
Original Article

Food supply and government: A ‘victualized’ reading of European modernity

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Abstract The food supply has been a formative space in the creation and exercise of centralized governing authority in Western Europe. Similar to warmaking, bureaucratization or market integration, governing agriculture has had a constitutive importance to modern European politics. One goal of this essay is to elucidate the often forgotten agrarian underpinnings of European modernity. A concurrent goal is to investigate, through a set of detailed empirical cases, some of the decisive strategic configurations through which ‘the agrarian’ and ‘the political’ have been conjoined across a history that spans a period of time from the Absolutist State to the European Union. Specifically, the essay interrogates how the management of the food supply and agrarian life were central to the projects of state formation, urban policing, imperial geopolitics, and Europe’s postwar reconstruction. *Comparative European Politics* (2016) **14**, 477–503. doi:10.1057/cep.2015.35; published online 16 May 2016

Keywords: Europe; food supply; historical sociology; agricultural policy; geopolitics

Introduction: Agriculture and Historical Sociology

‘No man qualifies as a statesman who is entirely ignorant of the problems of wheat’. (Socrates, cited in Morgan, 2000, p. 3)

‘What issues could be more burningly political than those of agriculture?’ (Hallstein, 1962, pp. 65–66)

Forty years ago Charles Tilly (1975) published an essay on the ‘Food Supply and Public Order in Modern Europe’. Though not one of his more widely discussed works, the essay did appear in an influential volume on *The Formation of National States in Western Europe*. In regards to the following essay, Tilly’s chapter is notable for two reasons. In the first place, the essay exemplifies original and rigorous historical sociological research. This is especially evident in how Tilly mobilizes a number of



'minor' cases in order to illuminate the broader significance of the food supply as a site of state formation. Second, the chapter illustrates the specific connections between an increasingly centralized control of the food supply and the ability of nascent statemakers to establish standing armies, generate political order and extract revenue. In other words, Tilly demonstrates how the most consequential trajectories of statemaking were firmly embedded in the management of agrarian relations at multiple levels.

Tilly's analysis also demonstrates the value of deploying historical sociological methods for the purposes of exploring how the centralization and intensification of sociopolitical authority becomes an inextricable feature of modern life (Abrams, 1982; Delanty, 2003). In this particular article, Tilly argues that the management of the food supply and its effects, particularly as relates to the aggrandizement of sovereign power, were central for enlarging the original scope of state authority. With this essay, my goal is to push forward an analytic framework that likewise privileges the imbrications between food, populations and political authorities in transformations of European modernity. At the same time, the empirical focus here is not limited to the period of statemaking. Rather, the goal is to assess the constitutive importance of agrarian relations across subsequent political eras. In so doing, the essay hopes to sketch out a framework for narrating European modernity based upon its many 'victual' histories.

This essay draws generously from the work of historical sociologists in order to frame the transformative significance of the questions being posed. Moreover, the essay also utilizes insights and concepts from a literature best described as 'genealogies of governance' (Bevir, 2010; Walters, 2012). Taking inspiration from Foucault's lectures on modern 'governmentality', these unconventional political histories interrogate the strategic, organizational and practical mutations that occur within a *particular* space or domain of government over time. A genealogical perspective implies a greater sensitivity to questions of contingency, practice and hybridity than is normally associated with scholarship in historical sociology. But for this essay the relationship between the two literatures is viewed as more complimentary than competitive. Historical sociologists, for example, often bequeath the rich empirical terrain upon which more narrow genealogical studies can be formulated. Moreover, the two approaches are united in a commitment to making visible the social and organizational bases of modern political power. In so doing, both literatures can be said to reject the static and institution-centric interpretations of governance that pervade most contemporary approaches within political science (Brass, 2000).

This essay ultimately seeks to 'blend' historical sociology and genealogy in productive ways. Some governmentality scholars have also advocated for this as an effective diagnostic route for interpreting how social and economic authority has been transformed over time (Dean, 1994; Brown, 2001). As Valverde (2007) concludes, Foucault also moves in this direction with his lectures at the *Collège de France* wherein he aims to outline, among other trajectories, the 'modern practices of power-knowledge' that have been integral to the manufacture of state authority



(p. 160). While I demur from labeling Foucault a historical sociologist, it is clear that his writings on the history of ‘governmentalities’ shares tremendous overlap with the work of historical sociologists such as Norbert Elias and Max Weber.

One thematic concern of *Many Europes* regards the different ways Europe has constituted a laboratory for governing populations, economies and territories. This essay isolates the food supply as one formative space from which many of Europe’s foundational governing projects have commenced. Furthermore, and likewise indicative of a *Many Europes* orientation, this article takes seriously the question of temporality, and the changes that occur in terms of the strategies and practices of governing at an empirical or ‘micro’ level. Considering these dual commitments, the conclusions reached in this essay are twofold. On the one hand, it is argued that there has always been a constitutive relationship between agrarian life and the operation of centralized governing authority in Europe. On the other hand, it also demonstrates that the specific configurations dotting this historical landscape have been defined by significant variegation and unevenness. It is in exploring this field of agrarian transformations that a compelling history of ‘victualizing politics’ can be located.

Agriculture and State Formation

In the chapter previously discussed, Tilly explicitly states that his intent is not to provide a ‘victual theory of state-making’ (p. 393). Nonetheless, he does give ample evidence to substantiate his overriding claim that state formation was heavily conditioned by ‘the battle for food’ and the struggle over its ‘control and distribution’ (Tilly, 1975, p. 392). In other words, Tilly demonstrates how managing the food supply emerged as one of the foundational competencies of early states. Therefore similar to waramaking, taxation or administrative centralization, governing food and agriculture belongs in the category of ‘monopoly mechanisms’ that made possible modern state authority (on this term see Elias, 1994, pp. 345–346). As Tilly (1975) cogently argues: ‘one of the [earliest] principle activities of European political officials was control of the food supply’ (p. 395).

For starters, controlling the food supply was required to wage continuous warfare, especially wars of territorial expansion. Netz (2004) notes that ‘agriculture and war are two species belonging to the same genus’ (p. 59). The violent processes of statemaking substantiate Netz’s claim exceedingly well. Monarchs and their administrators were forced to take on the task of organizing the provisioning for large armies on the march, which also included feeding thousands of horses. A well-fed army was required to achieve victory over competing sovereigns, in sustained engagements, as well as ensure the ability to violently subdue recalcitrant noble landowners who refused to recognize the right of these aspiring sovereigns to concentrate military power. The wars of Absolutism were ultimately fought with the bodies of men and horses; *metabolic*



machines whose ‘fueling’ required new feats of logistical planning and the administration of resources across space.

To this end, the French developed and utilized the *étapes* system during its wars of statemaking (Lynn, 1993). The system was an improvement on cruder modes of foraging and involved constructing impromptu feeding sites along common battle lines (pp. 17–19). As the intensity and scope of warfare increased over the seventeenth century, ‘grain magazines’ also became a preferred provisioning mechanism. The advantage of using magazines and storehouses was in having ‘fixed’ depots for storing grain, baking bread and dividing rations. A well-organized magazine system could feed an army of 60 000 soldiers over 10 days, baking in total 900 000 loaves of bread (Crevel, 1977, p. 3). ‘Stores of food gathered in magazines and shipped forward by convoy were consequently a fixture of late seventeenth century warfare. A shuttle system of magazines, bakeries and wagons was a recognized necessity of field warfare’ (Lynn, 1993, p. 140). Grain magazines were particularly crucial to Prussian military successes, providing the Hohenzollern armies an ability to sustain near constant warfare, and ultimately unify the numerous Germanic lands (Tilly, 1975; Clark, 2006).

Waging war was the most essential function of the Absolutist State. But raising revenue was a necessarily close second. Officers and soldiers had to be paid, and armaments had to be bought. And from where would this revenue derive? Nearly always it was pulled from the semi-feudalized countryside through a landowning nobility that either, via inducement or threat, became conjoined to the project of consolidating monarchical power (Poggi, 1978). To say this wealth was ‘pulled’ from the countryside is to more specifically argue it was generated through the systemized exploitation of peasant labour. While the extraction of agricultural surplus might be the oldest mode of capital accumulation, it was practiced with a particular comprehensiveness and ruthlessness under the Absolutist State; a configuration of early state power that Barrington Moore appropriately describes as an ‘agrarian bureaucracy’ (p. 57).

‘Taxation’ during the period of state formation should not be confused with the practices of contemporary liberal states, wherein the logic is to recirculate wealth in order to fund welfare measures, provision public goods or reduce socioeconomic inequalities (Neocleous, 2008). ‘Extraction’ is a far more illustrative term to describe the nature and form of taxation under Absolutism. Extraction more vividly conveys the sense in which wealth was being ‘pulled’ from a subjugated population in order to pay for the aggrandizement of state forces. At the same time, it was not the entire territory that shouldered this financial burden. In particular, it was rare that taxes and other forms of tribute were exacted from the circuits of urban commerce, despite the growing wealth of nodal cities during late Medievalism (Anderson, 1974; Poggi, 1978).

Burgers, artisans and merchants generally enjoyed ‘corporate’ status within the medieval urban economy that relieved them from the most onerous forms of direct taxation (Braudel, 1982). One reason for this distinction was that mercantile wealth was an important source of credit for often capital-starved statemakers (Poggi, 1978,



p. 81). In addition, Cameralist doctrine posited that trade, manufacturing and moneylending were 'productive employments' with a near infinite capacity for generating additional wealth across the sovereign's territory (Foucault, 1970; pp. 179–180; Tribe, 1978, pp. 90–92). The wealth resultant from agrarian production, in contrast, was understood as 'static' because it was all already there – 'in the soil', so to speak. In this discursive rendering of wealth and its capacity for growth, it is economic exchange rather than human utility or labor-power that generates value. As such, the 'stagnant' countryside becomes a space for extracting state revenue and little more, outside the occasional recruitment of peasant bodies for military service.

Braudel (1982) notes that 'between 80 and 90 per cent of people in preindustrial Europe lived from the land and nothing else' (p. 49). Here we confront the peasantry: that mass of laboring bodies and fated souls at the very bottom of a hierarchical yet stable distribution of human 'orders' and corporate 'estates'. The Absolutist State mapped entitlement, privilege and exclusion throughout the social body (Reus-Smit, 1999, p. 94). In concrete terms, this arrangement meant that a vast but impoverished peasantry would fund the political projects of a relatively small ruling clique. In this way argues Anderson (1974), the Absolutist State resembled 'a redeployed and recharged of apparatuses of feudal domination, designed to clamp the peasant masses back into their traditional social position' (p. 18).

Let us consider some extractive practices that bear out his point. Most notorious was the French *taille*. Created in 1439 and originally called the *taille royal*, the tax was standardized and intensified over the seventeenth century, at which point it became known simply as the *taille*.¹ It was essentially a direct land tax on the peasantry, and the most disproportionately unfair tax levied by the *ancien régime*. The tax also contained an inbuilt seigniorial exemption (Aftalion, 1990, p. 12). In fact, the very status of 'noble heritage' was determined by whether one was obliged to pay the tax or not. *Intendants*, when required, would also draw upon a 'formidable apparatus of repression' to enforce collection of the tax (Jones, 1988, p. 40). Through utilization of the *taille*, the French state was able to 'batten mercilessly' on the rural masses through a 'centralized pumping' of peasant surplus (Anderson, 1974, p. 97; see also James, 1988, pp. 42–43). The *taille* hit the middling peasantry especially hard: 'people too poor to rise through the purchase of an office but rich enough to pay a contribution' (Aftalion, 1990, p. 13).

The Prussian case was unique for exhibiting a noble class that was relatively autonomous in their role as tax-collecting agents of the state. Whereas French administrators organized the intricate *taille* system from above, the Prussian 'Junkers' utilized indigenous extractive practices and independently sent the required portion to state officials. To reward Junker honesty and diligence in collecting state revenue, the Hohenzollerns (re)legalized noble control over peasant mobility, land purchases and labor obligations. In other words, the Prussian state brought back serfdom as a means to guarantee the success of this decentralized extractive framework (Anderson, 1974, pp. 240–241; Clark, 2006, pp. 160–164). Such a fusion



of monarchical and noble power would make possible a permanent source of state financing based on the exploitation of peasant production – the latter population having now been stripped of all legal rights and ‘tied to the land’ in a labor-repressive agrarian system (Clapham, 1968, pp. 35–41; Clark, 2006, p. 85).

The so called ‘General Hide Tax’ was assessed on standardized classifications such as soil quality, plot size and animal headage (Clark, 2006, p. 91). While the tax theoretically applied to the manor as a whole, it was common practice for Junker overlords to understate their own official wealth and inflate that of their serfs, thus having the bulk of the financial burden flow downwards. In this way, peasant wealth and labor (again) become the primary target of extraction:

But since the tax-collecting agencies of the administration were still largely in the hands of the corporate nobility, the authorities tended to turn a blind eye when landowners understated their taxable landholdings. The returns of peasant households by contrast were subject to the most pedantic scrutiny, so that not a single hide was missed. (Clark, 2006, p. 90)

Not wholly dissimilar to the role of slaves and indentured servants within overseas colonial networks, the battered Western European peasantry was forced to subsidize and propel the same militaristic apparatuses that brought them only misery and subjugation: ‘wars and arming for wars demanded increased income...Oppressive, bloodsucking tribute was the order of the day’ (Wunderli, 1992, p. 80).

The goal of this opening section was to flesh out Tilly’s central claim that controlling the food supply was an essential component of state formation. Additionally, this discussion was also intended to pry open the door to a wider conversation about the constitutive relations between ‘the agrarian’ and ‘the political’. It is to the remainder of this story we now turn, first by exploring the intimate relationship between the food supply and preindustrial urban order; a history beginning in Ancient Rome and reaching its apex in pre-revolutionary France.

Bread and the Manufacture of Urban Order

Rome

In the case of Imperial Rome, the giant task of feeding a city of 1 million was a decisive impetus for territorial expansion. As Steel (2009) argues, it was this ‘need for grain, not political gain [that] often drove its empire onward’ (p. 73). Both the military and administrative machineries of Rome were designed with this urban food security imperative in mind. One strategy that connected agricultural supply with imperial expansion involved the imposition of farmer settler-colonies² across the Southern Mediterranean and North Africa (see also Fraser and Rimas, 2010). For generations, the nutrient-rich muds of the Nile provided the metropole a ‘boundless supply of wheat and



barley' (p. 53). It was ultimately Rome's ability to exploit the food supplies and farmland of its periphery that made possible such a complex urban configuration in ancient times.

Unlike the shoddy tenements and city squalor that were viewed with indifference by Roman elites, problems with the city's food supply were always taken seriously: 'Nobody close to the elite in Rome could be in any doubt that food and political power were closely linked, or that failing to feed the people was the surest path to political ruin' (Steel, 2009, p. 208). To provide relief to Rome's poorest citizens in times of dearth, a semi-formalized philanthropic system called *euergetism* was used (Garnsey, 1988). The system functioned by having wealthy Romans act as public benefactors. During times of acute shortage, the patritian classes would take grain and flour directly from their own storehouses and distribute it among the plebs (but never the slaves). *Euergetism* was very often 'the main safeguard of the common people of the towns against hunger and starvation in a subsistence crisis' (Garnsey, 1988, p. 82). This practice of securing the sustenance needs of Rome's non-slave poor was about more than simple charity. Rather it embodied a set of practices and obligations that merged the fates of Rome's elite and commoner classes. In addition, *euergetism* worked alongside a supplementary public 'grain dole' that provided regularized – if somewhat meager – rations to about 200 000 of Rome's poorest residents (Africa, 1971, p. 6).

At the other end of the spectrum, citizens with hereditary privilege were also entitled to a ration. The *annona* was exclusive to patrician families that could prove they descended from 'the Romans who conquered the world and were entitled to its tribute' (Africa, 1971, p. 6). The *annona* was the most generous of Roman provisioning mechanisms and worked through the distribution of wooden chits that could be redeemed for five *modi* of grain per month (just over a bushel) (p. 5). Similar to Rome's poor, the elite families were willing to spill blood in order to defend their entitlement. An attempt by Julius Caesar to reduce the number of persons eligible under the *annona* provoked severe civil unrest and violence that only abated with his assassination (Steel, 2009, p. 77). Furthermore, in addition to such mechanisms of public provisioning, Roman authorities managed the city's food supply through a centralized regulation of imperial trade. The 'wheat distribution laws', comprised an elaborate system for managing the circulation of grain that was mobilized in times of regional shortages in order to smooth out supply fluctuations over the vast imperial territory (Mazoyer and Roudart, 2006, pp. 253–255).

In the end, neither Rome's agricultural colonies nor its sophisticated provisioning mechanisms could prevent what ultimately became an agricultural-induced civilizational demise. A multifaceted agrarian crisis had taken root during the last phase of the empire. The crisis was characterized by strained supply-lines, climatic shifts, exhausted soils, slave revolts and the oppressive taxation of farmers (Mazoyer and Roudart, 2006; Steel, 2009; Fraser and Rimas, 2010). This combination of problems led to a reduction in agricultural yields, as well as a significant decrease in the amount of farmland under Rome's control. As the situation worsened, city authorities could not guarantee the sustenance of their people. A telling moment came in 383 when Rome was unable to withstand even a brief military siege from marauding Visigoths.



The city was forced to open its gates, as there was simply no food. ‘Bread, or the lack of it, had finally destroyed the Western Empire’ (Fraser and Rimas, 2010, p. 64).

Contrary to popular mythology, barbarian hordes did not destroy Rome. They merely picked at its decaying carcass. It was something far more mundane – a lack of bread and productive farmland – that generated its fatal vulnerability: ‘Like modern capitals, Rome depended on imported food, and a delay in the arrival of the grain fleet could reduce the city to famine and bread riots’ (Africa, 1971, p. 5). At Rome’s zenith, the imperial authorities organized and operated a complex array of granaries, food depots and trade routes (overland and sea) that connected the metropole with producers and merchants across the empire (Steel, 2009, pp. 72–78; Fraser and Rimas, 2010, pp. 41–68). The ingenuity of Roman engineering was also reflected in the first standardized model for a cool, properly ventilated and rodent-free granary. The ground floor of a typical *horreum* (storage-house) held enough grain to feed 15 000 citizens (Fraser and Rimas, 2010, p. 59).

But even the success of the most disciplined and extensive urban provisioning mechanisms during this period were dependent on the amount of *cultivable* land that could be effectively controlled from the center. On this front, Rome eventually faced insurmountable challenges. In the first place, Rome lost significant amounts of fertile farmland because of soil exhaustion and high levels of soil salinity due to exhaustive farming practices. Furthermore, as Roman military control over its periphery waned, so too did its ability to control these crucial agricultural hinterlands and the farming populations that sustained them. The combined effect of such environmental degradation and loss of territorial control was a significant reduction in the amount of productive farmland under Roman control.

As a result of these developments, urban dearths became frequent and Rome became the site of frequent bread riots that pitted political authorities against citizens and poor against wealthy (see especially Africa, 1971; Steel, 2009). Mazoyer and Roudart (2006) provide a succinct summary on how agrarian problems not only ruptured the internal peace of Rome, but likewise diminished its ability to project power externally: ‘the Roman Empire could no longer expand and conquer cheaply the wealth, new lands and new people upon which the Roman state and economy continually lived... there followed a dramatic fall in production, population, and fiscal receipts, while the state needed supplementary resources to repulse the barbarians and attempt to maintain internal order’ (p. 254–255). The agrarian nature of Rome’s collapse would become an important lesson for later statemakers who would be forced to confront anew the relationship between bread and urban order.

Pre-industrial Europe

Joly de Fleury, Controller-General of the *ancien régime* from 1781 to 1783, once noted that: ‘everyone is *people* when they lack bread’ (emphasis in original, cited in



Kaplan, 1976, p. 432). He knew of what he spoke. In his capacity as both a minister and provincial administrator, Joly de Fleury witnessed a series of devastating dearths, including localized famine, that occurred across the French kingdom during the 1760s, 1770s and early 1780s (Kaplan, 1982; Aftalion, 1990; Fagan, 2000). From this experience, he gained firsthand knowledge on the collective reaction of royal subjects who believed their regular supply of affordable and quality bread had been put into jeopardy. Joly de Fleury understood quite well that a violable mob percolated among unmet sustenance needs.

The ‘crowd’ is a useful term for illustrating the collective social form through which mass politics most frequently manifested within the Absolutist State (Rudé, 1959; Thompson, 1971; Tilly, 1971). The crowd was essentially an aggregation of urban residents who joined together to protest or otherwise actively resist royal policies it was believed worked against their immediate economic security (Rudé, 1959; James, 1988; Aftalion, 1990). Taxes on salt or matches might generate a crowd. But the most frequent catalyst, by a wide margin, was the availability, cost and quality of their daily bread (see especially Kaplan, 1976). Unlike the peasantry – who were viewed more as a resource by statemakers, not unlike the grains they produced – the crowd presented a collection of angry individuals who had to be satiated and pacified, lest their paranoia about the bread supply become the fuel that ignites a broader social fire which ends up engulfing the sovereign.

Despite popular representations, crowds did not act out ‘spasmodically’ whenever deprivation occurred (Thompson, 1971; see also Tilly, 1975). In fact, riots often occurred when there was more than enough bread in the marketplace, but no consensus between subjects and authorities on what constituted a ‘just price’. The most important factor in generating a crowd was simply the *perception* that the customary set of rights and entitlements around bread were being violated (see also Kaplan, 1982; Tilly, 1983). From the perspective of the crowd, royal authorities had a sacrosanct duty to uphold the ‘moral economy’ of policing, which aimed to regulate the circulation and sale of grain, flour and bread in the interests of the common people. If this sacrosanct obligation to the masses was not respected, the crowd believed it had a moral duty to take action: ‘the men and women in the crowd were informed by the belief that they were defending traditional rights and customs ... the consensus was so strong that it overrode motives of fear or deference’ (Thompson, 1971, p. 78).

The backbone of a crowd was generally working class, often *sans-culotte*, but likewise included professionals, artisans and the assorted lumpenproletariat (Rudé, 1959; Kaplan, 1982). This diverse membership was an accurate reflection of the pre-industrial city itself. The crowd *had* to be urban. Only within cities could people organize quickly and effectively enough to intimidate bakers, force changes to marketplace regulation, and raise the legitimate specter of political disorder. The peasantry had no such ability. While far more numerous, peasants were too distant from officialdom for the latter to feel threatened.³ In contrast, the *proximity* of crowds made them into an object of significant political anxiety: ‘Urban food riots,

especially those in capital cities, were quite another matter... Conflict over food became exquisitely political – and a dangerous threat to public order – when it was urban’ (Tilly, 1971). The relative spatial isolation *between* peasantries also made coordinated resistance against state officials improbable.

Pacifying the crowd meant that the grain trade, as well as the physical marketplaces where bread and flour were sold, had to be governed in the ‘moral’ or ‘public’ interest. This involved royal authorities exhaustively regulating, supervising and ‘making public’ every integral step of bread commerce: including trading grain, milling grain, selling flour, baking bread and marketing foodstuffs (Usher, 1913; Kaplan, 1984; Foucault, 2007). The administrative machineries of the ‘bread police’ had two clear priorities. The first involved protecting the bread supply of the city from hoarding and speculation by merchants. Second, and more important for the crowd, was the goal of maintaining a ‘just’ price for this vital foodstuff. This meant the cost of bread had to be properly indexed with prevailing wages. It was ultimately the minor practices of the bread police – setting prices, checking weights, supervising milling and determining orders of sale – that would make it possible to feed large cities within the technological constraints of pre-industrial Europe.

At the same time the urban bread supply was being policed in such intricate ways within the city, mechanisms of extra-legal repression were being activated in the countryside in order to guarantee the sustenance of these same crowds. It is clear that peasants were exploited in order to feed crowds, which manifested in regimes of ‘differential governance’ being developed for the city in comparison to the countryside.

As an example, consider the practice of ‘country buying’ that involved covertly sending merchants into rural areas and having them purchase directly from manors or larger peasant producers (Usher, 1913, pp. 21–22). The regulations governing the French grain trade stipulated that all transactions had to occur in the marketplace and in full view of authorities. Nonetheless the practice of country buying was openly tolerated as a way to feed cities when supplies were low and prices were high. The consumer ‘pull’ of big cities, such as Paris or Lyon, was always be the decisive factor in deciding to ignore existing regulations. (Moore, 1966, p. 45). Merchants, many of whom were commissioned by state authorities, scoured the countryside in an ‘attempt to hunt out the whole supply’ (Usher, 1913, p. 22; see also Moore, 1966, p. 45). Kaplan (1984) notes how the ‘supply crowns’ of eighteenth century Paris stretched from Auvergne in the south to Flandres in the North (pp. 90–91, 96–97). As one *intendant* from Poitiers (1709) complains, a simple edict allowing a merchant to export a specified quantity of grain easily morphs into a blanket right to subvert police regulations across the countryside. The frustration is apparent in his tone: ‘Does it (the edict) permit them to sell at wholesale to other merchants at Marans? Does it permit them to ship ten, twenty, thirty tons of grain...under the pretext of selling them at retail?’ (cited in Usher, 1913, p. 27).

While occasional official inquiries into the practice did occur, country buying was generally tolerated because feeding restive crowds was *the* preeminent concern of political authorities. As Moore argues, ‘the key agricultural problem was how to get



grain to the classes that ate bread but did not grow wheat' (p. 45). This required a politics of immediacy and necessity that was neither humane nor just from the perspective of the peasant. To use contemporary terminology, country buying resembled a secret grain cartel that operated in the shadows of the bread police, with the practice receiving the tacit approval of political authorities. In an age when policing aimed for the 'total administration' of the bread supply, not a single regulation appeared on the books regarding country buying (Usher, 1913, p. 39, p. 42).

Bread was sustenance in pre-industrial Europe. According to Fagan, bread was also a 'tyrant' that stalked pre-industrial populations (p. 154). But as a result it similarly stalked political authorities. 'Famine plots' swirled among urban crowds about the scheming merchants and politicians who wished to induce dearth in order to reap large profits, or eliminate hungry subjects (Kaplan, 1982). This constant threat of rebellion meant that cities were to be kept happy and satiated at all costs. Similar to the Roman masses, Parisian working classes did not *thrive* on this bread-centric diet, but they did *survive*. For pre-industrial European urbanites, bread comprised roughly 75 per cent of the family budget, and around 80 per cent of overall caloric intake (Rudé, 1959, p. 44; Price, 1983, p. 23). It should not come as a surprise, therefore, that an influential figure such as the *Encyclopediast* Diderot would write about bread being an 'element' of life similar to air or water, and therefore not something to be managed like 'any other' commodity (Kaplan, 1976, pp. 608–609).

More than any other political problem that confronted the Absolutist State, the bread supply 'defined relations between governors and governed' (Kaplan, 1984, p. 24). Sustenance was the lynchpin for pacifying royal subjects and guarantying their submission to paternal kingship. It is worth recalling the storming of the Bastille on 14 July 1789 begins with a small girl beating a drum and protesting the high cost of bread (Rudé, 1959, p. 74). The drumbeat was followed by a crowd of women chanting two successive demands: bread *first*, arms *second*.

Geopolitics, Industrialization and the Invention of Agricultural Policy

The political ecology of crowds, police, bread riots and famine plots will disappear by the 1850s. This occurs in large measure because of the transportation revolution which makes possible the simultaneous integration of both national and international grain markets (Trebilcock, 1981; Persson, 1999; Coclanis, 2003). Virilio (1977) argues it was an increase in 'speed' itself – that is, the velocity at which objects and bodies move through space – that made possible the compression of social and economic time which, in turn, fundamentally altered the conditions of human relations and ushered in the modern age (p. 74). For our purposes, this 'dromocratic revolution' certainly made possible the emergence of grain as a globally traded commodity, and in so doing permanently transformed the politics and mechanisms around the provisioning of food (Friedmann and McMichael, 1989; O'Rourke, 1997).



The incontrovertible problem was that in order to successfully integrate cereals markets, grain had to circulate faster than it would rot. As the physiocrats learned with their disastrous attempt to liberalize the French grain trade during the 1760s, the existence of surfeit grain by itself meant very little if that grain could not be moved quickly enough to the areas where drought or poor harvest was causing panic buying or worse, localized famine. To understand the conditions under which market integration does eventually occur – 100 years after the failed physiocratic experiment – we need to consider the impact new transportation infrastructures had on altering the pace and scale of late nineteenth century commerce and trade.

Railroads, in particular, were crucial for market integration because they made it possible to move surplus grain within and between states, simultaneously making possible the development of both national and regional markets (Persson, 1999). France experienced an 11.2 *annual* increase in rail capacity over the last few decades of the nineteenth century (Price, 1983, p. 207). By 1885 the most important rail corridors in the North – the pivotal Paris–Lyon–Marseille line, for example – moved goods at 34 km an hour. This figure had risen to 45 km an hour by 1913 (pp. 233–234). The average load could now reach its destination 56 hours faster than it could with carts driven by animal power, the previous modality. By 1914, Germany had 61 749 km of railway, while France possessed 37 400 (Wasserstein, 2007, p. 13).

Improved and expanded roadways were also important. In France, road networks were twice as large as those for rail and linked every major settlement in a region (Price, 1983). Roads could also be used in all seasons. A study conducted by the French minister of public works concluded that greatest savings in commerce would come through making major investments in the *routes nationales*. A law passed in 1868 provided 100 million francs over a ten year period for projects linking rural communes to urban areas (the *chemins d'intérêt commun* – or roads that link communes). Ultimately, it was the expansion and improvement of both the arterial and peripheral roadways that ended the isolated existence of the village peasantry and made it possible to diffuse market-spaces across the French countryside (see also Weber, 1976).

If railways and road networks made possible the agrarian integration of *continental* Europe, it was steam-power that opened up a *transoceanic* trade in foodstuffs. Steamships allowed grain from the 'virgin soils' of the settler colonies to penetrate the established metropolitan markets of Western Europe (Landes, 1969; Koning, 1994; Coclanis, 2003). From 1870 to 1910, the arable land in North America, Argentina, Uruguay and Australia increased from 82 million to 185 million ha (Koning, 1994, pp. 20–21). This occurred at the same time, the cost of shipping bulk commodities across the Atlantic decreased by 80 per cent (Tirrell, 1951, pp. 22–23; Tracy, 1989, p. 17).⁴ After 1870: 'wheat came from Kansas and Minnesota, from South Australia, from the Punjab, from Odessa, and the Danube. It challenged established growers everywhere' (Offer, 1989, p. 95). In the span of only a few decades, rural Europe went from embodying extreme forms of economic localism bordering on autarky, to being fully enmeshed in regional and global markets for grains, feed and meat.



It was therefore not market ideology that spawned the internationalization of agriculture. Rather, it was the new reality of *mobile grain* that finally ended the classic ‘event-scourge’ which had long bedeviled populations and political authorities alike (Foucault, 2007, p. 41). Especially, once the power of steam takes hold, the ‘law of one price’ emerges as the true regulator of cereals markets (Coclanis, 2003). At the same time, mobile grain would also generate a new set of problems. Specifically, the ‘competitive effects’ of a newly internationalized grain trade would come to have a deleterious impact on the vast middling peasantry of Western Europe – ushering in low prices and a series of devastating agrarian depressions across the 1880s and 1890s (see also Ingersent and Rayner, 1998; Tracy, 1989).

Political authorities worried about the productivity of their agrarian classes for two somewhat interconnected reasons. First, they feared the geopolitical effects of excessive dependence on imported foodstuffs. Second, they feared the economic impacts on their rural societies if this new competition was to completely undercut the market viability of their domestic agriculture. These two problematizations would ultimately elevate the strategic importance of agriculture and food supply in Europe’s National-Imperial States of the late nineteenth century.

The discourses and strategies of geopolitics were birthed within a Europe that had become simultaneously more imperial and industrial (see especially Heffernan 1998). Food supply and agricultural production, given their importance to maintaining both the military and industrial machineries, would quickly emerge as a site of substantial geopolitical concern. Unique among European powers, the British had the advantage of pursuing a ‘cheap food’ policy made possible through maximizing their system of Commonwealth trade. Drawing upon the immense production of their colonies and settler-states – which guaranteed access to an abundance of temperate and tropical foodstuffs – the British were able to inexpensively feed their urban working classes and thus ‘fuel’ their industrial take-off (Wolf, 1982; Mintz, 1985). Continental powers France and Germany lacked the island insularity, overseas imperial networks, and formidable navy that allowed the British to pursue what would have been a risky strategy for other European powers. For the continental empires in contrast: ‘food security...required that this dependence [on imports] did not exceed certain safety lines. This is why governments often reached for protectionist measures to prevent low farm prices from hampering the growth of domestic farm output’ (Koning, 1994, p. 34).

Clapham (1968) argues that modern agricultural policies were created in part as a ‘war insurance policy’ (p. 213). By protecting domestic producers from overseas competition, states could lessen their import dependence and therefore guarantee national food supplies in wartime. The possibility of being subject to a siege or economic blockade was a perpetual source of anxiety for the continental powers (Carr, 1939/2001; Offer, 1989). The British had an empire to feed it, and a royal Navy to protect these imperial supply lines. But as the first French Agricultural Minister Jules Méline rhetorically asked: ‘Is there a greater danger for a nation than to have its food supplies in the hands of foreign countries and their mercy?’



(1912, p. 247). Bismarck likewise feared that a food blockade would disorder civilian life and disrupt war preparation in a newly constituted Germany (Tirrell, 1951). 'Unlike the United Kingdom, Germany could not hope to maintain large food imports when attacked by more than one nation. If Germany had to preserve in such a war, its agriculture had to be capable of producing a large part of the country's basic food requirement' (Koning, 1994, p. 100).

In addition to maintaining a large and productive farming population for the purposes of national food security, a second motivation for protecting rural producers emerged from the widespread belief a 'healthy' national economy is one that strikes a 'balance' between industry and agriculture (see also Golob, 1944; Barkin, 1970). In stark contrast to the extractive policies of the Absolutist State, the National-Imperial States of the late nineteenth century viewed farming and agriculture as 'productive' employments in their own right, and sought to govern them as such.

In France, the new agrarian political economy was informed by two specific discourses. The first came from the doctrines of social Catholicism; wherein agricultural policy was imagined as a device from which to base an 'anti-individualistic' program of rural socioeconomic uplift (Golob, 1944, pp. 100–101). Agricultural governance, in other words, should be engineered as a 'social economy' for combating the pauperization of rural society. The second discourse came from agricultural associations such as the *Société des agriculteurs* and posited that agricultural policy should be an apparatus for rural modernization, or a means to increase the productivity of the small 'farmer' (no longer rendered a 'peasant' in the political discourse). These agriculturalists notably demanded equal treatment and economic support between industry and agriculture. A deputy of the *Société* stated during an association meeting in 1879: 'if some French industries obtain protective duties in any form whatsoever, justice demands that agriculture, which too is an industry, share equally in this protection' (cited in Golob, 1944, p. 53). In the context of a predominantly rural and agricultural country, the arguments of Méline, *Société*, and the social Catholics met with wide acceptance in France.

In Germany, the question of 'agriculture or industry' was more contentious and politicized. After the 'socialist law', protection for agriculture was the most hotly contested issue in the 1890 election (Tirrell, 1951, pp. 11–33). The supposed corrosive effects of industrialization had become a dominant narrative in forums such as the Protestant Social Congress (Barkin, 1970, p. 4). Agrarian supporters, in response to pro-industrial figures such as Max Weber⁵, churned out books and pamphlets and organized conferences to extol the value of a nation centered in the earth and soil, rather than in smoke and metals. These pro-rural intellectuals argued that city life was 'alienated, unethical, subversive', whereas life in the countryside was 'organic, hierarchal, traditional and healthy' (Offer, 1989, p. 332). Moreover, the experiences of European militaries in trying to recruit urban males for overseas conflicts had led to an exaltation regarding the 'health' of rural living in comparison to the stunted, excitable and emaciated



constitutions of working-class men emerging from city slums. (Burnett, 1994; Coveney, 2000).

Farmers and peasants not only produced food for the nation, so it was argued, but also provided the nation a moral and Christian backbone that was not found in urban spaces (viewed as places of knavery, vice and filth). Koning (1994) highlights that it was not one but rather a *collection* of pro-rural and pro-farming narratives that crystallized as a discursive order he labels 'agrarian fundamentalism':

According to this ideology, the farm population was the truly fertile class, a preserve of soundly conservative values and community spirit, and a breeding ground of hard soldiers. In contrast, the cities were places of cultural flowering, but also of alienation, rapid degeneration and demographic decline ... Furthermore, as such a flight from the land would normally involve disequilibrium between agricultural and industrial growth, it would entail dangerous international dependencies. A wise state, therefore, would foster its national agriculture, and it shield it against the negative effects of free market forces ... If needed, it would support farm incomes to secure adequate agricultural growth. (Koning, 1994, p. 152)

In Germany, Adolf Wagner was the most notable agrarian fundamentalist and prominent intellectual that argued for a nation guided by the principles of *Agrarpolitik* (Clark, 1940; Salter, 1944). Wagner did not view political economy as a theoretical science but rather as 'an inductive discipline based on an assessment of all aspects of man's life in society' (Craig, 1978, p. 197). This is essentially political economy imagined as social pedagogy; a reservoir of practical knowledge that would lead to beneficial interventions in the lives of farmers and rural communities (Craig, 1978, p. 197). Wagner was also a popular figure who routinely gave speeches that drew thousands, his audiences including bureaucrats, generals and members of the Reichstag (Barkin, 1970, p. 10).

Agricultural policy as an apparatus of political rule

As Barkin notes (1970), 'the age of the political economist had dawned' in European agriculture over the course of the late nineteenth century (p. 11). But it would be a particular diagram of economic government – 'national political economy' – that would prevail in Europe's agrarian spaces. Importantly, it was not an economic discourse that argued for the supremacy of free trade or market forces. Rather, it embodied a practical and problem-solving approach to economic policy that found its tangible manifestation in governing the frameworks of agrarian production and trade. Among its most important policy tools were a new class of 'frontier measures' that sought to manage both the national food supply and domestic farmers by 'modifying' the commercial grain trade between states (Ingersent and Rayner, 1998, p. 48).



Tariffs, the most commonly used frontier measure, amounted to a predetermined tax being placed on the importation of grain, and sometimes other foodstuffs. Tariffs were often based on standardized duties assessed relative to the quantity of the imported commodity, while other times operated on a 'sliding scale' that constantly adjusted the prevailing duties in reference to world prices. Tariffs were an attempt to indirectly secure the income of domestic farmers by 'protecting' or insulating national markets from cheap imports. Tariffs were also viewed as a means to lessen the geopolitical vulnerability that was generated through an over-dependence on foreign supply. If farmers could support themselves on the land – which meant they had to be competitive in local markets – then the health and productivity of the national farming sector could be preserved.

The use of agricultural tariffs begins in France in 1881, to be raised again in 1885 and 1887. The heavily protectionist Méline Tariff becomes law in 1892. This new law would place duties on various imported agricultural commodities and foodstuffs that ranged between 10 and 25 per cent (Clapham, 1968, p. 182; Tracy, 1989, p. 68). In Germany, tariffs become a core instrument of agricultural policy starting in 1879. The initial tariff was quite moderate: 1 mark per 100 kg of wheat, rye and oats, and only 0.5 mark on equivalent amounts of barley and maize (Tirrell, 1951, p. 74). The grain duties were significantly raised in 1885 and again 1887. After a brief period of moderate grain tariffs under Caprivi (Bismarck's successor), the German state progressively intensified its tariff regimes from 1902 to 1914.

Not all frontier measures involved assessing taxes at the border. For example, the Germans used a system of 'import certificates' that allowed traders to import specific quantities of higher-quality Russian wheat at domestic prices, mix it with an inferior German variety, and then re-export the blended grain at the higher Russian price (Tracy, 1989, p. 97; Koning, 1994, p. 84). This effectively amounted to an 'export subsidy' that was intended to maintain the competitiveness of Junker landowners within regional cereals markets, especially those for wheat and rye. Other frontier measures were based on distinctively prohibitive logics and operated by blocking imports of livestock for safety or sanitary reasons (Webb, 1982, p. 318; Tracy, 1989, p. 91). Socialists and Radicals viewed such measures as a poorly disguised attempt to prop-up prices for farmers at the expense of the working class. Conservatives and farmers argued it was a legitimate step to take in response to the dangers posed by trichina and hoof-and-mouth disease (Tirrell, 1951, pp. 77–78).

Agricultural policies though were not limited to market regulation. As Federico (2005) details, the creation of modern agricultural governance also included forms of infrastructural and social policy (p. 187; but see also Koning, 1994). Echoing the arguments of the French Social Catholics, continental agricultural policies came to include a set of policies and programs for addressing the 'backward' aspects of rural life. In concrete terms, this meant the extension of social infrastructure – such as post offices, schools, clinics and the like – across areas of rural Europe that were previously quite isolated from the normalizing institutions of the state.



We might also consider the state's promotion of modern farming practices during this period. Koning (1994) notes that 'the sponsoring of farm research and education' was one important technique used to combat the competitiveness problem of European farmers (p. 5). Previous to this period, agrarian knowledge was generally circulated through aristocratic networks or specific groups that engaged in agricultural experimentation, such as the Benedictine Monks (Tribe, 1978). But with the advent of agricultural policy, the improvement of farming practices would become a domain of 'applied' state knowledge. In Germany, previously dispersed and independent agricultural schools were folded into public universities (Clapham, 1968, pp. 216–221). There were also 'winter schools' and 'agricultural continuation schools' for the sons and daughters of the middling peasantry: 'So, between 1870 and 1900, the channels were provided through which agricultural knowledge could flow to the lowest ranks of the independent cultivators' (p. 216).

The ability of farmers to access credit was also imperative, and perhaps the single most important element in eradicating modes of subsistence agriculture among the lower status peasantry. In France agricultural associations, using financing from the Bank of France, provided loans to small farmers for 'the purchase of agricultural machinery which would otherwise have been unavailable to small farmers' (Golob, 1944, p. 89). In 1894, the German state created an institution that folded all preexisting agricultural associations into a single administrative entity that functioned as a standardized mechanism for diffusing agricultural knowledge and funding agricultural improvement schemes (Koning, 1994, p. 89). In France, agricultural policy also included crop insurance schemes to indemnify small farmers against catastrophic harvest loss (Clapham, 1968, p. 188).

Agricultural policy also involved the enrollment of farmers within the legislative organs of policymaking (Sheingate, 2001; Federico, 2005). Koning describes this as 'agrarian corporatism...the development of formal relations of negotiations and co-operation between government and agrarian organizations' (Koning, 1994, p. 89). Farmers had now become privileged partners and sources of authoritative knowledge in the professionalized and public agricultural bureaucracies of the nation-state. This agrarian corporatism appears as quite exceptional when we juxtapose it with the brute exploitation meted out to the peasantry through the extractive regimes of the Absolutist State.

To conclude this section, modern agricultural governance emerges as a response to the new economic and social realities wrought by industrialization and imperial geopolitics. A 'strong state' must not sacrifice its national farmers at the alter of global grain markets, nor should it allow its population to become dependent on imported foodstuffs. A strong state, in contrast, is one that promotes rural economic viability and national food security makes possible. If imperial struggle necessitate the full utilization of national manpower and resources, then it becomes both illogical and dangerous to allow vulnerability, stagnation, and backwardness to permeate the spaces of farming and rural life.



Agriculture and the Post-war Order

'Food will win the war and write the peace' – Postwar slogan of the USDA.
(cited in Collingham, 2011, p. 476)

Regional organizations and regional spaces are assembled in ways that seem to depend far less on the exercise of brute force. (Walters, 2012, p. 129)

The cessation of the classic pre-industrial dearth may have been eliminated with the rise of the railroad and steamship, but this did not simultaneously mean the disappearance of the bread-order *problématique* at the level of European history. Here we might consider the serious food shortages that appeared at the end of the Second World War and persisted for years into the reconstruction phase. It is embedded within this story of postwar hunger and the 'social' bases of postwar European cooperation that we encounter the transformation of agriculture from a space of imperial rivalry to one of functional cooperation and regionalization.

By 1943 postwar planners were already anxious about the potential effects that prolonged hunger would have on war-ravaged populations in a newly liberated Europe. By 1945, per-capita food availability had declined 12 per cent from its pre-war average. One-third of the world's population was on the brink of starvation, with millions of Europeans 'living on the edge' (Collingham, 2011, pp. 467–469; see also Judt, 2005, pp. 63–99). The United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration (UNRRA), the institutional forerunner to the UN, was created in 1943 to combat such deprivations. The bulk of UNRRA resources and manpower went to coordinating and delivering food relief, with most of the supply drawn from American and Canadian surpluses. Food aid provided by the UNRRA saved *millions* of Europeans from starvation during the brutal years of 1946–1947 (Judt, 2005, p. 86; Collingham, 2011, pp. 478–481). Led by its activist Director-General Fiorenzo La Guardia, the UNRRA should be considered a pioneer in the practices of international humanitarian government.

The internationalization of food relief and farm modernization would become permanent in the creation of the Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO), a specialized agency housed within the UN structure. A product of the 1943 Hot Springs Conference, the FAO brought together experts in nutrition, farming, public administration and agricultural economics from 44 allied countries. After a more sweeping mandate was rejected by the US State Department, the FAO was given the task of creating a set of integrated and scientific policies that would link agricultural production to food policy; that is, to merge the spaces of farming with those of nutrition and dietary health at the global level (Collingham, 2011, p. 482; see also Yates, 1960; Shaw, 2007). In addition to its range of technical operations, the FAO would also comprise the institutional home of an evolving food security discourse that would come to articulate the 'right to food' as a second generation human right; a physiological entitlement ostensibly protected within international law. (see also Mechlem, 2004).



The origins of our contemporary global NGO complex likewise originated with the problem of how to feed hungry Europeans. To take one example, the prominent NGO Oxfam – Oxford Committee for Famine Relief – began as a fund-raising drive to combat the severe hunger in wartime Greece (ÓGráda, 2009, p. 219; Collingham, 2011, p. 167). The food aid was organized by a civil society alarmed at Churchill's willingness to let Greek civilians starve lest the food fill the bellies of occupying German troops. CARE International⁶ is another example of an influential NGO that originated with wartime European food relief. Created in 1945, the organization provided a conduit for Americans to send individual relief packages to suffering Europeans – which they did by the millions. Oxfam and CARE not only pushed forward the internationalization of wartime food relief, but sought to democratize this humanitarian space as well. Their work was predicated on the belief that the suffering of disadvantaged populations was the responsibility of all global citizens in a position to help.

In confronting the work of the OEEC, we encounter a regional organization that initiated cooperation over a range of prevalent 'food and farm' problems in postwar Europe. While best known for organizing the distribution of Marshall Aid, the OEEC also undertook substantial efforts to both research and combat the problems of insufficient nutritional health and depressed agricultural productivity in postwar Europe (OEEC, 1949). The OEEC proved instrumental in forging cooperation across a sector that had for the previous fifty years constituted a space of imperial aggrandizement and competition (Biebuyck, 2014). As Gordon (1956) details, the OEEC was able to overcome an 'inauspicious background' to have a 'far reaching influence on major policies of the member governments and with considerable creative initiative' (p. 3). A sufficient and affordable supply of food was *the* symbol for European citizens that wartime deprivations were in the past, and that a more comfortable future beckoned (Moure and Schwartz, 2007).

Embedded liberalism and the farmer welfare state

What Ruggie (1998) labels 'embedded liberalism' was a particular form of transnationalism based in the practices of multilateralism, functional coordination and qualified international trade. Multilateral regimes, and the functional strategies they deployed, were crucial in the recovery, rehabilitation and stabilization of a war-ravaged Europe (1998, pp. 109–112). As we have now seen, the problems of food and agriculture became formative sites wherein these new forms of technocratic and scientific cooperation would be generated (Milward, 1977, p. 252). Indeed, the early work of organizations such as the UNRRA, OEEC, and FAO did much to internationalize the problems of food supply, laying the foundations for the subsequent consolidation of food security as a core human security concern within global governance.

Additionally, the relationship between agriculture and embedded liberalism was evident in a second trajectory that likewise privileged the need for programs in



transnational cooperation and welfare. This trajectory would most concretely emerge in the form of regional agricultural policy and rural welfare state – The Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) – that was placed at the heart of the nascent European project. When the CAP begins to operate in 1962 it certainly builds upon the cooperative practices initiated in the OEEC, yet at the same time also pushes beyond the ‘low-politics’ approach that defined the work of this largely technocratic organization. The uniqueness of the CAP was to push agricultural cooperation into the arena of regional economic integration, a strategy not attempted before or since. It was now ‘Europe’ rather than the individual states that would govern commodity markets and redistribute wealth among farmers on the continent. The CAP would ultimately emerge as the only supranational public policy of the EC (and later EU) based upon territorial and welfarist logics (Bowler, 1985; Gray, 2000). As Hallstein indicates, developing a regional agricultural strategy was believed at the time to be a necessary precondition for the success of the European project overall:

In 1957, when we negotiated the EEC treaty, we all knew that to achieve a common market in agriculture was vital to the future of the Community ... To leave it out of the processes of economic integration would not only be grossly unfair, but would also be fatal to the balanced and comprehensive development of our economic union, and hence any real prospect of building political unity. (Hallstein, 1962, p. 55)

The CAP was a political oddity in this new regional Community otherwise committed to the liberalizing strategies of customs harmonization, deregulation, and economic mobility. While the CAP did embody a form of market integration, its design in no way resembled that of the Common Market (see also Ludlow, 2005). The market regimes of the CAP are best categorized as a form of governance Thompson (1992) labels ‘managed political economy’. The CAP worked by extensively regulating the prices and markets for all major agricultural commodities. It was specifically through the usage of production linked subsidies – paid out at artificiality high internal prices – that the European Community became the patron of farmer prosperity and rural employment across its member states. A more liberal framework for governing European agriculture was simply not viewed as appropriate or even just for managing an economic sector and population that was simultaneously so economically vulnerable and yet vitally important for all of society (see Milward, 1992; Griffiths, 1995; Rieger, 2000).

Similar to the national agricultural policies that preceded it, the CAP governed through the systematic intervention and management of markets. Whereas in the National-Imperial State used tariffs and other frontier measures to regulate farmer income and food supply *indirectly* by working on the terms of trade, the postwar agrarian political economy of the EC was based on a *direct* organization of commodity markets in the most fundamental respects. For the CAP, this intervention was made possible through an instrument called the Commodity Market Organization (CMO). Rather than simply being an opaque form of protectionism or ‘autarky’ – as is commonly charged – the



CMOs were actually the technical means through which the EC was able to carve out and govern a social space centered on family farming and rural society (Knudsen, 2009).

The logic of a CMO was to provide generous price guarantees for staple agricultural commodities within an insulated European market (EC, 1979; Marsh and Swanney, 1980; Fennel, 1997). Essentially, farmers were promised a price-floor on every unit of production. Moreover, to protect EC prices from lower cost imports, a separate instrument called the 'variable import levy' was used. The levy set duties at the level which reflected the difference between the global and European price. It thus functioned as a 'floating tariff' that made it possible to realize 'community preference' across the internal agricultural market. The use of price supports and variable levies allowed political authorities to displace 'natural prices' and competition in favor of economic planning and managerialism. The original design of the CMOs provides quite solid evidence that a genuinely liberal framework was never seriously considered as a strategy for governing European agriculture (see again Ludlow, 2005; Knudsen, 2009).

Farmer poverty was endemic in Western Europe before 1945. In the postwar period this long-standing condition becomes problematized in new ways. In particular, the solution to this problem would now require a vast program of economic securitization to be carried out by the European Commission in the interests of millions of family farmers (Mansholt, [1967] 1968). As Walters argues, it is important that we broaden our understanding as to the scope and sources of postwar welfare policy: 'We tend to think of welfarism as a game of domestic governance, a way of thinking and managing questions of social and economic life *within* the nation. However, the case of European integration suggests that welfarism was much more flexible and could be applied to spaces across and above the system of states' (Walters, 2004, p. 159). Taking our cue from Walters, the CAP presents an ideal case for deconstructing the social contexts and political strategies through which a policy space that had been previously rendered as a core dimension of state power becomes transformed into the most expansive transnational welfare policy ever devised.

Conclusion

Commonsense discourse, habits of speech and thought, cramp and confine reflection and leave undiscovered representations of European space that could prove more powerfully mobilizing. To recover the worlds of political possibility that European Union (EU) opens up, one must therefore free discourse from the constraints of habit. (Loriaux, 2008, p. 2)

Absolutist state formation was predicated on mechanisms that allowed for establishing control over agrarian production systems, as well as the ability to comprehensively police the bread supply of cities. These agrarian 'monopoly powers' were essential for aspiring statemakers wishing to feed their armies, raise revenue and order urban life.



Whereas the countryside was rendered as a site of domination and extraction under Absolutism, cities were organized as sites of total administration and obsessive regulation. The crowd, unlike the peasantry whose labor underpinned state formation, was imagined as a ‘people’ that had to be appeased because of their ability to foment disorder and threaten sovereign authority. From this differential politics of peasants and crowds, the establishment of modern sovereign state authority becomes a more intelligible process.

The relationship between agriculture and political order was quite different in the Imperial-National State of the late nineteenth century. New geopolitical and economic contexts emerged that gave a new importance to the food supply and the prosperity of the farming classes. Agricultural governance becomes part and parcel of a broader movement towards governing complexity, a trajectory discussed by Mann:

Only in one respect is the state singular: As infrastructural interpenetration increased, ‘it’ tended to ‘naturalize’ social life. The ‘power’ of the modern state principally concerns not ‘state elites’ exercising power over society but a tightening state-society relation, caging social relations over the national rather than the local-regional or transnational terrain, thus politicizing and geopolitizing far more of social life than had earlier states. (Mann, 1993, p. 61)

How did the Imperial-National State attempt to ‘cage’ the social and economic relations around food and farming? One way involved making agricultural production central to the militarization of the social body and the maximization of its ‘productive forces’. A second strategy was catalyzed by prominent discourses that argued a strong state must ‘balance’ its agricultural and industrial dimensions within the overall framework of the ‘national economy’. Interestingly, the two problematizations would be linked through a single apparatus of rule – ‘national agricultural policies’ – that would appear across all of Continental Europe in the last quarter of the nineteenth century.

In this movement from *police to policy* there would be a more substantial use of political economy as a knowledge for managing national farming sectors. While a seemingly banal practice, tariffs, more than all other tools of economic policy, made it possible for the state to indirectly regulate farmer income and manage the aggregate level of national food production. Second, agricultural policies came to include new programs and instruments that facilitated the extension of social infrastructure across the countryside. Valverde (2007) argues that we only possess an ‘incomplete’ sketch of the ‘modern practices of power-knowledge’ integral in the development of state power (p. 160). In considering the connections between the food supply, industrialization and geopolitics, we have filled in some of these details.

Following this discussion, the essay explored the postwar pacification of the food supply and regionalization of agricultural governance. In canvassing this history it proved useful to think about the governmentalization of Europe’s agrarian relations as occurring in two phases, that of *cooperation* and *integration*.



The cooperative era begins immediately following the war and continues for nearly a decade after (1945–1954). In terms of food relief, we first encounter cooperative strategies in the crisis-mitigation practices of the UNRRA, an organization tasked with the physical rehabilitation of Europe's displaced and malnourished populations. The cooperative diagram gains additional traction within an emergent transnational civil society that would coordinate and 'democratize' the delivery of food aid to war-weary Europeans. It would ultimately be in the OEEC wherein agrarian cooperation becomes a genuine site of functional coordination and technocratic harmonization among former belligerents. The work of the OEEC's technical committees has been conspicuously ignored in most postwar European histories. Nevertheless, it was through its Food and Agricultural Committee that the OEEC began to make intelligible Europe's common social problems in the areas of nutritional health, agricultural productivity and farm modernization.

The integrative period (1955–1973) most importantly involves the Europeanization of agricultural policy and the creation of a regional welfare state for farmers. The CAP is commonly derided for its labyrinth complexity and fiscal excesses. But such an 'ideological' interpretation elides the radical significance of this policy when considering its historical timing and context. Within the CAP framework, it were the CMOs that provided the technical means through which Europe's commodity markets were managed and its farmers generously subsidized.

Europe's political modernity has not been a universally urban or industrial experience. Mobilizing a contrasting historiographical perspective, this essay has provided a reading of European politics that has foregrounded the importance of food, farmers and rurality. Here *Agrarian Europe* has become one dimension of *Many Europes* requiring its own questions and modes of inquiry. Of course, not all of Europe's important agrarian relations could be explored in this single essay. For example, we might likewise consider the ways Europe's history of agricultural imperialism has bound it to the rest of the world, as well as generated some of the most violent and repressive agrarian systems imaginable.

To paraphrase Loriaux's epigraph, what 'worlds of political possibility' open up when we historicize European modernity in terms of its food supply and other agrarian relations? What might such investigations reveal about the interrelated histories of sovereignty, economic governance, and welfare politics of which we were previously not aware? It is in posing and ruminating over such questions that we locate the potential of Tilly's 'victualizing politics'.

About the Author

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Notes

- 1 The root verb *tallage* means ‘to take part of the whole’.
- 2 Steel (2009) likens Roman agricultural colonies to the function of British settler states: ‘Two military conquests, over Carthage in 146 BC and Egypt in 30 BC, were crucial victories, securing access to coastal North Africa, territory as vital to Rome’s survival as the American Midwest would be to London’s almost 2000 years later’ (p. 73).
- 3 Even the much discussed ‘jacquerie’ – a local peasant uprising that targeted feudal overlords – has been exaggerated relative to its actual occurrences and impact (Moore, 1966; James, 1988).
- 4 At this time the development of the telegraph also made possible the instantaneous movement of price signals to across Atlantic, thus eliminating a knowledge-barrier to market integration (Clapham 1968; Landes, 1969).
- 5 Max Weber was a significant interlocutor in these debates. He argued ‘decisively’ for industrialization as ‘the only path which could make possible a greater Germany’ (Tribe, 1983, p. 187).
- 6 CARE stands for Cooperative for American Remittances to Europe.

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