisine?”, provides the potential entry point for a critical analysis of the “gastronomic boom” sweeping the country. However, it is apparent that in this film Cabellos hopes to propagate the vision of Acurio’s optimistic vision, which is that the entirety of the Peruvian nation can unite around its fine cuisine and benefit from the economic development that it brings.

*De ollas y sueños* in addition to its circulation in international festivals was submitted to UNESCO as part of a proposal to designate Peru’s culinary tradition as part of the “intangible cultural heritage of humanity.”\(^{66}\) For Wilson, the posing of the aforementioned question is sufficient for addressing the paradoxes of identity representation in Peru: “it should be noted that the mere asking of this question—especially within the formal presentation submitted to UNESCO—signifies a step in the right direction in taking into account those populations that are often marginalized.”\(^{67}\) This perspective is dismissive of the struggles of the marginalized populations in Peru, the result of centuries of settler colonialism and a stark urban-rural dichotomy. She applauds the asking but does not expect an answer or follow through. Cabello’s film likewise denies the messiness of the political situation in Peru, and proposes an overly facile

---

\(^{65}\) [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8_xWS7tN608](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8_xWS7tN608)


\(^{67}\) ibid. p. 16
solution to lead the reconciliation between the marginalized and the powerful through the “melting pot” of Peruvian cuisine. Also apparent in Wilson’s article and in the film, is the internalization of the relegation of Peru to Third World status, a label that elites in the country have a great interest in shedding in order to improve its national image for the (developed) world to which it hopes to expand its gastronomy. In short, De ollas y sueños provides a look at Peru as a developing nation that is overcoming its backwardness by amalgamating all of its identities into one melting pot (olla) and developing Peru’s economy around its gastronomy (sueños [dreams]).

The opening scene of De ollas y sueños sets the tone for the entire film, leaving little to be questioned about Cabellos’ intentions. The skillful montage splices together close-up shots of sizzling pots and pans, sounds of chopping and cutting ingredients that syncopates with the music, and additional close-ups of Afro-Peruvians, Indigenous and Asian-Peruvian faces. The excitement, enticement and representativeness of the entire nation in this section of the film is accompanied by a narration provided by Cabellos which adds a saccharine element that is too sweet to be believable:

“Siempre me ha intrigado, que en medio de tantas diferencias que puedes encontrar en un país, existe un espacio público, afortunado, donde todo la nación se siente armóniosamente integrado. En mi país, Perú, dicen que este espacio no es el futbol, ni la música, menos la política. Dicen que este espacio es la olla. A lo largo de siglos de mestizaje, encuentros y desencuentros, la cocina peruana ha ido construyendo una experiencia deliciosamente integradora. En la cocina, en la olla, luchan, se confrontan, negocien, se concilian, sabores, aromas y colores. Cada uno busca su sitio, y convive con el otro. Este documental es un viaje de exploración hacia un lugar donde todas las sangres de una nación están representadas. Donde pobres y ricos comparten el mismo espíritu.”
“It has always intrigued me that amid all of the differences that you can find in a country, there exists a happy public space, where the entire nation feels harmoniously integrated. In my country, Peru, they say that this space is not football, not music, y much less politics. They say this space is the pot. After centuries of racial mixing, meetings and clashes, Peruvian cuisine has been building up a deliciously integrating experience. In the kitchen, in the pot, flavors, aromas and colors confront, negotiate and reconcile with one another. Each one looks for its place, and coexists with the other. This documentary is an exploratory journey toward a place where all of the bloods [races] of a nation are represented. Where rich and poor share the same spirit.” (translation mine)

In this short sequence, Cabellos achieves a succinct encapsulation of the entire project of the Gastronomic Boom. The pairing of the imagery of the scenes and the narration conveys a gastronomic metaphor for the problems that face Peruvians in constructing a national identity, for which, in Cabellos’ view, the cuisine provides a panacea. The ‘diferencias que puedes encontrar’ in Peru, are, according to the Lima-centered political discourse (and Cabellos), racial, cultural, regional, and economic; however, these differences can be overcome by incorporating them into one, Peruvian identity through cuisine.

It is the presentation of Peru’s gastronomy to an international audience, through means such as *De ollas y sueños*, which is consolidating the formation of the national cuisine in Peru. Appadurai discusses this process of national cuisine construction at length in his article, “How to Make a National Cuisine: Cookbooks in Contemporary India”. The framework he uses to discuss the influence of cookbooks in this process can be extended to *De ollas y sueños*, looking at the documentary as a kind of gustatory text. India and Peru also have in common, despite their unique sociocultural and geographical circumstances, that the pattern of “the construction of a national cuisine is essentially a postindustrial, postcolonial process”, though, local settler colonial structure make the comparison a bit more complicated. In the last few decades, Peru and India have both asserted themselves as competitors in the globalized economy. The gastronomy

---

may provide a sensually pleasing and enticing package for Peru to gain the same kind of economic success that has India.

Beyond making a national cuisine, the discourse and cultural productions of the Gastronomic Boom such as De ollas y sueños is what Rochower calls “gastrodiplomacy, [which] simply put, is the act of winning hearts and minds through stomachs.” The hearts and minds that Acurio and Cabellos want to win appear to be those of Limeños, but also those of international audiences of tourists and consumers in order to convince them of Peru’s difference among Latin American countries and economies as more developed and modern. In the film, Cabellos focuses heavily on the inputs of chefs who are the self-proclaimed creators of this reimagined cuisine for the world. This emphasis on the chef’s preparation of Peruvian cuisine is what makes it modern. One chef who enjoys a significant amount of time in the film is Pedro Miguel Schiaffino who is first shown at his restaurant in Lima and then at the gastronomic festival Madrid Fusión. He claims that he and his team went to Madrid Fusión, not merely as people but as proud Peruvians. For Schiaffino, “la gastronomía es el mejor vehículo para mostrar lo que tiene el Perú” (gastronomy is the best vehicle to show what Peru has to offer), which is for him is an ultra-modern, minimalist mixture of Amazonian ingredients on a rectangular plate. Both Schiaffino and Cabellos see gastronomy as representative of their country as a hole, but absent from this modernity, are the Amazonian and Andean people themselves.

The inclusion of the scenes from the gastronomic conference serves to prove the positive reception of Peruvian (in this case Amazonian) in Europe. Cabellos makes sure to include the impressions of Ferran Adriá, at the time of the film’s production, the so-called “best chef in the

---

world”. He remarks on the complexity and unknown quality Peru’s cuisine has to show the European market. It is clear, then, that the presentation and reception of the cuisine in haute circles includes a claim to Peru’s as equal in quality to other national cuisines of prestige while maintaining a certain difference, a kind of particular Peruvian sabor. Nonetheless, this Peruvian sabor is the one conceptualized by the gustatory elite to the exclusion of the contributions of other Peruvian identities and their flavors.

*De ollas y sueños* demonstrates a concerted attempt to propagate the positive sides of globalization and the perceived advantages of neoliberalism, with its optimistic diatribe about inclusion and integration and its assumptions that as the transnational industry around Peruvian cuisine develops, it will benefit all of the sectors of the population in Peru. From a family trying to make it in the restaurant and tourist businesses in Iquitos, to restaurant owners abroad in places like Paris, to famous chefs of renowned gourmet restaurants and culinary institutes in Lima, Cabellos shows Peruvians as an entrepreneurial lot, whose efforts are not merely motivated by capitalistic self-interest, but also by the love for their country. The scenes of the most influential Peruvian chefs conversing around a large round table are some of the most transparent in the film. In one such scene, Gastón Acurio, speaking to some young culinary students who have joined the conversation, tells his vision for the chef of the future. For him, the most legitimized and well-loved chef would be one who not only is good at his craft, but also concerned with social justice. In a moment of honesty, Acurio declares that these young chefs will write that history, conceding that it is not what he and the other chefs are doing currently. The fact that the
narrative of this film and the Gastronomic Boom overall acknowledge the differences, inequalities and animosities that characterize the relations between the sectors of Peru’s population is not enough. Acurio and Cabellos are putting their faith in presenting Peruvian cuisine as a good for consumption, that is to say, in the possibilities of capitalism to produce an equitable development of the food industrial complex, of which the gastronomy is only one facet. The production of the cultigens that make the creation of these Peruvian dishes, and the people who grow them, is one aspect that is completely absent from the film.

In De ollas y sueños, the metaphorical melting pot becomes literal thanks to the cuisine into which different Peruvian ingredients—each representative of the regions in which the respectively originate—come together to create a Peruvian cuisine and a Peruvian national identity. As Arjun Appadurai shows for the formation of a national cuisine in India, in the Peruvian case, “the cuisine that is emerging today is a national cuisine in which regional cuisine play an important role, and the national cuisine does not seek to hide its regional or ethnic roots.”71 Different from Appadurai’s conceptualization of Indian cuisine, however, is that in the Peruvian case the regional and ethnic identities are appropriated in a cuisine that is constructed by certain interested elites for exportation to the global (tourist) market. It is not that the inputs of the Andes and the Amazon are not truly valorized; in fact, this film shows the opposite to be true. But their inclusion stems from a settler colonial appropriating of what is perceived to be essentially Andean or Amazonian. It is not inclusive at all to incorporate these identities in a fetishized, essentialist manner that separates them from their source without any sense of social responsibility. This kind of multiculturalism allows for representational cuisine to stand in for the bodies of those it supposedly represents, contributing to their further erasure, assimilation and

---

elimination from the political sphere. Tokenistic representation and inclusion is all that we see in De ollas y sueños, and in the Gastronomic Boom at large.

3.2 Discussion of film at Casa Campesina

Thanks to the Director of Martes Campesino, a Cusqueña, who translated my Spanish to Quechua and the comments of those who felt more comfortable speaking Quechua to Spanish, we were able to have a long, deep conversation about De ollas y sueños and the Gastronomic Boom. After the screening of the film, I opened up with a general call for comments about the film. Everyone present agreed that it was “munaycha” or beautiful. Some remarked that it reminded them of their mother’s cooking. One young man said the film made him feel proud of his country and it’s cuisine. Once we got past our initial impressions of the film, I told the group why I am interested in what’s happening in Peru with the cuisine. I told of how it seems to me that the Gastronomic Boom only benefits a few, and that those few were making money off the culture of the Andes and only talk about making the money reach those who grow the ingredients that form the base of the cuisine. This opened the discussion up a bit more, with several nodding their heads.

The crowd remained quiet until one gentleman, who spoke in Spanish, called attention to the film’s portrayal of Peruvians who have restaurants abroad. He remarked on the number of foreign-born Cusco residents who have opened restaurants and hotels at the exclusion of Peruvians, especially Cusqueños and indigenous persons. He went on to tell about how he and his wife would like to open their own business to take advantage of the tourism boom, but do not have the capital to do so. It doesn’t make sense to them that a foreigner can come to Cusco and make money off their culture, which many do through selling their cuisine, selling artesanías or
owning a Quechua language institute. This gentleman’s comments showed me that, indeed, the globalization of Peruvian cuisine has negatively affected local populations in Peru.

Another interesting issue that was brought up in this discussion was the issue of hunger and nutrition, which are barely addressed in the film. A female attendee at Martes Campesino made a point to say that in places like her town, there is no lack of food. She and others present that evening resent that the government and other outsiders regard them as malnourished and impoverished. She insists that they are healthy because they have their natural food and their knowledge of natural healing methods. This sentiment is reminiscent of that presented in a scene of *De Ollas y Sueños*. The commentary of Wilbert Achahuanca, a local Cusqueño, conveys an Andean population that is content because the earth provides all of the food that they need. In the film, Achahuanca says,

No hay problemas economicamente, hay suficiente para comer. […] Un hombre rico no es tranquilo porque tiene que estar administrando su riqueza. Y no es tranquilo. Entonces, yo quiero vivir tranquilo, teniendo lo suficiente nada más, conforme como sea mi suerte.

There are not any economic problems, there is enough to eat. A rich man is not at ease because he has to be administering his riches. And he’s not at ease. So, I want to live at ease, just having enough, leaving it up to luck.

Though many may share this view in Peru, Cabellos’ decision to include this section is strategic for his, and the Gastronomic Boom’s, narrative by providing justification for the fact that the material benefits that actors like Acurio reap from the ‘boom’ do not trickle down to people like Achahuanca. This section of the film portrays the Andean sector as stereotypically noble and disinterested in material gain. At the same time that Cabellos presents the Andean population as disinterested in money, he includes contradictory comments from Acurio in which he claims that it is the dream of all Peruvians to develop the country’s economy around their globalized cuisine. In this vein, Acurio states the following: “*mi trabajo no es hacer restaurantes. Mi trabajo es llevar la gastronomía peruana al mundo*” (My work is not to make restaurants. My work is to
take Peruvian gastronomy to the world). That is, the gastronomy that he and Cabellos conceive to be ‘Peruvian’, including attempts at including \( \text{lo indio, lo mestizo y lo criollo} \). As in the case of India, “the idea of a Peruvian cuisine “has emerged because of, rather than despite, the increasing articulation of regional and ethnic cuisines. As in other modalities of identity and ideology in emergent nations, cosmopolitan and parochial expressions enrich and sharpen each other by dialectical interaction.”72 These interactions are not lost on those who were in attendance at the discussion at Martes Campesino.

During the discussion about the film at Martes Campesino, I explicitly asked if those present felt that their work as farming peoples, as those whose work provides the ingredients for this gastronomy, felt that they work was valued. The same gentleman who commented that he would like to have a restaurant and hostel thanked me for asking that, stating that “\( \text{está bonita su pregunta} \)” (that’s a nice/prety question). The fact that he was so impressed that I would ask this showed to me that the answer was most likely that, no, they do not feel that their work as campesinos is valued by the nation at large. Perhaps, though, they are not at all concerned with national recognition, but with working for the benefit of their own communities. At El Parque de la Papa, the next field experience I will discuss in detail, their vision is certainly cast inward, not out to the nation or the global economy.

3.3 One-day excursion at El Parque de la Papa

About one hour from Cusco, near the smaller urban area of Pisac, El Parque de la Papa (Potato Park), accepts groups of tourists for one, three, or five-day excursions at the Park. I visited for one day, along with a group of about 10 of my classmates from an intensive Quechua

language program I attended during my stay in Cusco. We were picked up at Plaza Tupac Amaru in Cusco and bused to the site, about an hour’s drive.

Along the way, we stopped to let on a Quechua man, dressed in punchu and chullu, who lives and works in one of the communities of Parque de la Papa. He began to tell us about the Park, its mission and what we would be seeing that day. Upon arrival, we were greeted by a group of similarly dressed men, playing music and setting up for the presentation they were about to give us. From this point, I began to document the presentation with my video camera. I asked for permission to film and promised to return the favor by later submitting to them a video from that day which they may use for their own purposes if they so choose. I made a 12-minute video of the portions of the tour in which they mentioned food sovereignty or related notions, all from my position as a tourist there. During the question and answer section at each stop on the tour, I took the opportunity to ask questions relevant to my research.

Upon reviewing the footage from this visit, I noticed some major themes, all of which center on notions and practices of what the presenters at El Parque de la Papa called, “soberanía de la alimentación.” (Food security was never mentioned.) As the name of the Park suggests, the main goal is to preserve, catalogue and cultivate native varieties of potato, of which there are at least some 1,430. They do this by way of their “living culture”: the knowledges and practices associated with the production of the potato, including customs of reciprocal help called ayni.

They work to conserve native potatoes in the face of things like climate change, which has already begun to effect their crops and caused them to use heartier varieties that are resistant to extreme weather conditions. The threat of biopiracy, the act of stealing genes from biological sample for use in transgenics or without recognition of the cultural patrimony of a plant’s source, is also imminent to the native potato. As they present it, El Parque de la Papa is a community
organization working to reclaim food production for their own people’s benefit. At El Parque de la Papa, the community members proudly assert their Andean culture and tradition, without falling into essentialism. They refer to their way of life as a “living culture,” not as a surviving culture, nor a culture that must be revived.

Food sovereignty is a practice, not just a concept, at El Parque de la Papa. The notions of food sovereignty that I critiqued in the Literature Review section were those presented by academics and the La Vía Campesina movement, which has goals of changing the entire global food system. The communities of El Parque de la Papa are part of this global food system, but as one comunero said in response to a question I asked regarding their thoughts on the exportation of Peruvian foods, “nuestra visión no es... hacia afuera,” “our vision is not cast outwardly.” The effects of globalized problems like climate change and biopiracy are dealt with to improve their local conditions, and to control their own food production so as to not be as affected by these issues. However, it is not to say that they are insular in their perspective. Another tour guide told us that the Park is active in (trans)national politics, opposing laws that give rights to transnational companies to import their transgenic crops. Reportedly, representatives from El Parque de la Papa traveled to Lima to lobby for a 10-year moratorium on the importation of transgenic crops, which was passed in 2011. In light of evidence of this kind of engagement, it is curious that scholars like Iles and Montenegro see a need for food sovereignty initiatives to “scale up.” The activities of organizations like El Parque de la Papa demonstrate the value of grassroots organizing for resisting global maladies while improving local livelihoods.

The questions I asked the tour guides during my visit (see video), before I had the benefit of studying deeper the relationships between indigenous communities and the states within which they reside, often referred to the Peruvian state. El Parque de la Papa operates without
any engagement or support from the Peruvian state. I asked if the government had any kind of registry of potatoes similar to the one they have. The guide simply informed me that the Peruvian government “does not take any interest” in their activities. He also stated that, “It’s possible that if we asked, they might support us.” With this statement, he made clear that the involvement of the State in their activities was not something they were interested in. Not only are they working to conserve native potatoes using their own knowledges and technologies, enacting their own conceptualization of food sovereignty, but they are also determining for themselves their livelihood and future.

El Parque de la Papa, however, is not the only organization working to conserve native varieties of potato. Another NGO, El Centro Nacional de la Papa, in Lima, had previously stored all of the samples of native potatoes in the country. Apparently, when Potato Park was founded in 2002, they had to first work to repatriate those varieties, which had been displaced by preference for industrialized strains of potato, what they called “papa mejorada”. Now, half of the 3,000 or so varieties are at Potato Park and half are at the International Center for the Potato. All of the potatoes have been catalogued and coded. One of my classmates asked if one of the guides could recognize all of the different kinds just by looking. He replied, “Of course. But now, we know them by their code, no longer by their name.” It is an interesting paradox that in the attempt to conserve, something has been lost.

Included in the tour was a lunch prepared in one of the five communities with local ingredients: potato, quinua, other vegetables, and meat. The restaurant is referred to as the Centro de Gastronomia, but the gastronomy of El Parque de la Papa was not like the gourmet, stylized, ultra-hip versions to be found in Cusco, Arequipa and Lima, though everything was delicious and expertly prepared. This complicates the meaning of gastronomy in Peru, while also
leading me to wonder if El Parque de la Papa is attempting to tap into the cultural capital of the Gastronomic Boom by referring to it this way. I attended other events during my time in Peru, in Ollantaytambo and Arequipa, which were also called “gastronomic” festivals. It seems as though the term is not as elusive as I had originally thought.

The Gastronomic Boom has taken hold of Peru in many overt, but also in many subtle ways. The relatively brief time that I spent in Cusco collecting data about the food landscape of the Andes as it relates with the discourse of the Gastronomic Boom, impressed upon me this fact. Whether or not it is conscious, many people from every node in the chain of production of food, including consumers and tourists, are implicated in this phenomenon. However, in spaces like Casa Campesina and El Parque de la Papa, critical dialogues about food and political economy are constantly taking place. The community-based activities rooted in locally determined cultural traditions subvert and resist the settler colonial, globalized and imperial structures that created the Gastronomic Boom, and that the Gastronomic Boom perpetuates. Though the data presented here are perhaps too paltry to lend to a surprising finding about the Gastronomic Boom in Peru, they do show the efficacy of grassroots level organizing to create spaces of resistance and self-determination amidst the assimilative, standardized approach to cuisine proposed by the Gastronomic Boom.
IV. Conclusion

This thesis provides an overview of the ethnographic and discursive contexts in which the Gastronomic Boom is happening in Peru. It also seeks to present critical perspectives and potentialities. The purpose of this thesis is not to give “voice to the voiceless” campesinos, Indigenous persons, and urban working class who disproportionately experience the detrimental affects of this huge movement of capital, appropriation of culture and labor, and rising food prices due to gentrification. My field data is also miniscule in comparison with the complex, historical issues at hand. However, in the wake of the Gastronomic Boom, this explosion of meaning making, marketing and agricultural production around Peruvian gastronomy led by chefs and gourmands in Lima, and to lesser extents, Arequipa and Cuzco, I see a need to resist. In fashion with the status quo that has reigned in Peru since the Spanish invaded and more intensely once the Republic was founded, the elites are capitalizing on the labor and appropriating the epistemologies of indigenous and campesino peoples in their quest for a cuisine that is uniquely Peruvian.

Academics like Judith Fan have uncritically glossed the Gastronomic Boom a food “movement,” or at least engaged with the phenomena as such. Fan’s article “Can Ideas about Food Inspire Real Social Change?: The Case of Peruvian Gastronomy,” naively characterizes the Gastronomic Boom in Peru as “[i]nspired by biological diversity and a history of cultural heterogeneity, Peruvian gastronomy is a thoroughly modern project to forge solidarity from the shards of cultural difference, rediscover value and pride in the historically neglected, and, most contagiously, assert that food itself can become a vehicle for real social change.”73 Fan takes for granted the ability for discourse and ideas to translate into actions, as well as capacity for the

“solidarity” spoken of here to reach across borders of class and race. Narratives about social inclusion and economic prosperity sound positive and hopeful, but these emotions cannot be allowed to cloud our critical judgment. My field experiences made apparent to me that these positive notions and ideas of multiculturalism and market-oriented globalization have not succeeded in translating to procedural changes to the food system of Peru. These claims are shallow, and clearly serve as a justification for pushing forward the entrepreneurial agenda of ambitious chefs like Gastón Acurio. When he speaks of hunger, he acknowledges that gastronomy and hunger don’t go together, but quickly changes focus to showing the world that Peru is not a poor, starving nation. It serves him and the other chefs prospering from the Gastronomic Boom not to speak of the realities of hunger and racism, as it allows for him to evade any questioning on the food and economic justice in the food system of Peru. It is the job of scholars to critically approach projects such as the Gastronomic Boom, recognizing its faults and acknowledging its potential.

While there are actors at every level of this process who believe in making better lives for their families and their country by contributing to these gastronomic efforts, the fruits of their labor, their fields, their fishing boats, and their kitchens, are largely in function of those above them. For the Gastronomic Boom to be a true movement, the meanings, methods and knowledge to carry this out must come from below. The gaze must be horizontal in focus, not upward and outward toward the globalized tastes of foodies in the metropolis and abroad. At a time when activists across the globe are taking more interest in food justice and building a food system that benefits everyone, the moment is propitious for Peru to set an example of what a just, community-determined, sovereignty-oriented food system could be. Though I acknowledge how tall an order true solidarity is, and that my insistence that a food movement would better serve
the majority of the population of Peru may also incur certain costs and burdens to those I would hope it would benefit. As it stands, however, the Gastronomic Boom perpetuates and deepens historical inequalities and violence by way of its multicultural rhetoric and developmentalist market orientation. The Indigenous, campesino and urban working class majority must continue to re-appropriate their food system, take over the production of meaning, and resist assimilative, exploitative incorporation into the elite project of the Gastronomic Boom, in order to found a true movement for a food system for all Peruvians. The food sovereignty movement, which already has many actors and proponents in Peru, perhaps has lent itself best to this re-appropriation. However, food movements themselves must also be scrutinized critically. Therefore, this thesis does not propose and answer to these issues, but rather an interrogation of plausible suggestions for further action.

Those at the top in the social hierarchy in Peru, force the idea of “breaking bread” to bring people together. If only things were so simple. Not only has the process of settler colonialism, in combination with US imperialism, created severe economic disparities, racial tensions and discriminations also have been brewing in Peru for centuries. An incident that occurred in the realm of social media demonstrates the failure of the efforts of the Gastronomic Boom to integrate Peruvian society thus far. Peruvian actress

Figure 6: Magaly Solier, Lamula.pe
Magaly Solier of acclaimed films such as *La Teta Asustada (The Milk of Sorrow)*, was featured on Peru21.com, a Peruvian newspaper and website, on October 1st, 2013. In the short interview, she responds to a question about things she would not do on screen now that she is a mother. She stated that she would not appear nude, unless they paid her well and justified the nudity. This comment sparked a wave of racism by the site’s users, who responded violently to the idea of seeing the Quechua-speaking actress nude. Another news site, Lamula.pe, published a photo of the actress with two of the comments on their Facebook page, advertising an article that called for Peru21.com to remove the offensive remarks. Interestingly, the comments that were selected by Lamula.pe, from the dozens that were posted, both made pejorative reference to either food or food production. One user says, “*Haganme el favor...Quien va a querer ver a ese olluco sin ropa!?*” (Give me a break…Who is going to want to see that olluco with no clothes!?). The commenter’s choice to refer to Solier as an “olluco”, which is a small tuber from the Andes, demonstrates an association of the tuber with the Andean population of the country. The other sampled comment reads, “*y que tienes para mostrar?, wanaca porque no te regresas a tu tribu a rascar la tierra*” (and what do you have to show?, guanaco why don’t you go back to your tribe to scrape the Earth). The scraping of the Earth here refers to the manner in which potatoes and other tubers are harvested, and “wanaca” refers to a camelid species from the Andes. Again, this second commenter refers disparagingly to characteristically Andean objects and agricultural labor most often performed by Indigenous and campesino farmers.

The well-known and polemic Peruvian journalist César Hildebrandt also wrote a response to this incident by questioning national Peruvian pride (often expressed in relation to food), asking: how could they be proud of such hate speak? Thanks to the protestations of Lamula.pe and Hildebrandt, Peru21.com removed the comments. After this incident and countless others, it
is clear that the Gastronomic Boom has not changed racist sentiments towards foods regarded as essentially Andean or the arduous work that campesino families do, despite many chefs’ gourmet interpretations of the food they cultivate. Preparing a plate of pork loin marinated in *chicha de jora* with a side of roasted purple potatoes and quinua risotto, washed down with a coca leaf mojito, cannot break down class and race hierarchies 500 years in the making. It actually serves to exacerbate them.

It is not my intention to totalize the Gastronomic Boom as all together negative for Peru. Peruvians have a great deal of pride in their food, which is mostly benign, though nationalistic. The Gastronomic Boom has been successful in getting people across the political spectrum, and people of all ages, class and ethnic backgrounds interested in food. This widespread interest could translate to political mobilization and action. Appreciation of the Peruvian national cuisine, which is “slower,” artisanal, made with fresh, local ingredients, could also establish a food culture that resists the imperialism of US fast food chains and imported industrialized food products and technologies. Regardless of the positive effects, the contradictions inherent with a complacent globalization discourse and trust placed in market forces to ameliorate racial and economic inequalities overshadow the Gastronomic Boom in Peru.
References


https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=47jlok0WyE0&list=PL3DF664444C0358D6&index=23


APPENDIX A: VIDEO FILE (Food Sovereignty.m4v)

Concurrently with this thesis, I submit a video titled, “Food Sovereignty for Tourists at El Parque de la Papa.” The video serves as documentation for the visit I made to El Parque de la Papa and shows how food sovereignty as it is practiced and conceptualized at the Park is presented to tourists. I filmed and edited the video myself. I also translated the content from Spanish to English and supplied the subtitles. The video is intended only for use as supporting evidence for this thesis, and will not be published in any other venue.