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Hungry for Trade?: Poverty Reduction, 'Inclusive' Liberalism, and Rising Food Insecurity in Cambodia

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ABSTRACT

This thesis aims to critically explore the ongoing dominance and shifting nature of global liberalism on development policy and practise. This is to be achieved through an investigation of the World Bank's Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP) approach and its relationship with rising food insecurity in Cambodia. Drawing on David Craig and Doug Porter's concept of 'inclusive' liberalism, this thesis will attempt to illuminate some of the complex ways in which dominant approaches to poverty reduction and food insecurity remain embedded within, perpetuate and reinforce wider hegemonic liberal governance. Using the 2008 global food crisis as a foundation for its analysis, this thesis will attempt to demonstrate the complex relationship between global liberal ideology and development responses to food insecurity within a particular context and place. It will critically explore some of the wider political economic factors that have contributed to the current food crisis. In particular, it will focus on the historical and ongoing impacts of neoliberal structural adjustment reforms on developing country agriculture, development and poverty reduction. In this way the thesis will address the need to see the current food crisis also in connection with long-standing neoliberal development practises, and the perpetuation of these by international development organisations and their frameworks. Using Cambodia as a case study, this thesis aims to demonstrate the way in which the PRSP framework and approaches to food insecurity continue to maintain and reinforce the very structures which perpetuate certain people's vulnerability to hunger.

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ABBREVIATIONS

ADB	Asian Development Bank
AoA	Agreement on Agriculture
BWIs	Bretton Woods Institutions
CARD	Council for Agriculture and Rural Development
CDRI	Cambodia Development Resource Institute
CDF	Comprehensive Development Framework
CMDGs	Cambodian Millennium Development Goals
CPP	Cambodian People's Party
CSES	Cambodian Socio-Economic Survey
CSO	Civil Society Organisation
ELCs	Economic Land Concessions
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organisation
FDI	Foreign Direct Investment
FSN	Food Security and Nutrition
FSSP	Food Security Support Programme
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
HDI	Human Development Index
HIPC	Heavily Indebted Poor Country Initiative
IFIs	International Financial Institutions
IFPRI	International Food Policy Research Institute
IMF	International Monetary Fund
JICA	Japan International Cooperation Agency
JSA	Joint Staff Assessment
JSAN	Joint Staff Advisory Note
MAFF	Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food
MDGs	Millennium Development Goals
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
MoP	Ministry of Planning
MoRD	Ministry of Rural Development
MOWRAM	Ministry of Water Resources and Meteorology

MTR	Mid-Term Review
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
NPRS	National Poverty Reduction Strategy
NSDP	National Strategic Development Plan
OHCHR	Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights
ODA	Official Development Assistance
OECD	Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development
PDS	Poverty Dynamics Study
PPA	Participatory Poverty Assessments
PRSP	Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper
RGC	Royal Government of Cambodia
SAW	Strategy for Agriculture and Water 2006-2010
SAP	Structural Adjustment Programme
SEDP	Socio-Economic Development Plan
SFFSN	Strategic Framework for Food Security and Nutrition
SLCs	Social Land Concessions
SLT	Systematic Land Titling
TWG	Technical Working Group
TWG-FSN	Technical Working Group on Food Security and Nutrition
UN	United Nations
UNTAC	United Nations Transitional Authority in Cambodia
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
WDR	World Development Report
WFP	World Food Programme
WTO	World Trade Organisation

We must refute the false idea of reality that accepts as inevitable what is in fact a result of present politics; in other words, of organized chaos. Each and every one of us must support measures to save the living. If only people are told what is happening, then the world's dark future, which now seems to threaten everyone in it, may be changed. But only if we take action. Now is the time to act, now is the time to create, now is the time for us to live in a way that will give life to others.

– *The Manifesto Against Hunger, 1981*

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

“If the government cannot lower the costs of living it simply has to leave. If the police and the UN troops want to shoot us, that’s OK, because in the end, if we are not killed by bullets, we’ll die of hunger” (A demonstrator in Port-au-Prince, Haiti, as cited in Angus, 2008).

In 1974 Henry Kissinger opened the proceedings of the first World Food Conference declaring that “within a decade no man, woman or child will go to bed hungry” (as cited in Bush, 2007: 145). More than 30 years later, and after innumerable promises by world leaders committing to banish the scourge of hunger and poverty, food insecurity and chronic malnutrition continue to dominate the lives of almost half of the world’s population (Magdoff, 2008; Sundaram, 2008; WFP, 2009). This is at significant odds with the fact that the world is currently producing more than enough food to meet the sustenance and nutritional needs of every person on the planet (FAO, 2002). It is abundance, rather than scarcity, which best characterises our current food system. Yet not only does hunger persist, it is also rapidly increasing (Edkins, 2000; Mousseau, 2005; Pretty and Hine, 2001; Bush, 2007). According to the Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO), the number of those experiencing food insecurity has been escalating at a rate of 4 million a year since the middle of the 1990s (FAO, 2004; FAO, 2008). This has been significantly exacerbated with the recent onset of the 2008 global food crisis. Characterised by the unprecedented and rapid rise in the price of all food commodities, particularly essential staple foods¹, this crisis has threatened to push an additional 100 million more into conditions of hunger and poverty (WFP, 2009; World Bank, 2008c).

While defined as a ‘global’ food crisis, the impacts of skyrocketing food prices are far from evenly distributed. It is the poor, predominantly concentrated in developing countries, who have been particularly affected. In Haiti, unable to purchase basic staple foods, the poor have resorted to mixing clay and water into ‘mud biscuits’ in order to survive. Once consumed only by severely impoverished pregnant women as a dangerous calcium substitute, mud is now replacing the staple food of entire households (Carroll, 2008; Angus, 2008). In Cambodia, a country currently producing a

¹ In particular, rice, maize, corn and soybeans (World Bank, 2008c; WFP, 2009).

rice surplus of around 2 million tons for export every year, more than 50 percent of the population are characterised as food poor², with 3 million people unable to access enough food to meet the minimum dietary requirements needed to sustain a healthy life (CARD, 2008). This becomes increasingly incongruous when juxtaposed with the routine practise of wealthy Western governments of paying millions to their farmers for the destruction of surplus food commodities (Rosset, 2008; Bello, 2008a). The Canadian federal government is currently paying its pork producers \$225 per pig killed in a \$50 million mass swine culling programme, in an attempt to reduce an overabundance of pig production and increase prices (Angus, 2008). Meanwhile, as the number of the world's hungry continues to increase, wealthy governments and international corporations are scrambling for the control of millions of hectares of agricultural land throughout the developing world, in an attempt to further bolster and secure their own food stocks. In a recent twist on what can be described as a continuing narrative of neo-colonial imperialism, countries such as Madagascar and Ethiopia are leasing, or selling, vast tracts of arable land to wealthy foreign investors, who are in turn growing staple foods for export to their own countries (Economist, 2009; Independent, 2009). Incongruously, this is occurring while the World Food Programme (WFP) continues to provide vast amounts of food aid to the millions of poor in both these countries suffering from chronic hunger and malnutrition (Economist, 2009; Jung-a et al., 2008; Rice, 2008).

While an overabundance of food in Western countries, increased global land-grabbing, and growing hunger in the global South may seem like separate issues, they are intimately connected (Bush, 2007). Rather than resulting from scarcity, the current food crisis, and rising food insecurity more generally, can be seen as a manifestation of increasing inequality and polarisation within, and between, rich and poor countries over the last 30 years; exacerbated by what Watts and Goodman (1997: 3) characterise as the 'lost decade' when neoliberalism ascended to dominance throughout the 1980s. In order to understand the current food crisis, hunger needs to be positioned within the wider historical processes and tendencies which produce it (Edkins, 2000; Bush, 2007; Sen, 1981). Food insecurity, often referred to as 'food security', is embedded

² Food poverty is defined by households earning an income lower than the cost of a food basket corresponding to the average dietary requirements of 2120kcal per day (CARD, 2008).

within wider relations of power and structures of inequality which inform, maintain and perpetuate certain people's vulnerability to hunger. Much like poverty, food insecurity is deeply connected to, and embedded within, the broader trajectory, development and restructuring of global free-market capitalism (Bush, 2007; Edkins, 2000). More particularly, rising incidences of hunger can be seen as directly related to the rise and impact of neoliberalism and the particular ways in which it has structured modes of production and consumption on a global scale (McMichael, 1998).

In this thesis, I will critically explore some of the wider political economic factors that have contributed to the current food crisis. In particular, I will focus on the historical and ongoing impacts of neoliberal structural adjustment reforms on 'developing' country agriculture, development and poverty reduction. I attempt to situate rising food insecurity within the current era of hegemonic liberal governance. Thereby addressing the need to see the current food crisis, and rising food insecurity more generally, in connection with long-standing neoliberal development practises and the perpetuation of these by dominant development organisations and their frameworks. In so doing, I aim to tease apart some of the wider factors contributing to the seemingly incongruous anomaly of a world characterised by simultaneous abundance and widespread hunger (Bush, 2007). I will use the current food crisis as a provocation for beginning to explore the complex relationship between dominant, global liberal ideology and approaches to food insecurity. Cambodia is utilised as a case-study for this analysis, with the aim of illuminating some of the complex interplay between local and extra-local forces acting within the wider global political economy. In particular, I will focus on the way in which global liberalism manifests itself in Cambodia in certain ways, in turn impacting the way in which food insecurity is framed and approached.

The overall purpose of this thesis is to explore the ongoing dominance and shifting nature of global liberalism on development policy, to be achieved through the exploration of the World Bank's Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP) approach and its relationship with food security in Cambodia. While taking into account the wider contextual and ideological underpinnings which inform this approach, I will explore some of the complex ways in which food security is conceptualised within Cambodia's PRSP framework. PRSPs have become the principal mechanism and

overarching operational framework through which development financing is assessed and disbursed. In this way, PRSPs have become highly influential in the shaping of poverty reduction policy and processes in developing states (Tan, 2005). The underlying assumption informing this research is that food insecurity and hunger are intimately connected to wider issues of poverty and inequality. For this reason, I would argue that further exploration of the complex role of PRSPs in poverty reduction and policy formation is of significant importance when looking at the ability of developing countries, institutions, and development organisations to respond to rising food prices and hunger. Using Cambodia as a case study, I look particularly at how PRSPs relate to, impact and inform a specific poverty problem in a particular context and space. The goal is to illuminate some of the complex ways in which dominant approaches to poverty reduction and food insecurity remain embedded within, perpetuate and reinforce wider hegemonic liberal governance and unequal structures of power. In this way, I hope to demonstrate the way in which approaches to food insecurity continue to maintain and reinforce the very structures which perpetuate certain people's vulnerability to hunger.

Setting the Scene

How poverty and food insecurity is framed and conceptualised significantly impacts the way in which particular poverty problems are approached and the kinds of policies and programmes which are put in place (Brock et al., 2001; Rojas, 2004). Historically, development policy and its surrounding literature has constructed development problems in such a way as to further legitimate and justify the kinds of interventions and approaches it advocates (Lewis et al., 2008; Ferguson, 1990). As will be discussed in Chapter Two, the particular ways in which poverty, 'the poor' and the state were conceptualised throughout the 1980s for example, gave impetus and legitimacy to the implementation of neoliberal structural adjustment policies throughout the developing world. Making sense of development policy requires a closer analysis of the way in which certain ways of thinking about poverty and food insecurity have "gained ascendancy, coming to determine the frame through which poverty is defined, measured" and approached (Brock et al., 2001: iii). In regards to the PRSP framework and policy responses to food insecurity, this requires an understanding of the way in

which neoliberalism has shaped certain ways of thinking about hunger; demarcating particular kinds of knowledge and approaches to policy as legitimate and natural, while excluding and repudiating others.

The ideological dominance of neoliberalism on development policy throughout the 1980s and 1990s has had profound impacts on the shape and structure of our current food system, as well as significantly impacting the rise of poverty and inequality throughout both the developed and developing world (Harvey, 2003; Chang, 2004). Championing the uninhibited role of free-market capitalism as the solution to wider issues of poverty and economic growth, neoliberalism provided the ideological framework for the far-reaching implementation of state restructuring and rescaling reforms throughout a range of national contexts (Peck and Tickell, 2002: 38; see also Craig and Porter, 2006; Tan, 2005; Abrahamsen, 2004; Larner, 2000). Radically departing from the Keynesian, state-centred framework which had dominated development economics from the 1950s onwards, markets became the leading mechanism through which poverty reduction was to be achieved (Peck and Tickell, 2002).

To roll back the state, and ‘let the market govern’ was the resounding mantra which informed this period. Poverty reduction was believed to occur only as the result of economic growth, assumed to ‘trickle down’ to the poor through the equalising and efficient activities of the markets ‘invisible hand’ (Paloni and Zanardi, 2006; Peet, 1999, Harvey, 2005). Deemed inefficient and corrupt, the state was to pull out of any involvement in market processes and provisions for the poor, instead ‘rolling out’ institutions which would foster a healthy environment for the development and growth of the private sector and international trade (Harvey, 2006; Peck and Tickell, 2002; Larner, 2000). To liberalise, privatise and deregulate were considered central to this goal; enabling the market to rip-free from the previously regulatory and protective boundaries of the state. Initially adopted and heavily marketed in the West, neoliberalism was forcefully disseminated throughout the developing world through the mechanisms of the World Bank and International Monetary Fund’s (IMF) Structural Adjustment Programmes (SAPs). Attached as conditions to financing and loans, SAPs forced developing countries to rip open their borders to the free flowing

influx of international capital and goods, while removing any previous protections or regulations which would have sheltered the vulnerable from the consequences of market failure.

In contrast to the assurances of prosperity so fervently promised to the developing world, neoliberal structural adjustment reforms failed to reduce conditions of poverty for most of the world's poor (Chang, 2004; Harvey, 2003; Hellinger et al., 2001). Rather, as will be demonstrated throughout this thesis, unfettered free-market capitalism has led predominantly to the increased concentration of wealth and power into the hands of a few global elite. Ironically, while markets, technology and trade were touted as the “essential conditions of development and prosperity, these forces combined, under the banner of ‘development’ to create hunger amid abundance” (McMichael, 2007a: 170). Implemented in one developing country after another, neoliberal reforms have resulted in an ever-widening gap in inequality, skyrocketing unemployment, declining economic growth and stagnating poverty reduction³ (Paloni and Zanardi, 2006; Davis, 2006; Kiely, 2007; Tan 2005). In many cases, particularly in regards to food security, neoliberalism has significantly worsened the conditions of poverty for many, further entrenching the vulnerable into conditions of hunger and deprivation (Havnevik et al., 2007; Patnaik, 1996). Effectively, under the influence of adjustment policies all development indicators, including child mortality, have taken a downward turn (McMichael, 2000). In addition, and as will be discussed in Chapter Three, neoliberal reforms have structured our global food system in such a way as to have paved the way for the current food crisis; contributing to increased market volatility and vulnerability, while eroding the capacity of governments to protect the poor.

PRSPs were adopted by the World Bank and IMF in 1999, amidst rising international protest around the failure and inadequacy of SAPs to bring about any kind of poverty

³ According to the United Nations (2005), the amount of people living in absolute poverty in Sub-Saharan Africa (with incomes less than \$1 per day) doubled in the 20 year period since 1981, with numbers climbing from 288 million to 516 million in 2001. Similarly, Latin America and the Caribbean also experienced massive increases in poverty over this period, rising from 99 million in 1981 to 128 million in 2001 (United Nations, 2005). Globally, unemployment has skyrocketed, increasing from 140 million in 2003 to 186 million in only a decade (United Nations, 2005). This has corresponded with sharp rises in inequality the world over. Measured in 2003, 18 countries, with a combined population of 460 million, have a Human Development Index (HDI) that is lower than it was in 1990 (UNDP, 2005).

reduction in the developing world (Hellinger et al., 2001; Fraser, 2005; Crawford, 2003; Storey et al., 2005; Paloni and Zanardi, 2006). As will be discussed in Chapter Two, this criticism was further exacerbated by the apparent failure of SAPs to prevent and assist in the 1997 Asian crisis. The rise of the PRSP approach can be seen as part of an attempt by the World Bank and IMF to reframe and broaden their development agenda, in the face of a rising crisis of legitimacy surrounding IFI policies and the impact of global free-market capitalism on the poor (Fraser, 2005; Paloni and Zanardi, 2006; Craig and Porter, 2006; United Nations, 2005). In what has been defined as a radical departure from the narrow and conservative neoliberal orthodoxy so characteristic of SAPs, PRSPs emphasise the importance of positioning poverty reduction, rather than simply economic growth, at the very centre of development policy. In an apparent shift away from the universal and one-size-fits-all policies inherent in SAPs, PRSPs are declared to be country owned and locally driven; incorporating the participation of national governments, NGOs, local communities, and even 'the poor' in the creation of a nationally relevant and locally specific development plan. Part of a wider global shift in development discourse, this approach emphasises local participation, 'inclusion' and 'pro-poor' economic growth as essential to the poverty reduction process.

A burgeoning literature has emerged over the last decade in response to the rise of the PRSP approach, exploring its impacts on poverty reduction as well as development policy, donor-recipient relations and 'the poor' (Abrahamsen, 2004; Brown, 2004; Cammack, 2004; Stewart and Wang 2003; Fraser 2005; Dijkstra 2005; Paloni and Zanardi 2006). For those embracing the new agenda, PRSPs are believed to demonstrate a radical departure from the raw, market-orientated neoliberalism inherent in top-down, structural adjustment initiatives. They are said to represent a welcome and sizeable expansion in development policy and practice; addressing the various inadequacies of the previous agenda; broadening previously narrow conceptions of poverty; while dramatically transforming donor-recipient relations on a global scale (Maxwell, 2005; Tan, 2005). However, while rhetorically alluring, there are many critics who remain significantly sceptical of this apparent turnaround in what was a previously dogmatic development agenda. For many critics, such as Hellinger and colleagues (2001), Fraser (2005) and Crawford (2003), PRSPs are perceived as little more than old

structural adjustment policies in new Poverty Reduction clothing: a palliative public relations exercise designed simply to placate those rising in protest against SAPs, while continuing the expansion of neoliberalism throughout the developing world (see Hellinger et al., 2001; Fraser, 2005; Crawford, 2003; Storey et al., 2005; Paloni and Zanardi, 2006). However, as will be explored throughout this thesis, particularly in Chapter Two, it would be incorrect to assume PRSPs represent merely more of the same. While the core tenants of neoliberalism continue to be woven throughout the Poverty Reduction approach, there has been a definite shift away from the raw, market fundamentalist orientation of previous SAPs, to what David Craig and Doug Porter (2006) have defined as a more 'inclusive' liberal form.

Drawing on Karl Polanyi's concept of the 'double movement'⁴, Craig and Porter (2006) explore the shift from SAPs to the adoption of the Poverty Reduction approach, positioning PRSPs within the wider context of the constant transformation and rearticulation of global liberalism (Craig and Porter, 2006; Porter and Craig, 2004). As these authors (2004) argue, while liberalism remains globally hegemonic, firmly centred around the promotion of free-market capitalism and international trade, it is also a plural liberalism, subject to ongoing hybridisations and rearticulation (Porter and Craig, 2004: 388). In the face of rising criticism surrounding the devastating and destructive impacts of unfettered global markets on the poor, neoliberalism needed to be re-framed and reshaped in order to survive. What we are seeing now, woven throughout the PRSP framework, is more liberalism, however it is a more securing, embedding and 'inclusive' form of liberalism.

Within this framework, neoliberal macroeconomic policies are being joined with a greater emphasis on concepts of 'empowerment', 'participation' and 'pro-poor' economic growth. This is coupled with increasing humanitarian concerns for the creation of social safety nets and human capital provisions. Poverty and food insecurity are perceived as resulting predominantly from 'barriers to access' preventing the poor from participating in international trade, and it is this which development policy seeks to remedy. Moving away from a narrow focus on economic growth, development policy now champions the incorporation and inclusion of the poor deeper into

⁴ To be further explored in Chapter Two.

relationship with global free-market capitalism. The aim is to ensure active participation of those previously excluded into what the World Bank has defined as the “inclusive world economy” (Craig and Porter, 2004: 398). In this way, Poverty Reduction’s emphasis on ‘participation’ and ‘empowerment’ serves to further expand and entrench the reach of liberalism; incorporating and aligning even the most marginalised under the auspicious umbrella of ‘inclusion’. PRSPs can be seen as part of a continuing effort to consolidate and expand contemporary liberalism at the global level. The continuing dominance of private sector development and international trade, so central to the liberal agenda, is bolstered and legitimated through the adoption of more ‘poverty-friendly’ and ‘inclusive’ policies and rhetoric. What we are seeing within the PRSP framework is the continuation of liberalism; however it has been reformulated and re-framed with a more poverty-orientated and friendly face.

It is within this framework of ‘inclusive’ liberalism, to be discussed further in Chapter Two, that the issue of food security will be centrally placed. The aim is to explore the way in which PRSPs and approaches to rising hunger continue to be informed by, shape and perpetuate the global dominance of liberalism. PRSPs can be seen as a manifestation of this wider shift in the tumultuous trajectory of global liberalism, and thus present a useful starting point for the exploration of the way in which emerging ‘inclusive’ liberal discourse continues to shape dominant development policy. As will become clear throughout out this thesis, while rhetorically beguiling, concepts of inclusion, partnership and empowerment remain both ideologically reinforcing and shallow. Despite claims of increased concern for poverty reduction and ‘pro-poor growth,’ the continuing adherence of development policy to the proliferation of global free-market capitalism significantly undermines any real concern for the poor, hungry and vulnerable; in turn casting significant doubts on the actual extent of any real attack on systemic poverty (Bush, 2007; Edkins, 2000).

Theoretical Framework

This thesis will employ a critical political economy approach. It will be drawing specifically on the concept of ‘inclusive’ liberalism, as outlined by Craig and Porter (2006), while broadly informed by Foucauldian governmentalities theory and post-

development perspectives (see Escobar, 1995; Larner and Walters, 2004; Peck and Tickell, 2002; Abrahamsen, 2000). A political economy framework emphasises the need to explore the commutual relationship and complex interplay between politics, power and economic outcomes. In regards to global liberalism, this relates to the way in which dominant political discourses and ideology influence the shape and structure of global capitalism, while also exploring the power of markets and economic interactions to shape political structures and outcomes throughout both local and global contexts. Drawing on the work of Peck and Tickell (2002), Larner (2000) and Abrahamsen (2000) this approach emphasises the need to recognise the globality of neoliberalism and its impacts, while also taking into account the multifarious and heterogeneous nature of the manifestation of neoliberalism in particular contexts and places⁵.

When conceptualising 'global' liberalism, there is a risk of producing an overgeneralised account of a monolithic, homogenous and all-encompassing global force; potentially obfuscating neoliberalism's complex internal composition and local variabilities (Peck and Tickell, 2002; Springer, 2009a). At the same time, limiting an analysis of neoliberal discourse to within the boundaries of the state, or within a particular project, fails to take into account neoliberalism's wider globalising and pervasive nature (Peck and Tickell, 2002; Larner, 2000; Springer, 2009a). Global liberalism manifests itself differently in differing places, yet we can still recognise the hegemonic influence of neoliberalism woven throughout development policy and discourses (Peck and Tickell, 2002). As Peck and Tickell (2002) propose, we need to see

neoliberalisation as both an 'out there' and 'in here' phenomenon whose effects are necessarily variegated and uneven, but the incidence and diffusion of which may present clues to a pervasive 'metalogic'. Like globalization, neoliberalisation should be understood as a process, not an end-state (Peck and Tickell, 2002: 383).

It is this process-orientated and fluid conceptualisation of neoliberalism that will be employed throughout this thesis. Viewing global liberalism in this way enables us to take into account the complex ways in which neoliberalism is reconfigured and

⁵ See also Craig and Porter, 2006; Springer, 2009; Harvey, 2003; Weber, 2005.

redefined in relation to particular historical, political and economic arrangements within localised contexts (Larner, 2000). This will be demonstrated most clearly in Cambodia, where the manifestation and impacts of neoliberalisation can be seen as locally unique while also mirroring the experiences of a wide range of countries on a global scale.

A governmentality framework similarly encourages a broader, and more nuanced, understanding of neoliberalism. While this thesis is not employing governmentality directly, ways in which liberalism, discourse and power have been conceived within this research has necessarily been informed by this perspective (see Larner, 2000; Edkins, 2000; Rojas, 2004). This is because a governmentality framework encourages a move away from conceptualising neoliberalism as simply the ideological rhetoric or political philosophy of hegemonic institutions. Instead, neoliberalism can be seen as a complex system of meaning characterised by “certain arts, tactics and practises of governing” (Larner and Walters, 2004: 4). Rather than limited to specific institutions or government agencies, governance is defined as involving a wide array of practises and techniques of governing. These practises can be employed by a range of varying actors aimed at shaping the behaviour of individuals or groups in certain directions (Sending and Neumann, 2006: 656). As Larner and Walters (2004) suggest, practices of governing involve “particular representations, knowledges and often expertise regarding that which is to be governed” (Larner and Walters, 2004:2). Whether it is the government of the poor, the state or the production of food, governance “involves particular ‘truths’ about these entities” (Larner and Walters, 2004: 2). Exploring the way in which particular kinds of knowledges and ‘truths’ have gained ascendancy, in turn influencing certain techniques and ‘rationalities’ of governance, helps illuminate the manner in which societies are constituted in particular ways (Larner and Walters, 2004). Employing governmentality as an analytical lens enables us to explore and identify certain ‘rationalities’ of governance which shape particular kinds of knowledge that is integral to (and renders possible) differing modes of governance (Sending and Neumann, 2006).

Most importantly, a governmentality perspective provides us with new and broader way of thinking about the concept of power. It prompts a move away from zero-sum

and centralised understandings of the way in which power operates. Instead, it favours an understanding of power as multifarious and dispersed. It is no longer confined to the realm of the state or hegemonic institutions, but is perceived as relational, involving a range of actors in the perpetuation of rationalities and techniques of governing (Sending and Neumann, 2006). In this manner, a lens of governmentality focuses on the way in which actors themselves actually reproduce, and are products of, particular governing rationalities and knowledge. This therefore enables us to look more particularly at the way in which these rationalities “are defined as appropriate and normal and how relations of power are implicated in these processes” (Sending and Neumann, 2006:657). It is this multifarious and fluid conception of power which has informed this thesis. It has shaped the way in which I explore the role of discourse in development policy. In particular, as I take into account the way in which certain ways of thinking about and ‘knowledge’ around poverty and food insecurity have gained superiority, defining how poverty problems are approached, and the way in which relations of power have influenced this.

Case Study

As a conceptual and empirically based thesis, I will be using Cambodia as a case study as a means of provocation for beginning to explore some of these questions and points of inquiry outlined above. Cambodia has had a PRSP in place since 2002, and is considered to be one of the poorest, and most inequitable, countries in South East Asia, with levels of malnutrition, food insecurity and income inequality far exceeding those of its neighbours (Beresford et al., 2004; Hughes, 2006; World Bank, 2006a; ADB, 2004). Although Cambodia is a rice surplus country, self-sufficient in the production of its staple food, almost 57 percent the population continues to experience significant food deprivation and hunger. Recent global food price spikes can be seen as further exacerbating what was already a significant food insecurity problem, with the average Cambodian household now spending 70 percent of their income on food (CARD, 2008). For these particular reasons I argue Cambodia is a useful context in which to ground this research. While it could be said that issues of global food insecurity, the PRSP framework, and hunger in Cambodia are large enough concerns to be explored in isolation, the purpose of this thesis is to bring these three issues

together; exploring the complex interplay between the global and the local, with emphasis on the way in which global liberal discourses interact with a particular poverty problem in a particular context and place. Like large puzzle pieces, I will use the Cambodian experience as a way of demonstrating the interconnected and mutually reinforcing nature of these issues; situating local food insecurity within a wider global political economy and policy context, while also exploring the complex relationship between the World Bank's PRSP framework and hunger.

Compared to other developing countries, Cambodia's experience with the PRSP approach has been described by some as 'less than stellar', and not what many would consider to be a 'cherry picked' case study (Conway, interview with author; Rigg, 2006). However, rather than viewing this as an obstacle to my analysis, the variabilities and limitations within Cambodia's PRSP framework have allowed me to explore some of the context-specific complexities inherent in the implementation of such a horizontal, regulatory framework in a particular space. I would argue that this has added more depth to my analysis, rather than relying on a case study which fits more neatly within any pre-conceived ideas I may have initially held. Drawing on the theoretical framework discussed above, Cambodia's complexities allow for an exploration of the way in which neoliberalism manifests itself within a certain context, while at the same time illuminating patterns and impacts which reflect, and can be more broadly applied to, the experiences and effects of neoliberalism on a global level.

Methodology

This thesis will be employing a two-fold, theoretically-informed methodological approach. A critical discourse analysis of contemporary policy documents will be used; relying particularly on those produced in Cambodia, and by international development organisations, in response to the current food crisis, rising food insecurity and poverty reduction. This has been coupled with in-depth, semi-structured interviews with development practitioners involved in the PRSP process and issues of food security in Cambodia. This thesis has employed a critical discourse analysis in an attempt to illuminate the way in which dominant development discourses frame and conceptualise food security. In turn, exploring how this discursive framing impacts the kinds of

policies which are put in place at both a local and global level. As argued by James Ferguson (1999),

the thoughts and actions of ‘development’ bureaucrats are powerfully shaped by the world of acceptable statements and utterances within which they live: and what they do or don’t do is a product not only of the interests of various nations, classes, or international agencies, but also, and at the same time, of a working out of this complex structure of knowledge (Ferguson, 1990: 18).

A critical discourse approach draws our attention to the exploration of dominant and hegemonic development discourses, looking at the way in which they structure meaning; influencing and legitimating certain kinds of practises, knowledge and ‘regimes of truth’ while excluding other possible modes of action or approaches (Milliken, 1999: 229; see also Bernstein, 2005). As discussed previously, the way in which poverty reduction and food insecurity is framed and conceptualised has very real impacts on the kinds of development policies which are put in place; in turn significantly impacting the lives of those subject to development interventions. For this reason it is necessary to interrogate the way in which dominant development organisations construct issues of food insecurity and poverty reduction. In particular, it is important to take into account how this process is informed by and perpetuates relations of power.

Due to the contemporary nature of the 2008 food crisis, this thesis will be relying on combination of both scholarly articles as well as primary development policy documents. In particular I will be drawing on those produced by the World Bank, the IMF, the Asian Development Bank (ADB), and other organisations involved in Cambodian poverty reduction and development⁶. Furthermore, given the inevitable delay in the production of academic literature and research documents, a range of official news sources have also been employed. These have provided up-to-date reports on the various impacts of, and particular problems associated with, rapidly rising food prices and hunger.

⁶ Within the Cambodian context, the Cambodian Development Research Institute (CDRI) and the NGO Forum on Cambodia were particularly useful.

This primary analysis was supplemented with a number of interviews conducted in Phnom Penh, in February and March, 2009. Those interviewed included representatives working within, or affiliated with, the World Bank's Poverty Reduction Department in Cambodia. This involved those working within the World Bank itself, and also other national or international NGOs, bilateral donors and Cambodian government ministries affiliated with the World Bank's NSDP programme in the country. The purpose of these interviews was to gain further insight and perspective from those intimately involved in Cambodia's PRSP process, particularly regarding the NSDP's relationship with food security. Unfortunately, obtaining willing interview participants, particularly those involved in large multilateral institutions such as the United Nations as well as the Royal Government of Cambodia (RGC), proved to be more difficult than previously anticipated.⁷ As a result, fewer interviews were conducted than initially hoped for. However, I was able to obtain interviews with representatives from the World Bank, the Asian Development Bank (ADB), as well as senior representatives from the RGC's Ministry of Planning (MoP) and Council for Agriculture and Rural Development (CARD), all of whom are central players in Cambodia's PRSP process.⁸ Interviews were also conducted with local NGOs and research institutions directly involved in the monitoring and evaluation of the NSDP. All interviews were conducted in a semi-structured manner. This ensured that consistent themes were covered throughout the interviews, while also allowing for a certain degree of flexibility; enabling participants to focus on areas and issues in which they were most familiar. The question themes focused on the role and influence of the PRSP approach in Cambodia, its relationship with food insecurity and the current crisis, particular Cambodian limitations, and complexities in the implementation of this approach, and so on. For a full outline of the interview themes please refer to Appendix II.

⁷ This can largely be attributed to the very busy schedules of those working within the Cambodian development field, corresponding with a relatively short timeframe, of only one month, for allocated for field research. This made it difficult for perspective interviewees to be able to allocate time within a very specific period.

⁸ For a full detailed list of those interviewed please refer to Appendix I.

Chapter Outline

Consisting of five chapters, this thesis has been conceptualised as a sum of both individual and intersecting studies. As outlined above, the purpose of this thesis is to explore the way in which food security is approached within the wider Poverty Reduction framework. In order to do this, I will first discuss PRSPs and food security individually, with the aim of drawing them together within the context of my case study in Cambodia.

Chapter Two will develop the theoretical and contextual framework employed in this thesis. The purpose of this chapter is to critically examine the PRSP approach, exploring the wider contextual and ideological underpinnings which inform it. In particular, I will attempt to position PRSPs within a wider ‘inclusive’ liberal framework, demonstrating the way in which they remain embedded within and perpetuate global liberal dominance. In order to understand ‘inclusive’ liberalism, and the way in which PRSPs fit within this paradigm, we need to first situate this new approach within the wider shift in World Bank and IMF policy; from the dominance of neoliberal SAPs to the more poverty orientated approach. Thus, after outlining Craig and Porter’s (2006) Polanyian conception of ‘inclusive’ liberalism, this chapter will explore some of the wider contextual factors which informed this wider shift in development policy (Craig and Porter, 2006). The second half of this chapter will then critically examine various concepts within the PRSP framework. In particular, it will explore the way in which continuing relations of power, coupled with liberal constructions of poverty and the state, continue to shape the way poverty reduction is conceptualised and approached.

Chapter Three shifts the focus to an exploration of food security and hunger. The aim of this chapter is to position the current food crisis and rising vulnerability to hunger within a wider historical and political economic context. In particular, I will critically explore the way in which neoliberal policies, especially in the form of SAPs, have patterned the current global food system in particular ways; paving the way for increased food prices and rising vulnerability to hunger. In the second half of this chapter I will examine the dominant responses to rising food insecurity of international development organisations, demonstrating how they remain embedded within a wider neoliberal approach to development. The final section will briefly discuss the rise of

the global food sovereignty movement which offers a sophisticated attempt at creating a comprehensive, in-depth and localised alternative to the current global food system.

Chapter Four will attempt to draw these previous chapters together, incorporating the PRSP approach and food insecurity within the context of Cambodia. The aim is to examine the way in which ‘inclusive’ liberalism is manifested within Cambodia’s PRSP, and how this continues to inform how issues of hunger and rising food security are approached. Setting the scene for my analysis, this chapter will begin by historicising the way in which global liberalism has been uniquely manifested within Cambodia’s political economy. The second half of this chapter will discursively examine how hunger and food insecurity is framed and conceptualised within Cambodia’s PRSP framework and surrounding policy documents. While embedded within an inclusive liberal paradigm, I will demonstrate how approaches to food insecurity continue to obfuscate structures of inequality and relations of power, while attempting to incorporate the poor deeper into the very structures which perpetuate and maintain vulnerability to hunger.

Chapter Five will summarise the core themes and arguments which have been discussed throughout these chapters. It concludes that while an increased focus on inclusion, empowerment, and pro-poor growth is rhetorically alluring, the continuing dominance of ‘inclusive’ liberalism within the Poverty Reduction framework and approaches to hunger continues to undermine any real commitment to increasing food security for the most vulnerable.

CHAPTER TWO: POVERTY REDUCTION STRATEGY PAPERS AND 'INCLUSIVE' LIBERALISM

Introduced in 1999, the World Bank's Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP) approach to development has become the leading instrument, and overarching operational framework, through which development financing is assessed and disbursed (Tan, 2005). As the operational manifestation of what has been defined by some scholars as the 'New Poverty Agenda,' PRSPs have generated new forms of policy initiatives and institutional cooperation which departs dramatically, in both impact and scale, from any previous development approach (Weber, 2005; Storey et al, 2005; Maxwell, 2003). In an apparent shift away from the raw and narrow neoliberal orthodoxy, which had dominated development thinking throughout the 1980s and early 1990s, PRSPs emphasise the importance of placing poverty reduction at the very centre of development policy. Attempting to distance themselves from the one-size-fits-all approach of previous Structural Adjustment Programmes (SAPs), International Financial Institutions (IFIs) declared PRSPs to be country owned and locally driven, emphasising the importance of local 'participation' and 'inclusion' in the poverty reduction process (Brown, 2005; Fraser, 2005; Sumner, 2006). Facilitating the involvement of 'civil society', NGOs, and local communities, as well as governments, was purported to be of utmost importance in the creation of a nationally-relevant and specific development programme (Fraser, 2005; Gould, 2005; Kamruzzaman, 2009). Hailed by its supporters as part of a new and progressive period in development's evolutionary history, PRSPs are believed to offer a "key opportunity to put country-lead strategies for poverty reduction at the heart of development assistance" (OXFAM, 2004:1; Storey et al. 2005).

In the name of 'ownership,' governments, with the involvement of civil society and the guidance of the World Bank and IMF, are encouraged to adopt and develop their own three year national Poverty Reduction plan (Fraser, 2005; Brown, 2005; Whitfield, 2005). As a prerequisite for access to funding and debt relief, PRSPs are to describe the "macroeconomic, structural and social policies which a country will pursue in order to promote broad-based growth and reduce poverty" (IMF, 2008b: *no page number*). They

are to include detailed government budget and spending goals, social development agendas, and macroeconomic policies (Fraser, 2005; Paloni and Zanardi, 2006). New participatory processes are to ensure that ownership is extended “well beyond the country officials who typically negotiated the conditionalities for concessional financing” (Porter and Craig, 2004: 399). Instead, they are to involve a broad range of bilateral donors, local and international NGOs, regional bodies, and the private sector in development planning and reforms (Sumner, 2006; Kamruzzaman, 2009). As will be discussed below, even the ‘poor’ themselves are to be included in developing Poverty Reduction strategies and policies which reflect their specific localised context and needs.

For those embracing the new agenda, PRSPs are believed to demonstrate a radical departure from the conservative, market-orientated neoliberalism which dominated development policy and practice throughout the 1980s and 1990s.⁹ Instead, PRSPs are believed to represent a welcome and considerable expansion in development policy; addressing the various inadequacies of the previous agenda; dramatically transforming donor-recipient relations; and reflecting an overall deepening in our understanding of the complex and contextual nature of poverty (Fraser, 2005; Tan, 2005; Crawford, 2006). For others, far more sceptical, PRSPs are perceived as nothing more than a palliative public relations exercise and a dubious attempt to repackage neoliberal SAPs in new Poverty Reduction clothing (Hellinger et al., 2001). The apparent renewed interest in poverty reduction is seen as merely an ideological smokescreen to placate those rising in protest against the failure of World Bank and IMF policies and the impacts of global capitalism on the poor (Hellinger et al. 2001; Fraser, 2005; Craig and Porter, 2006; Storey et al., 2005). As will become clear throughout this thesis, although many of the central tenets of neoliberalism remain embedded throughout the PRSP framework, it would be wrong to assume they represent simply more of the same. PRSPs can be seen as a manifestation of the continuing dominance of global liberalism within development policy. However, it has been re-morphed and re-shaped into something new, shifting away from the disruptive and disembedding phase characteristic of SAPs to what Craig and Porter (2006) define as a more securing, embedding and ‘inclusive’ liberal form.

⁹ To be discussed in detail throughout the following sections of this chapter.

Drawing on the work of Karl Polanyi, Craig and Porter (2006) explore the shift from SAPs to the adoption of the Poverty Reduction approach, positioning PRSPs within the wider context of the constant transformation and rearticulation of global liberalism (Craig and Porter, 2006). Written in 1944, Karl Polanyi's *Great Transformation* provides us with a powerful framework for the critique and conceptualisation of market liberalism, critically exploring the belief that society can, and should, be governed and organised through self-regulating markets (Block, 2001). For Polanyi (2001), the idea of a global free-market economy- operating free from government regulation or societal restraint- has always been a utopian dream. Rather than being 'naturally occurring,' he views the implementation of a self-regulating economy as a purely ideological fancy. Instead, he argues the operation of free-market capitalism requires "a conscious and often violent intervention on the part of government," which if ever achieved would "physically destroy man and transform his surroundings into a wilderness" (Polanyi, 2001: 3). For Polanyi (2001) 'self-regulating' markets can never really be self-regulating, as they are dependent on the very social and institutional regulatory frameworks in which they seek to destroy (Haque, 2001). Free-market liberalism requires the continuing and significant involvement of the state and institutions to manage and ensure that markets work, for although "society may limit the reach of markets, it also constructs the very frameworks within which markets" can exist (Haque, 2005: 3; see also Block, 2001; Polanyi, 2001). For Polanyi (2001), the enabling of unrestrained market processes to pervade all areas of society would ultimately lead to social destruction. He argues that the commodification of people and the natural environment, coupled with the overall subordination of social relations to market processes and the undermining of social concerns, would cause such dislocation that society would eventually disintegrate (Craig and Porter, 2006; Polanyi, 2001).

Central to Polanyi's theory is his concept of the 'double movement'. Using the emergence of laissez-faire liberal economics in 19th century Britain, Polanyi (2001) explores the inherent tension within capitalist societies between those seeking to disembed and deregulate market processes and those trying to keep them constrained. Rather than embedding economic practises within society, as has historically been the case, those championing free-market liberalism seek to subordinate social relations

within market practises. For Polanyi (2001) this means “no less than the running of society as an adjunct to the market...Instead of the economy being embedded in social relations, social relations are embedded in the economic system” (Polanyi, 2001: 60). He argues that the destructive and devastating societal affects of disembedding markets will always result in some sort of collective social reaction and response. As markets burst out of societal restraints, counter reactions emerge in an attempt mitigate negative societal impacts and re-embed markets back into societal control. Polanyi (2001) defines this constant disembedding/reembedding process as the ‘double movement’. Within this framework, social regulations are viewed not as unnatural impediments to spontaneous human market interactions, but as instinctive reactions to the destructive societal effects of market liberalism (Haque, 2005; Polanyi, 2001).

Drawing on the concept of Polanyi’s ‘double movement,’ Porter and Craig (2004) discuss the shift from SAPs to the Poverty Reduction approach and argue that it reflects an overall re-embedding and consolidation of contemporary global liberal hegemony. For Porter and Craig (2004), the highly rational, frank and market-orientated neoliberalism of the Structural Adjustment era represents the first stage of this movement. This involved the breaking up and ‘disembedding’ of social regulatory processes by market processes, to make way for the “increased, unfettered penetration of market forces” (Porter and Craig, 2004: 391). The second movement involved a shift back towards the social, and the emergence of what Polanyi calls ‘enlightened reactionaries,’ which assemble to alleviate the social disruption caused by market-driven liberalisation (Porter and Craig, 2004). The shift from the use of SAPs to PRSPs can be seen in the light of this second phase in Polanyi’s double movement. As will be discussed below, intensifying criticism of the Washington Consensus, and its failure to stem mounting poverty and promote growth, seriously called into question the legitimacy of the neoliberal order. In order to survive liberalism needed to be seriously reframed and reformulated. Out of a crisis of legitimacy emerged a new and reconstituted liberal form of which PRSPs are a useful demonstration. Although elements of neoliberal ideology are inherent at the very core of the PRSPs approach, there has been a shift from the raw, market-orientated neoliberalism of the 1980s to a more ‘inclusive’ and embedding liberal form (Craig and Porter, 2006; Porter and Craig, 2004).

In order to understand the concept of 'inclusive' liberalism, and the way in which PRSPs fit within this framework, we must first understand neoliberalism, focusing particularly on the way in which it has shaped development policy and practice over the last 30 years. 'Inclusive' liberalism needs to be conceptualised in relation to the changing nature of global liberal dominance. Thus, the concept of neoliberalism needs to be significantly problematised and defined. As Wendy Larner (2000) suggests, "the emergence of new political projects is never a complete rupture with what has gone before, but rather is part of an ongoing process involving the re-composition of political rationalities, programmes and identities" (Larner, 2000: 14). The purpose of this chapter is to place PRSPs within the wider context of the ongoing dominance of global liberalism. The aim is to critically examine this new approach, looking more closely at the contextual and ideological underpinnings which inform it. In order to do this, we need to position PRSPs within the broader historical shift in World Bank policies, from the dominance of SAPs to the adoption of the more poverty orientated approach. It is against the background of this broader paradigmatic shift that PRSPs can be understood. In doing so, we will see that rather than representing something novel and new PRSPs remain embedded within, and reinforce, the ongoing expansion and consolidation of global market liberalism. Before discussing this concept in more detail, the following section will explore some of the wider contextual factors which informed and influenced the shift within the World Bank and IMF from the use of SAPs to PRSPs. This chapter will then critically examine some of the core elements of the PRSP approach. In particular, it will explore the way in which continuing relations of power, coupled with liberal constructions of poverty and the state, continue to shape the way Poverty Reduction is conceptualised and approached. Finally, through positioning PRSPs within a wider Polanyian shift, I will demonstrate how they remain situated in, and reinforce, a wider more 'inclusive' liberal paradigm.

From Structural Adjustment to Poverty Reduction: The Shifting Sands of the World Bank's Development Agenda

Throughout the 1980s and 1990s development policy and practice was dominated by neoliberal, laissez-faire ideology which championed the uninhibited role of free-market

capitalism as the solution to wider issues of global poverty and inequality. Previously a marginal and utopian intellectual movement,¹⁰ neoliberalism became, throughout the 1980s, the prevailing and hegemonic “ideological rationalisation for globalisation and contemporary state ‘reform’” (Peck and Tickell, 2002: 380). Forcefully marketed and cemented in the West through the policies of both Ronald Reagan and Margaret Thatcher, neoliberalism provided a kind of “ideological software” and framework for “competitive globalisation; inspiring and imposing far-reaching programmes of state restructuring and rescaling across a wide range of national and local contexts” (Peck and Tickell, 2002: 38; see also Peet, 1999; Larner, 2000; Cerny, 2008).

Influenced by monetarist and classical liberal economists such as Milton Friedman and his ‘Chicago boys’, Friedrich von Hayek, David Ricardo and Adam Smith, champions of neoliberalism glorified ideas of self-interested competition, rugged individualism and comparative advantage as the most efficient way to stimulate economies and generate wealth (Peet, 1999; Chang, 2004; Harvey, 2005; Harvey, 2006). Free-market fundamentalism and unregulated competition was typically linked to a committed, and often vehement, aversion to any kind of collectivist or Keynesian approach (Peck and Tickell, 2002; Harvey, 2003). The underlying belief was that if individuals were only given the ultimate freedom to pursue their economic self interests, the self-regulating global market would benefit all (Peet, 1999). As discussed below, arising originally within the political economies of the US and Britain, these principles were disseminated from the West throughout the developing world. This was based on a problematic assumption of sameness and the acceptability of applying a uniform economic formula for growth regardless of localised contexts and need (Cerny, 2008). Developing governments only needed to recognise the potential benefits of opening up their local markets to the free-flow of international capital and goods, which would ostensibly lead to increased efficiency through heightened competition and trade (Block, 2001: *xviii-xli*). As Celine Tan (2005) asserts, “economic growth led by market forces became the new economic rationale; the potential for development and poverty reduction lay in ensuring fiscal and monetary austerity in developing economies and

¹⁰ Prior to the 1980s, neoliberalism was largely an isolated and marginalised movement, limited predominantly to small think-tanks and minor political groups. As David Harvey (2003) argues, it was only after the global crisis of stagflation and overaccumulation in the 1970s that neoliberalism gained any kind of recognition as a serious alternative to Keynesian economics (Harvey, 2003; see also Peck and Tickell, 2002).

creating an enabling environment for economic activity” (Tan, 2005: 4). Poverty reduction was viewed only as a result of economic growth which was assumed to ‘trickle down’ to the poorest in society through the supposed equalising activities of the markets ‘invisible hand’ (Paloni and Zanardi, 2006).

Within this paradigm, the state was positioned as the cause of many of the woes impacting the developing world. Throughout the 1980s, problems of inflation, indebtedness, corruption and ‘rent seeking’ were believed to be derived from excessive state spending and unwarranted interference in market activity (Peet, 1999: 49; Springer, 2009). The solution was believed to lie in the complete overhaul and reorientation of the states economic structure towards a market-lead and market-orientated system (Crawford, 2006). Neoliberal economists, such as Deepak Lal (1983), lamented over what they saw as the overly statist ‘Dirigiste Dogma’ of previous Keynesian influenced development economics (Peet, 1999; Lal, 1983). Reflecting the dominant anti-state ethos of the time, Ronald Reagan famously declared in 1981 that “government is not the solution to our problem; government is the problem” (as cited in Howell and Ingham, 2001: 329). State interference and protectionist policies were seen as leading only to inefficiency, with tendencies towards “over bloated public services, exchange control, inward looking trade policies, heavy government spending and investment in social welfare” seen as the primary obstacle to development and economic growth (Konadu-Agyemang, 2004: 474). To enable the market to break free from all social and political constraints was championed as the only solution for economic growth in both the developed and developing world. Imperfect markets were considered far superior to the inadequacies and imperfections of the state.

To ‘let the market govern’ was the resounding mantra which informed this period and lead to the adoption and implementation by the World Bank and IMF of Structural Adjustment Programmes (SAPs). As the central instrument through which neoliberal ideology was ‘rolled out’ in the developing world, SAPs were attached to conditional financing and loans in an attempt to mould lower income countries in the neoliberal image (Chang, 2004). Developing countries were ‘encouraged’ to adopt certain ‘good policies’ purported to promote economic growth and development. These policies,

termed by John Williamson (1990) as the 'Washington Consensus,'¹¹ were informed by free-market ideology which emphasised the importance of trade and financial liberalisation, privatisation and deregulation as the most efficient and beneficial means of ensuring economic growth (Paloni and Zanardi, 2006; Chang, 2004; Springer, 2009; Kiely, 2007). This consensus was clearly articulated in the World Bank's 1984 *World Development Report* (WDR), where it argued that in order for developing countries to experience economic growth they needed to reduce "public spending commitments;" avoid "overhauled exchange rates;" encourage a larger increase in foreign capital, and most importantly not take "any action that reduces trade" (World Bank, 1984: 42). Coupled with the erosion of traditional roles of the state, the overall goal of Structural Adjustment policies was to create and ensure a sound and healthy environment for foreign investors and trade, robust private property rights, and "transparent, market orientated corporate governance and financial institutions" believed to be key in attracting investment which would lead to economic growth (Chang, 2004: 1; see also SAPRI, 2004).

As development policy became increasingly dominated by a canonical milieu of neoliberal prescriptions, conditions attached to development lending penetrated into areas of state reform and restructuring not traditionally traversed by development institutions (Paloni and Zanardi, 2006). In order to receive much needed funding, developing countries were required to 'roll back' state involvement; cut back public spending on infrastructure and social services such as healthcare, education and welfare; and open up all barriers to trade, foreign direct investment and capital flows (Chang, 2004; Peet, 1999; Konadu-Agyemang, 2004; Bernstein, 2005). Despite the mandate preventing IFIs from interfering in a recipient government's political affairs adjustment measures delved into areas of governance, gender, the environment, taxation and law. Many developing governments were required to make significant law changes in order to be able to comply with IFI prescriptions (SARPIN, 2004; Stewart and Wang, 2003). Furthermore, policies were often designed and implemented without the consideration of a countries own particular context. For example, the IMF

¹¹ John Williamson coined this term in 1990 in reference to the overall consensus between the IMF, World Bank and US Treasury on what were believed to be the 'best' and most effective policies for economic growth. The term has subsequently been adopted by critics to describe what is seen by many as a neoliberal development and reform package promoted and imposed by these institutions throughout the developing world (You, 2002).

commonly drafted a full policy report before visiting a recipient country, where “whole paragraphs had been borrowed from the report of one country and inserted into another” (Stiglitz, 2002: 47; see also Tan, 2005). Although not without significant contestation and public opposition to the implementation of these reforms, threat of the loss of international financing and aid meant that many developing governments were forced to respond to the conditions of their creditors rather than their own constituencies (SAPRI, 2004). First applied to some Latin American states, most famously Chile in the early 1970s, by the 1990s Structural Adjustment had been rapidly imposed on virtually all developing countries, sometimes overnight, in what came to be known as ‘shock therapy’ (Harvey, 2006; Peet, 1999; Stiglitz, 2002).

Despite continued assurances to the contrary, Structural Adjustment policies failed to bring about the prosperity and economic growth that was promised to the developing world. In many cases these reforms only perpetuated and entrenched conditions of poverty, while increasing inequality and widened the divide between the rich and poor (Tan, 2005; McKinley, 2004; Paloni and Zanardi, 2006; Chang, 2004; Havnevik et al., 2007; Kiely, 2007; Davis, 2006; Patnaik, 1996). If economic growth occurred at all, it was very minimal. In fact, many countries experienced a reduction in growth to levels lower than those that occurred between the 1950s and 1970s; a period characterised by the use of interventionist policies apparently inferior to those championed by the Washington Consensus (Paloni and Zanardi, 2006). According to the United Nations (2005), the amount of people living in absolute poverty in Sub-Saharan Africa (with incomes less than \$1 per day) doubled in the 20 year period since 1981, with numbers climbing from 288 million in 1981 to 516 million in 2001 (United Nations, 2005; Tan, 2005). This was particularly apparent in Latin America where, according to research conducted by the International Labour Organisation (ILO), poverty increased by 50 percent in just over 5 years from 1980 to 1986 (Davis, 2006: 156). Effectively, under the influence of adjustment policies all development indicators, including child mortality, took a downward turn (McMichael, 2000). In regards to economic growth, a study conducted by Weisbrot et al. (2000) found that between 1980 and 2000 only 13 out of 88 developing countries had a GDP per capita increase of more than 0.1 percent (Weisbrot et al. 2000; Chang, 2004).

Initially, it was maintained that while Structural Adjustment may lead to an initial rise in inequality, resulting economic growth from market-led globalisation would be the 'rising tide' which would 'lift all boats' out of poverty; melting away any income disparities between rich and poor (Chang, 2004; Konadu-Agyemang, 2004). Inequality and deprivation were seen as acceptable, inevitable and necessary prerequisites of overall economic growth and development (Peet, 1999). However, as Ha-Joon Chang (2004) asserts, after two decades of neoliberal 'reforms', only the first part of this prophesy has come to pass. While "income inequality increased as predicted... the acceleration in growth that had been promised never arrived" (Chang, 2004). The imposition of rapid and premature market liberalisation on developing countries forced many domestic industries into competition with much larger foreign companies and multinational corporations. This commonly resulted in major job losses and unemployment, as local industries were overwhelmed by foreign competition (Stiglitz, 2002; Paloni and Zanardi, 2006). Growing inequality, coupled with low (or reduced) economic growth, was commonly accompanied by rising social vulnerability and unrest, increasing exclusion from healthcare and education services, environmental degradation, and a deterioration of democratic consent¹² (Paloni and Zanardi, 2006).

Increasingly, voices outside and within the IFIs were rising up in protest against the destructive effects of Structural Adjustment Policies on developing countries (Fraser, 2005; Stiglitz, 2002; Fine 2001). SAPs were heavily critiqued for their one-size-fits-all approach to development which undermined sovereignty and democracy, while denying countries their own historical, social and political contexts (Fraser, 2005). Massive protests halted World Trade Organisation negotiations in Geneva in 1999, and in 2000 thousands picketed outside the meetings of the World Bank and the IMF in Washington D.C. The fiftieth anniversary of the World Bank was marked by numerous protests around the globe in which thousands of people declared that "Fifty years is enough" (Owusu, 2003; Fraser, 2005). The world was groaning in protest, with voices in the South also rising up in reaction; staging strikes, marches and other popular protests demanding an end to devastating structural reforms (Owusu, 2003).

¹² As Wendy Larner (2000) argues, "deregulation and privatisation are identified as transferring power away from democratically elected governments with a mandate to ensure universal service provision, towards private capital concerned primarily with furthering opportunities for accumulation. In turn, this shift from public to private sector is understood to erode the foundations of both national economies and traditional social solidarities" (Larner, 2000: 6).

The Asian financial crisis of 1997 generated even more criticism around the failure of IMF and World Bank approaches, severely calling into question the legitimacy of SAPs (Porter and Craig, 2004). For much of the two decades preceding the crisis, East Asian economies, especially those of South Korea, Malaysia, Thailand and Indonesia were characterised by rapid and continued economic growth. In rates apparently unprecedented in human history, for more than ten years all of these economies had been achieving growth rates of 5-10% each year¹³ (Wade, 2000). Defined as the 'East Asian Miracle', the sustained successes of these economies were commonly touted as some of the finest examples of neoliberal development in action. They were believed to represent the positive impacts of "financial openness, fiscal restraint and export orientated development" (Haque, 2005: 130; see also Wade, 2000). However, what was perceived as miraculous was soon revealed as "a classic speculative bubble" with devastating local affects (Craig and Porter, 2006: 75). Although influenced by multiple factors, the eventual crisis led to a rapid 'whiplash' reversal of short-term private capital flows, sparking fear and uncertainty throughout "an already over-committed banking sector," eventually culminating in a full-blown liquidity crisis (Craig and Porter, 2006: 75; Wade, 2000). As anxiety took root, currencies plummeted, stock markets crashed, unemployment skyrocketed and banks failed, becoming what Robert Wade (2000) describes as "not merely a crisis but a collapse, perhaps the world's steepest and deepest since the Great Depression" (Wade, 2000: 86).

The wider international community, and particularly the IMF, placed the blame for this crisis squarely on the shoulders of the 'Asian Tiger' governments themselves. The model which had been so highly praised, leading to sustained levels of economic growth and involving active state participation in markets, was now defined as little more than 'crony capitalism' (Wade, 2000; Haque, 2005). Factors contributing to the crisis were purportedly home grown. They were perceived as resulting from continuing interventionist policies with a "free-market veneer," coupled with corruption, nepotism, inadequate banking regulation and an overall lack of transparency (Wade, 2000: 88). Rather than attempting to deal with institutional weaknesses, the IMF

¹³ This, coupled with China's also rapidly growing economy, meant that each decade almost 30 percent of the world's population were witnessing a doubling of their GDP (Wade, 2000).

responded by further entrenching affected economies into the neoliberal order. As one by one, countries slipped into economic meltdown, the IMF stepped in with a billion dollar lending programme in an attempt to stabilise those economies most affected by the collapse. Conditions attached to this bail-out lending were dominated by standard neoliberal prescriptions, forcing vulnerable countries to “accept the full brunt of old-school structural adjustment policies” (Haque, 2005: 130).

Holding tightly to their beliefs in the virtues of neoliberalism, the IMF saw the crisis as the ideal chance to effect radical structural change; putting in place imperatives to drastically reduce public spending, maintain fiscal prudence, slash import tariffs, deregulate labour markets and remove capital account restrictions (Wade, 2000). The imposition of these policies into economies already on the brink of recession had devastating effects, undermining any potential stabilising effects “that social security expansions could have played” (Haque, 2005: 131). The removal of capital account restrictions effectively aided capital flight, resulting in money fleeing these economies faster than the IMF could lend it (Craig and Porter, 2006; Haque, 2005). What was becoming patently clear was that rather than aiding the crisis, neoliberal responses were only increasing its devastating effects, adding to the IFIs already dwindling reputation and fuelling the fire of growing anti-market responses around the globe.

The apparent reorientation of development policy towards an increased focus on poverty reduction can be seen as a clear reaction to the rising crisis of legitimacy surrounding IFI policies and their role in the developing world (Weber, 2005; Tan, 2005). In response to violent global protests and the apparent failure of SAPs to prevent and assist in the Asian crisis, the World Bank and IMF attempted to broaden and reframe their development agenda by adopting the PRSP approach (Fraser, 2005; Paloni and Zanardi, 2006). With the adoption of this framework, a broader concept of poverty reduction, rather than simply just economic growth, became the predominant focus of IMF and World Bank development policies.

The key principles of this new vision- of a comprehensive, country-driven and poverty-focused development- were outlined in the World Bank's Comprehensive Development Framework (CDF) (Brown, 2004; Tan, 2005). PRSPs, as a subset of this,

are seen as the mechanism through which this wider vision can be operationalised. They are to be an “instrument of policy implementation,” detailing a country’s “priorities, targets, indicators, costings, financing plans and procedures for monitoring” (World Bank, 2003: 13; see also Tan, 2005). Although the CDF outlines the principle guidelines for actually ‘doing development,’ this was not enough to encourage recipient states to wholeheartedly embrace the new vision. Thus, PRSPs were linked to the newly created Heavily Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC) initiative, as a prerequisite for much needed funding and debt relief, which provided the incentives needed for developing countries to fully adopt, and commit to, the Poverty Reduction agenda (Craig and Porter, 2006).

In its 2000 World Development Report *Attacking Poverty*, the World Bank outlined its three-pronged Poverty Reduction initiative of “promoting opportunity, facilitating empowerment and enhancing security,” which it views as central to the overall PRSP process (WDR, 2000: 6). Within this document, opportunity is defined as the enabling of individuals, specifically those living in poverty, to participate fully and beneficially in market processes. The concept of opportunity is about overall economic growth, however it goes much further than this; it is about making markets work for the poor and encouraging what has been defined as ‘pro-poor growth’ (Craig and Porter, 2006: 85). Facilitating empowerment, within this paradigm, refers to the concept and development of ‘good governance’, which emphasises accountability, responsibility to the poor, transparent institutions, anti-corruption and decentralisation (WDR, 2000). Empowerment emphasises the significance of ‘including’ the poor in the governance structures which affect them, focusing on developing community and individual capabilities and wellbeing (Craig and Porter, 2006: 86). The enhancement of security is associated with reducing the poor’s ‘vulnerability’ by providing social security measures and investing in human capital in areas such as healthcare and education (WDR, 2000: 7).

Despite maintaining the absence of a universal ‘one-size-fits-all’ blueprint for the implementation of PRSPs, the World Bank’s mantra of ‘opportunity, empowerment and security’ has become the focal point of the Poverty Reduction initiative and is woven throughout all developing countries PRSPs (WDR, 2000; Porter and Craig,

2004). As Craig and Porter (2006) suggest, this strategy, while combining aspects of neoliberal market opportunity with social security and “democratic empowerment”, constructed a framework in which to implement a wide range of specific ‘good governance’ reforms and technical planning approaches (Craig and Porter, 2006: 81). As opposed to the blatant and explicit macroeconomic focus of previous SAPs, development and good governance reforms were now positioned around the overall goal of poverty reduction (which is to be achieved through the adherence to the three-pronged strategy) and legitimated through the construction of national ownership and participation (Fraser, 2005).

Although the success of the PRSP approach in reducing poverty has yet to be fully determined, it has been rapidly adopted and is currently being implemented in around 70 developing countries (World Bank, 2008b). Having been strongly influential in lobbying for change, organisations such as the UN, bilateral donors and many major NGOs very quickly engaged with and embraced the Poverty Reduction process (Fraser, 2005). The participation of major NGOs, commonly regarded as direct representatives of the poor, and who were especially vocal in their criticism of IFI policy, brought a much needed apparent legitimacy to the new development agenda (Fraser, 2005). Further, the involvement of the UN and the establishment of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) placed the PRSPs approach within a globally established set of outcome related criteria. This brought with it much needed “credibility and accountability to a policy consensus that was so apparently not doctrinaire” (Craig and Porter, 2006: 83). The adoption of the MDGs reinforced and legitimated the idea that a renewed focus on social service provision, community development, and good governance was not merely a rhetorical, palliative exercise but a powerful instrument for the achievement of the overall goal of Poverty Reduction (Craig and Porter, 2006).

SAPs in new Poverty Reduction Clothing?: Critiques of the PRSP Approach

According to Celine Tan (2005), any analysis of the PRSP process needs to be positioned within the wider context of the continuing legacy and impact of neoliberal

SAPs on the function and structure of the state. For Tan (2005), the disciplinary impacts of these reforms, which attempted to restructure and reconstitute the state, “resulted in the fragmentation of state autonomy, which paved the way for the successful insertion of PRSP” reforms throughout the developing world (Tan, 2005: 2). Adjustment policies significantly reconfigured governance institutions within the state. They transformed donor-recipient relations and pioneered whole new levels of intervention and modes of governance at the international level (Tan, 2005). The linking of social and economic development goals to wider structural reforms significantly changed the way development was approached, moving away from the ‘piecemeal’ project-orientated agendas characteristic of previous development assistance. Rather than filling resource gaps and providing public goods, development assistance was now linked to, and contingent upon, the complete restructuring of a countries economy and governance structures. The coupling of development financing and aid with far-reaching regulatory reforms gave the World Bank and IMF unprecedented influence over and into the economies of recipient countries. This created whole new levels of intervention and modes of governance into the everyday workings of the state (Tan, 2005). Furthermore, adjustment reforms imposed from above significantly undermined and diminished state capabilities, forcing developing governments to engineer their own downsizing and reform (Peck, 2001). Increasing limitations on the role of the state opened up new spaces for the increased involvement and influence of external, non-state actors in domestic policy processes, as more and more state functions were outsourced to private contractors and NGOs (Tan, 2005; Ferguson, 2006; Springer, 2009).

For Tan (2005), the adoption and implementation of PRSPs could only have been operationalised as a result of these regulatory precedents established through previous structural reforms. New poverty reduction approaches are being introduced within relationships which are already “inherently skewed” (Tan, 2005: 9). The “disciplinary force” of SAPs created the “domestic political space needed for the imposition of PRSPs;” cementing new forms of unequal relations of power between recipients and donors which continue to influence the content and shape of development policy (Tan, 2005: 2). In a similar way, Brock, Cornwall and Gaventa (2001) argue that rather than perceiving PRSPs as simply more of the same, this “new architecture of aid” should be

viewed as a consequence of a constant process of hybridisation. Dominant conceptions of poverty reduction and development are being continuously reshaped through the absorption of alternative, counter-narratives “giving rise to the articulation of new variants that appear to offer a convergence of competing agendas, recasting elements of older approaches in evocative new story lines” (Brock et al., 2001: 8; Tan, 2005: 4). For these authors, hegemonic liberal discourse, posturing economic growth as central to poverty reduction, continues to form the underlying foundation of development thinking. However, as counter narratives arise, in response to the inadequacies of this paradigm, they are appropriated and subsumed into it, with concepts such ‘country ownership’, ‘inclusion’ and ‘pro-poor participation’ serving to qualify and legitimate orthodox thinking rather than radically departing from it (Brock et al.,2001). The shift towards a focus on poverty can be seen as complementing, rather than revolutionising priorities of donors; allowing agencies to accommodate poverty alleviation strategies alongside, or within existing approaches, distorting alternative approaches to fit the orthodox model (Storey et al., 2005).

The purpose of this thesis is to explore the way in which states and international development institutions respond to rising food insecurity within the wider PRSP framework. For this reason, taking into account the continuing legacy of SAPs on the Poverty Reduction approach and on policy formation is of significant importance. As we have seen above, the particular ways in which poverty, ‘the poor’ and the state were framed throughout the 1980s gave impetus and legitimacy to SAPs. How poverty is defined and conceptualised has significant impacts on the way in which development is approached (Brock et al. 2001; Rojas, 2004). Therefore, while taking into account the continuing legacy and influence of SAPs, it is crucial to critically explore apparent shifts in discourse around poverty reduction, in particular concepts of partnership, ownership and good governance. In this next section I look at how poverty, ‘the poor’ and the state are discursively constructed within this wider Poverty Reduction framework. As we will see in further chapters, this continues to have crucial impacts on the way in which poverty reduction is approached and the kinds of policies which are implemented; issues which are central when looking at the ability of states and development institutions to respond to the current food crisis.

Partnership and Inclusion

The introduction, and increasing emphasis, on the concept of 'participation' in PRSP processes has been praised on high for its apparent potential to drastically transform the unequal donor-recipient power relations inherent in previous SAPs (Crawford, 2003; McKinley, 2004). Relationships between donor agencies and their southern recipients, which were previously based on imposed and non-negotiable bondage-like borrowing conditions, are now described as participatory "partnerships based on mutuality and trust" (Gould, 2005: 1). IFIs are championing the concept of 'partnership' as a way of giving power and influence back to developing states (Abrahamsen, 2004). Participation purportedly ensures the involvement of a range of actors, including the state, NGOs and local communities, in the preparation of a PRSP. This is seen as fundamental in fostering a countries sense of 'ownership' over their own development strategies, in turn strengthening their commitment to the implementation of necessary policies, and thus increasing overall aid effectiveness (McKinley, 2004; Kamruzzaman, 2009). A rising emphasis on the use of partnerships is believed to cultivate and advance democratic development through ensuring that even the local poor and marginalised have input in wider decision making processes (McKinley, 2004).

Despite continuing rhetoric, IFI conceptions of partnership remain limited in both depth and scale, having little or no impact on the strategies themselves or the types of policies which are included (Dijkstra, 2005; Fraser, 2005; Brown, 2004; Kamruzzaman, 2009). As Heloise Weber (2006) asserts, development is a social and relational process "constituted by and constitutive of social power" (Weber, 2006: 188). The framing of participation as a vision of equal involvement of the local community, government and IFIs obscures the power relations inherent in this process. Individuals and groups are not universally eligible to participate but are 'invited' only after negotiations between the IFIs, select government ministries and 'civil society'. The choice of who participates is "achieved through a process of active selection, based on subjective, and not necessarily openly articulated, standards of legitimacy and representation" (Brown, 2004: 241). Participation is not universal. Rather, inherent power relations within this process, coupled with a wider context of concessional funding and aid, influences

whose voices are heard. While some groups are given a voice, others are often excluded.

Despite the range and variety of consultation experiences across countries, Stewart and Wang (2003) have found that certain categories of people, particularly women, trade unions, minority groups, parliamentarians and local NGOs have been consistently excluded from participatory processes. This continued exclusion is clearly visible in the fact that Cambodia's PRSP was only made available in Khmer (and not only English) in its final version, rather than in earlier drafts (Stewart and Wang, 2003; Bretton Woods Project, 2001). Further, Gould and Ojanen (2005) also comment on the increasing involvement of much larger transnational NGOs, apparent 'representatives of the poor,' who due to their superior resources are effectively crowding out local advocacy groups from the public policy arena. Most importantly, those groups excluded or 'crowded out' from the consultation process are often those standing in opposition to dominant, neoliberal policy prescriptions promoted by IFIs. For these authors, rather than opening up new spaces for the involvement of civil society and the poor, participation is characterised by a closed "iron triangle" of international private actors, bilateral donors and a small clique of "domestic technocratic policy elite" (Gould and Ojanen, 2003: 67). While increasing the access of a few transnational private organisations to the public policy arena, participation simultaneously excludes and depoliticises any dissenting voices and views. The inclusion of only those who concur with the current hegemonic IFI agenda, coupled with the bypassing of elected parliamentarians and the exclusion of local NGOs, significantly undermines any claim to increasing representative democratic development. Important here too, is the continuing emphasis of the role of civil society groups in participatory processes which relies heavily on the problematic and normative assumption that these groups are objective representatives of the poor (Brown, 2004; Fraser, 2005).

While the World Bank encourages consultation, when groups are selected to participate it is not guaranteed, or even required, that any of their contributions be included in the final plan (Gould and Ojanen, 2005). Commonly, participation has been more about process than any actual substantive involvement in the content of PRSPs, with issues up for debate often significantly curtailed. In many cases, concerns which are central to

poverty reduction, such as trade agreements, macroeconomic reforms and privatisation, as well as issues around redistributive policies and land reform, have been deemed 'off limits' and not up for public discussion (Dijkstra, 2005; Crawford, 2003; McKinley, 2004). Instead, the agenda is limited to technical issues or discussions around government spending. Divorced from any existing political practices, this process effectively depoliticises any debate around poverty reduction (Dijkstra, 2005; Gould and Ojanen, 2005). Having 'participants' focus only on internal technical and procedural issues draws attention away from any examination or critique of the links between local livelihoods and wider unequal relations of power. It obscures global inequalities and the continuing dominance of harmful neoliberal policies (Mawdsley and Rigg, 2003). As Gordon Crawford (2003) asserts, despite the appearance of being "benign, inclusive, open, all embracing and harmonious, partnership intrinsically precludes other interpretations of reality;" effectively sidelining any opposing perspectives and alternative views (Crawford, 2003: 142; see also McKinley, 2004). This is often coupled with normative assumptions of consensus within developing countries themselves, depoliticising processes within these states. Assuming all groups and factions within a country are in agreement obscures and ignores social differences, conflicts and tensions within these contexts, potentially rendering opposing voices invisible.

Ownership

The inherent and underlying tension between the PRSPs emphasis on country 'ownership' and the IFIs continued use of implicit conditionalities has come under consistent fire from the critics of this new agenda (Paloni and Zanardi, 2006; Ellis and Mdoe, 2003). Although IFIs have attempted to move away from explicitly attaching coercive conditions to their development financing, more implicit conditionalities which continue to inform and impact the content of a states specific development programme remain. Some authors have suggested that rather than decreasing IFI interference in recipient policies, PRSPs have enabled donors to impose even more regulatory reforms and interventionist policies, thus delving even deeper into the 'sovereign' workings of the state (Tan, 2005; Crawford, 2003). As mentioned above, the development and approval of a PRSP is a precondition for many developing

countries to obtain funding, aid and debt relief within the HIPC initiative developed by the World Bank and IMF in 1996 (Fraser, 2005; Ellis and Mdoe, 2003, 2006; Brown, 2004). Increasingly PRSPs have become a prerequisite for any type of resource provision or concessional financing, not only for the World Bank and IMF, but for several other bilateral donors and regional development banks which are increasingly streamlining their operational policies in accordance with PRSPs (Dijkstra, 2005; Weber, 2006). Furthermore, within this new framework “public accounts are to be available for routine audits by donor representatives under what’s called a Public Expenditure Review (PER)” (Gould, 2005: 3).

Despite maintaining the rhetoric of ownership, the World Bank and IMF continue to prescribe a list of factors which are to be included in a PRSP programme and, most importantly, are responsible for mandatorily assessing and approving a final document upon its completion (Malaluan and Guttal, 2002). Developing countries are encouraged to develop their ‘own’ policy programmes, yet IFI approval of the final product determines a countries access to much needed resources and funds. This can create significant tension between the desire of a country to have ownership over its own policy agenda and the significant funding that can arise from compliance and conformity with donor preferences (Ellis and Mdoe, 2003; Paloni and Zanardi, 2006; Stewart and Wang, 2003). As Fraser (2005) suggests, “approval, although sequenced at the end of the policy cycle, casts a shadow across the entire process, encouraging actors to self-censor demands that might jeopardise desperately needed funds” (Fraser, 2005: 326). As one Finance Minister involved in developing a PRSP has tellingly expressed,

We do not want to second-guess the Fund. We prefer to pre-empt them by giving them what they want before they start lecturing us about this and that. By so doing, we send a clear message that we know what we are doing - i.e. we believe in structural adjustment” (as cited in Stewart and Wang, 2003: 18-19).

Couched in inclusive language, PRSPs have become part of a wider framework of aid and resource selectivity (Porter and Craig, 2004). Policies that are approved are usually those which fall within the liberal concept of ‘good governance’ and free-market macroeconomic reform (Paloni and Zanardi, 2006; Fraser, 2005). Developing

countries, aware of the risk of loss of funding if denied, are more likely to develop PRSPs which fit in with the liberal expectations and policy requirements of IFIs rather than reflecting their own development interests and needs (Fraser, 2005). In this way, IFIs implicitly mould the outcomes of their so called 'country driven' development programmes. This poses serious questions to the PRSP concept of 'ownership', particularly if we define ownership as the ability of a country to choose and implement its own development agenda (Owusu, 2003). It could be argued then, that the shift from SAPs to the PRSPs approach represents not a move away from conditionality, but merely a change in the form of conditionality's imposed on developing countries (Paloni and Zanardi, 2006). As David Brown (2004) suggests, the use of PRSPs does not seem to be

a process under unequivocal national ownership, but one in which positive participatory sentiments function as much to obscure as to reveal the nature of central control; more the co-optation of faddish language in the service of the status quo than a radical reform of political relationships (Brown, 2004:249).

Of central importance for this thesis, as we attempt to position issues of food security within the wider PRSP agenda, is what is *not* included within the Poverty Reduction framework. Looking at what types of policies and development approaches are occluded from the wider agenda will help to illuminate some of the limitations, restrictions and continuing relations of power which shape how issues of poverty are approached. The ongoing influence of neoliberal conceptions of poverty reduction, and the interference of donors over the policies of developing states, can be seen throughout the content of PRSPs. If developing countries are, in fact, formulating their own unique poverty reduction plan, one would expect the content of PRSPs to differ from one country to the next. One would also presume that policies outlined in these documents would diverge somewhat from the standard policies imposed in previous structural adjustment reforms (Stewart and Wang, 2003; McKinley, 2005; 2004). Unfortunately this is not the case. As argued previously, approaches to poverty reduction remain strikingly similar and neoliberal macroeconomic prescriptions continue to be woven throughout all PRSPs documents (Stewart and Wang, 2003; Gould and Ojanen, 2003; Weber, 2005; McKinley, 2005). A study by UNCTAD for

example, found that out of 27 African countries only Mozambique and Rwanda departed from the conventional wisdom which postures open and free trade as central to poverty reduction (Oxfam, 2004). Similarly, Stewart and Wang (2003), when exploring the macroeconomic content of 30 PRSPs, found no radical departure from the policies prescribed within earlier SAPs. Rather, current PRSPs “contain all the elements of the first generation of policy reforms designed to ‘get the prices right,’” with every document promoting policies which involve privatisation, trade liberalisation and public sector reform (Stewart and Wang, 2003: 19).

Importantly, alternative approaches to development, particularly those relating to the redistribution of resources or those that are human rights-based, are rarely considered or broached within the PRSP framework (Stewart and Wang, 2003). Instead, it is private sector development which continues to be championed as central to the achievement of poverty reduction. This is commonly promoted under the rubric of ‘pro-poor’ or ‘broad-based’ economic growth, while underscored by the normative assumption that growth and natural redistribution go hand in hand (Stewart and Wang, 2003). If issues of redistribution are considered, practical policies to ensure these are often vague and unclear; usually limited to increased public spending on ‘the poor’ or the consolidation of private property rights rather than any dramatic departure of policy from the status quo (Stewart and Wang, 2003). Policies approaching issues of land reform for example, usually revolve around strengthening property rights and establishing legal titles for the development of property markets, rather than re-allocating resources to the landless. Initiatives which actually champion the re-allocation of resources to the poor remain notably exempt from these policy documents (Stewart and Wang, 2003).

Overall, claims to ownership and participation should be viewed with scepticism. Core neoliberal macroeconomic policies persist, while narrow and limited definitions of participation continue to undermine any real form of political accountability and democratic oversight (Crawford, 2003). The relative power of the World Bank and IMF has changed very little, with perceptions of ownership and partnership often serving to strengthen and legitimate their intervention rather than significantly challenging it (Cammack, 2004).

Good Governance

For those championing PRSPs, the renewed focus of international development organisations on 'good governance' reforms is seen as a major shift away from the anti-statist agenda characteristic of the Washington Consensus (Crawford, 2006). In contrast to SAPs, the Poverty Reduction approach stresses the importance of state participation and involvement in development processes while emphasising the need to increase 'state effectiveness' and efficiency (WDR, 2000; Crawford, 2006). The state, and its capacity to foster development, has made an apparent comeback, featuring once again as a significant and beneficial 'partner' in the war on poverty. However, despite the rhetoric, there has been considerable debate over just how much of a shift has effectively taken place. Although the World Bank and IMF claim to be rethinking the role of the state, Gordon Crawford (2006) argues that their conception of government "remains limited and subordinate within an overall free market model of development," while still "firmly embedded within a neoliberal paradigm" (Crawford, 2006: 115-117). As will be demonstrated throughout this thesis, although there has been a shift in thinking towards the state, the concept of 'good governance' remains inherently ideological.

Since the adoption of the PRSP approach, the IMF and World Bank have championed 'good governance' as a crucial area for policy reform (Craig and Porter, 2003). Very quickly this concept has been adopted and interwoven into the policies and operational frameworks of multiple development agencies, major NGOs and the UN. This has been accelerated by the appropriation of legitimating symbols of democracy such as inclusion, ownership, participation and empowerment. The concept of 'good governance' emerged within the World Bank and IMF in response to growing criticisms of Structural Adjustments failure to promote economic growth (Crawford, 2006; Craig and Porter, 2006). However, the continuing adherence of IFIs to neoliberal economic policies was highly apparent within this initial policy shift. Lack of economic growth and increasing poverty in developing countries was attributed to the inability and failure of governments to *implement* structural adjustment policies (Crawford, 2006). Rather than attributing the poor performance of developing countries to neoliberal

prescriptions themselves, it was the state that was perceived as failing; in its lack of commitment and implementation of market reforms (Paloni, 2006; Crawford, 2006; Kiely, 2007). As a result, the focus of IFIs shifted towards the importance of building 'effective' governments and institutions capable of embedding market-friendly reforms. The state, which had long been considered the central problem in developing countries, was now paradoxically expected to become the solution by "initiating and implementing adjustment programmes" (Crawford, 2006: 117; see also Kiely, 2007).

According to Rita Abrahamsen (2000), the paradoxical fusion of "destatisation" with democratisation is a common characteristic of this 'good governance' paradigm. Democracy is positioned as the core overarching framework through which economic development is to be achieved (Abrahamsen, 2000: 51). While a seductive and alluring concept, it remains limited to within the boundaries of a liberal, market-orientated conception of the state. Democratisation and economic liberalism are seen as two sides of the same coin, considered to be "interrelated and mutually reinforcing processes" (Abrahamsen, 2000: 51). Democratic practises are seen as central to the consolidation and protection of private property rights, which in turn create healthy environments for investment and capital accumulation. Although the significance of democratic representation, transparency and accountability cannot be denied, it is the conflation of these concepts with free-market ideology which is problematic. Under the rubric of good governance, the belief in democracy is "conceptually linked" with market liberalisation. Good governance perceived as synonymous with democracy and economic liberalisation, while so called 'bad' governance continues to be equated with government intervention (Abrahamsen, 2000). The fact that inequalities, generated by free-market economic policies, often lead to an undermining of democratic practices and political equality seems to be pushed to the background of obscurity within the boundaries of this discourse.

The World Bank's *World Development Report 2002: Building Institutions for Markets* clearly outlines four key principles of 'good governance' which are needed to maintain and support a free-market economy. These include the creation, protection and enforcement of private property rights; the promotion of competition; the "provision of *sound* macroeconomic policies which create a stable environment for market

activities;” as well as the absence of corruption (World Bank, 2002: 99). The conceptual linking of governance with liberal economics is clearly articulated here, with these principles rooted in the underlying normative assumption that a neoliberal free-market economy is the most rational and advantageous way to develop (Crawford, 2006; Kiely, 2007). Woven explicitly throughout this construction of good governance are liberal notions emphasising the importance of protecting private property, the rule of law, fear of state interference and corruption. The continuing biased and unbalanced liberal conception of the market and the state are consistently perpetuated and reinforced. Problems resulting from excessive and unlimited state power are routinely stressed, while inequalities and unequal power relations between those who own private capital, and those who do not, remain unexamined (World Bank, 2002; Crawford, 2006).

The concept of good governance as outlined here narrowly defines the state as subordinate to market processes (World Bank, 2002). The goal of good governance is to create an enabling institutional environment for neoliberal macroeconomic policies to function. Within this framework, the role of the state is limited to the service of a free market economy and to the development and maintenance of institutions which support it (World Bank, 2002; Crawford, 2006; Paloni, 2006; Storey et al., 2005; Havnevik et al., 2006). As James Wolfensohn evocatively asserts:

Our new world of open markets raises the stakes for developing countries. Investment is linked to *good policies* and good governance— liberal trade regimes and high savings rates, combined with sound legal and judicial systems. Simply put, capital goes to those countries that get the fundamentals right. And we are working with our clients on those fundamentals (James Wolfensohn, 1996 as cited in Cammack, 2004: 195).

These so called ‘good policies’ and ‘fundamentals’ are those that promote and foster market activities, and remain heavily embedded within an overall neoliberal construction of the state and market-driven development. Here, the concept of ‘good governance’ serves only to disguise what is in reality “pro-market governance” (Crawford, 2006: 120; see also Storey et al., 2005). State interference is acceptable only when it is ‘market friendly’ and serves to support, and not inhibit, market processes.

Thus, alluring as it may seem, the concept of good governance rather than bringing back the state, seems only to restrict the scope of state power and ensure that government involvement in development processes is limited (Crawford, 2006; Fine, 2001).

Much of our discussion thus far has focused on relations of power within the PRSP framework; examining if, and to what extent, developing countries have actually gained increasing power to define and pursue their own development agenda. As discussed above, despite the rhetoric, IFI conceptions of 'partnership' and 'ownership' are shallow at best, with the IMF and World Bank continuing to influence the policy outcomes of developing states. However, important as this is, relations of power are not only primarily limited to those of domination. As Rita Abrahamsen (2004) has argued, exploring the role of PRSPs within the wider context of global governance requires moving beyond narrow, zero-sum conceptions of power. Within the PRSP paradigm, relations of power are exercised, not only through coercion, but "through promises of incorporation and inclusion" (Abrahamsen, 2004: 1453). Discursive constructions of 'partnership' and 'ownership' can in themselves "act as forms of power through the production of specific forms of legitimate action and agency" (Abrahamsen, 2004: 1454).

Within the framework of partnership and participation, developing countries are constructed as free and responsible for their own development. This concept positions developing governments as in 'the driver's seat' of their own poverty reduction processes, bestowing upon them a range of duties and obligations, while simultaneously opening up apparent spaces for increased agency and action (Abrahamsen, 2004). The construction of partnership places the onus and responsibility on developing governments to manage their own development 'wisely'. According to Rita Abrahamsen (2004), with this increasing responsabilisation, coupled with dominant conceptions of 'good governance', partnership becomes a tool of disciplinary governance from afar (Abrahamsen, 2004). Developing countries are 'free' to govern themselves, however this freedom remains restricted and limited to within the boundaries of what IFIs define as 'good' or 'sound' policies.

In order for donors to enter into partnerships with recipient states, developing governments must prove they are responsible, demonstrate their willingness to undertake 'sound' policies and govern themselves wisely. Actions and policies considered 'responsible' remain embedded within hegemonic liberal conceptions of poverty reduction and the state. Using "freedom as a formula of rule", processes of responsabilisation ensure developing countries become "self-regulating" or "self-disciplining" agents of their own development (Abrahamsen, 2004: 1460). Thus, although unequal relations of power remain embedded throughout the PRSP framework, they are not limited only to relations of coercion or domination. Through the recruitment of

recipient states as partners or agents in their own self-management, partnerships govern through the production and consent of responsible states...the power of partnerships is voluntary and coercive at the same time, producing both new forms of agency and new forms of discipline (Abrahamsen, 2004: 1454).

In this way, PRSPs can be seen as a modern tool of liberal governance; managing and influencing development outcomes through freedom, ownership and empowerment. They ensure developing countries, and the poverty reduction policies they pursue, remain fully embedded within, and continue to maintain, hegemonic market liberalism.

Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers and the Rise of 'Inclusive' Liberalism

As I walked back down the hill from that *favela*, I realised that this is what the challenge of development is all about – inclusion. Bringing people into society who have never been part of it before... This – the challenge of *inclusion* – is the key development challenge of our time (James Wolfensohn, 1997 as cited in Mawdsley and Rigg, 2003: 280).

As we have seen throughout this discussion, rather than representing a radical or dramatic shift away from the raw neoliberal hegemony of the Structural Adjustment era, the new Poverty Reduction approach reflects a continuing effort to consolidate

contemporary liberalism at the global level. Although the rubric of 'inclusion' and 'empowerment' is alluring in its promises, it remains shallow at best. In reality, creating what Craig and Porter (2006) define as a powerful "inclusion delusion" obscuring and "legitimizing wider liberal market relations and the powerful inequalities" they create (Craig and Porter, 2006: 87). The belief in the power of global, free-market capitalism to lift all societies out of poverty continues to form the very foundation of dominant conceptions of poverty reduction and development. With discourses around Poverty Reduction remaining firmly embedded within liberal conceptions of development and the state; in turn continuing to define the boundaries of development policy and action.

Contemporary liberalism has moved beyond the disruptive and disembedding phase witnessed throughout the 1980s, into a more embedding, legitimating and securing liberal form (Porter and Craig, 2004). This new, reconstituted form of 'inclusive' liberalism attempts to re-frame, expand and re-embed the liberal order through the use of concepts such as inclusion, participation and ownership (Porter and Craig, 2004). 'Inclusive' liberalism does this institutionally by incorporating the poor and marginalised into the wider global economy, using mechanisms such as trade liberalisation, the opening of capital flows and the implementation of global trade rules (Porter and Craig, 2004). Ideologically, 'inclusive' liberalism is embedded through the expansion of the liberal paradigm, beyond its bare market orientation, to include and incorporate the poorest and most excluded in society. As Porter and Craig (2004) suggest, 'inclusive' liberalism does this by attempting to "offer the most excluded of the poor some stake in the wider liberal order... Great efforts are made to be seen to 'include' those classic liberal subjects, the vulnerable: the excluded, the poor and the marginal" (Porter and Craig, 2004: 392). In addition, liberalism is further embedded through the remoulding and reconstruction of social processes, structures and governance to fit within the 'inclusive' liberal framework. This involves, not only the integration of people into markets, but the construction of rules, processes, social relations and spaces in which all are 'included' and embedded into the wider liberal order (Porter and Craig, 2004).

The PRSPs approach can be seen as an effective tool for the embedding of 'inclusive' liberalism. As we have seen, liberal conceptions of the state, the market and

development are tightly woven into the PRSPs approach. Yet there has also been a shift and expansion of this liberal paradigm to include issues such as human resource development, social security and community development. The Poverty Reduction emphasis on 'participation' and 'empowerment' expands and extends the reach of liberalism; incorporating and aligning even the most marginalised under the auspicious umbrella of 'inclusion.' As Porter and Craig (2004) suggest, key concepts such as inclusion, participation and ownership align "whole countries powerfully within the sharpened parameters of a liberal economic paradigm, and in doing so, maintains a radical openness to both capital flows and the market power of international business" (Porter and Craig, 2004: 395). The concept of 'good governance' reframes and repositions the state and government processes within an overall liberal framework. IFIs emphasise the importance of state inclusion and ownership in the PRSPs process yet, as we have seen above, this inclusion is limited only to the support and service of a free-market economy.

Liberal ideology and macroeconomic reforms continue to be woven throughout the PRSPs approach despite the shift from raw, market-orientated neoliberalism characteristic of the Washington Consensus era (Stewart and Wang, 2003; Gould and Ojanen, 2003; Weber, 2005; McKinley, 2005). Rising frustration and disillusionment with the failures of SAPs to promote growth and reduce growing poverty, meant that liberalism needed to be reframed and reconstituted in order to survive. What we are seeing is now is more liberalism, however it is a more securing, embedding and 'inclusive' liberal form. To ensure active participation in what the World Bank calls the "inclusive world economy," neoliberal macroeconomic reforms have been joined up with the concept of good governance and various social and human capital provisions (Porter and Craig, 2004: 389). Liberalism has been reframed to give it a more human face. However, as we have seen in the above discussion, this convergence only goes so far. IFIs conception of participation, ownership and good governance, although rhetorically alluring, are ideologically reinforcing and limited in both scope and scale. Rather than representing any real move towards a more social liberal agenda, PRSPs are further expanding, embedding and securing the 'inclusive' liberal order.

Concluding Section

It is this concept of 'inclusive' liberalism which will inform the theoretical underpinning of this thesis, as I seek to explore the way in which governments and development institutions respond to growing food insecurities within the boundaries of the PRSP approach. The following chapter will attempt to explore some of the wider political economic factors contributing to current food insecurities, looking specifically at the ongoing legacy and impact of neoliberal SAPs on developing country agriculture and development. I will attempt to look critically at some of the broader development issues and debates around food security, looking particularly at how development policy and food security intersect. An underlying assumption informing my research is that the current food crisis, and food security more generally, can be seen as not only a result of market fluctuations, but as intimately connected to poverty and wider global inequality. For this reason, I would argue that further exploration of the role of PRSPs in poverty reduction and policy formation is of significant importance when looking at the ability of developing countries, institutions, and development organisations to deal with and respond to rising food insecurity.

CHAPTER THREE: THE POLITICAL ECONOMY OF FOOD SECURITY

It is one of the world's greatest contradictions that widespread and pervasive hunger continues to exist today. In contrast to the ominous 18th century warnings of Tomas Malthus¹⁴ and his modern day followers, the world continues to produce more than enough food to meet the needs of its growing population. According to the Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO), global agriculture currently produces more calories per person than it did 30 years ago; enough to provide for the sustenance and nutritional needs of every person on the planet, despite a 70 percent population increase over this period (FAO, 2002: 9; see also Mousseau, 2005). Rather than scarcity, it is abundance that best characterises our current global food system (Mousseau, 2005; Edkins, 2000). Yet despite this, hunger and chronic malnutrition continues to dominate the lives of millions. This has been significantly exacerbated by the onset of the 2008 global food crisis, which saw skyrocketing prices push food and much needed nutrients out of the reach of millions more. For a period, albeit brief (to be significantly overshadowed by the global financial crisis), stories of the impact of rising food prices on the poor dominated international headlines, as both development practitioners and the media attempted to explain the causes of such food price volatility and its effects. Overwhelmingly however, these explanations have been dominated by short-term, decontextualised, and depoliticised accounts which emphasise notions of scarcity. In particular, they have centred on issues of variability in agricultural production and the forces of global supply and demand, largely obfuscating issues of inequality and wider historical processes which shape certain people's vulnerability to hunger.

¹⁴ Tomas Malthus published his infamous *Essay on the Principle of Population* in 1798. Within this publication he argued that poverty, underdevelopment and hunger were largely associated with increased fertility and population pressures on "the means of subsistence" (Ross, 2003: 437). This discourse has continued to powerfully inform thinking around hunger and food insecurity since its publication. The central assumption is that hunger is predominantly the consequence of scarcity and insufficient food production, of which population pressure is defined as a principle cause. Eric B. Ross (2003) argues that this argument has often been employed as a means of explaining "the nature and origin of poverty in a way that exonerates capitalist economies, by suggesting that it was the reproductive and productive behaviours of the poor themselves that caused their material suffering" (Ross, 2003: 437).

However, a lack of food is rarely the reason people go hungry. As popularised by Amartya Sen's seminal 1981 *Poverty and Famines*, rather than resulting from scarcity hunger can be seen as the product of a historically specific set of social, political and economic relations which impact people's ability to access food (Sen, 1981; Edkins, 2000; Maxwell, 1996; Sundaram, 2008). In order to understand rising food insecurity, we need to explore the wider structural processes and relations of power which render possible a world in which so much hunger sits alongside such abundance. The current food crisis, and rising food insecurity more generally, needs to be seen in light of the ongoing development and restructuring of global capitalism (Bush, 2007; Edkins, 2000). In particular, rising incidences of hunger can be seen as directly related to the rise and impact of neoliberalism and the particular ways in which it has structured modes of production and consumption on a global scale (McMichael, 1998).

The purpose of this chapter is to place food insecurity, and the recent global food crisis, within a wider social, political, and economic context. In particular, I will position hunger within the broader trajectory and development of neoliberalism over the last 30 years; addressing the need to see the current food crisis in connection with long standing neoliberal development practises and the role of international development organisations in perpetuating these. This chapter I hope to illuminate the way in which neoliberalism has been employed by, and perpetuated through, the policies and discourses of a range of global actors, focusing particularly on the policies imposed by international financial institutions (IFIs) in the developing world. I will look at the way in which dominant development institutions, informed by neoliberal ideology, have shaped particular notions of food insecurity and agricultural development throughout the post WWII era onwards. This in turn has constructed powerful frameworks for the implementation of neoliberal reforms, most commonly in the form of the World Bank and IMF's Structural Adjustment Programmes (SAPs). SAPs have had devastating and deep-rooted impacts on developing country agriculture, food insecurity and inequality. Reproducing unequal relations of power, these reforms have perpetuated vulnerability to hunger and market failure throughout the developing world.

Examining the globality of neoliberalism, and its impacts on food security, will set up an analytical frame for the investigation of the particular manifestation of global liberalism in Cambodia, and how this impacts approaches to hunger within that context. However, rather than envisaging neoliberalism as the uncomplicated implementation of a unified and top-down political ideology, I will draw on what Peck and Tickell (2002) have defined as “actually existing neoliberalisms” (Springer, 2009a: 139). Linked to the institutional policies and practises of powerful actors, this approach allows us to explore the way in which neoliberalism has patterned global food security in certain ways. At the same time however, it also takes into account global liberalism’s fluid and multifarious nature. In the following section I will critically explore global liberalism’s relationship with food security. In particular, I will look at the way in which neoliberal reforms have structured the current global food system, paving the way for the recent food crisis while exacerbating poverty and hunger throughout the developing world. This chapter will then briefly discuss the rise of the food sovereignty movement. In an attempt to re-politicise hunger and shift the terms of debate, this movement presents a comprehensive, local, yet international alternative to our current food system; one based on the equitable access to and production of food for all.

‘The Great Hunger of 2008’

For many of the world’s poor, 2008 was characterised by growing hunger and food insecurity triggered by rapid increases in the price of all basic staple foods including rice, wheat, corn and soybeans. Skyrocketing food prices brought food security to the forefront of international attention; inciting food riots across several continents, in countries as diverse as Bangladesh, Egypt, Indonesia, Zambia, Haiti, Philippines, Morocco, Uzbekistan, Senegal, Niger, Mexico and Peru (Ghosh, 2008; Angus, 2008; Halimi, 2008). Worldwide, inflation rapidly increased the prices of almost all food commodities, including oils, cereals and dairy, to rates higher than have been recorded in decades. This increased the total developing country food import bill from an estimated \$191 billion in 2006 to \$245 billion in 2007 (IATP, 2008). However, it was staple foods that were most particularly affected, with the price of rice increasing by “nearly 150 percent in the first 100 days of 2008” (Ghosh, 2008; World Bank 2008c).

According to the World Bank (2009), wheat prices rose by 181 percent over the 36 month period leading up to February 2008, with overall food commodity prices climbing 83 percent over this time (World Bank, 2009a). From May 2007 to April 2008 the prices of rice, soybeans and sugar increased by 216%, 101% and 33% respectively¹⁵ (Shafaeddin, 2008, 3). Even more extreme manifestations of these price increases have been seen in local markets, with the price of a 50 kilogram bag of rice in Haiti doubling in just one week in March 2008 (Angus, 2008).

While labelled a ‘global’ food crisis, the impacts of rising prices are far from evenly distributed. It is the poor, concentrated predominantly in developing countries, who have been most severely affected (McMichael, 2007a). Even before the food price increase, the United Nations estimates that more than one billion people were suffering from chronic hunger, with another 2 billion severely malnourished.¹⁶ This brings the total number of food insecure to 3 billion, equating to almost half of the world’s population¹⁷ (Magdoff, 2008; Sundaram, 2008; WFP, 2009; Pretty and Hine, 2001). Hunger is on an upward trend. According to the FAO, since the second half of the 1990s the number of chronically hungry throughout the developing world has been increasing at a rate of almost 4 million a year (FAO, 2004; FAO, 2008). Recent food prices increases have threatened to further exacerbate this, potentially pushing 100 million more into conditions of severe hunger and deprivation (WFP, 2009; World Bank, 2008c). This becomes particularly salient when coupled with the United Nation’s estimate which suggests that 18,000 children die daily as a direct or indirect consequence of malnutrition (Morris, 2006).

Food security and hunger are flexible and multifarious concepts (FAO, 2003). Much like poverty, the way in which they are defined and conceptualised is deeply connected to issues of power and discourse, thus making any operational definition problematic.

¹⁵ The most commonly sold grade of Thai rice sold for \$198 a tonne in 2003, rising to \$323 a ton in 2007, before spiking to phenomenal \$1000 per tonne in April 2008 (Angus, 2008)

¹⁶ As opposed to acute hunger and famine, chronic hunger can be broadly defined as a long term, persistent and global phenomenon, characterised by the gradual erosion of bodily strength and resistance resulting from malnutrition (Minor, 1990: 438). In contrast to famine, which is often a more short term and localised event, chronic and persistent hunger accounts for approximately 90 percent of the world’s hunger-related deaths (Minor, 1990; Young, 1997).

¹⁷ Hunger is not only limited to within poorer, developing countries. In the United States, which is one of the world’s largest economies and food producers, the Department of Agriculture estimates that in 2006 over 35 million people were living within food-insecure households (Magdoff, 2008).

This is reflected in the way in which definitions of food security, as employed within wider policy contexts, have shifted so dramatically over the last 30 years¹⁸ (FAO, 2003). However, for the purpose of clarity and discussion a working definition is necessary. For this reason, this thesis will be employing the most recent redefinition of food security developed at the World Food Summit in November 1996. Negotiated within a process of international consultation, food security is defined as existing when “all people, at all times, have physical and economic access to sufficient, *safe and nutritious* food to meet their dietary needs and *food preferences* for an active and healthy life” (FAO, 2003: *no page number*)

While global food prices have recently receded from their 2008 peaks, the prices of staple foods continue to remain much higher than their previous 2007 levels, and in some places are still at record highs (FAO 2009a; FAO, 2009b). Corn prices in Nairobi for example, are now higher than they were in 2008 (Financial Times, 2009). Over the last 20 years however, prior to the food price spikes, agricultural commodities have at many times been characterised by a crisis of low prices. So low in fact, that millions of peasants and small holder farmers have been driven off their land to join an ever-growing pool of unemployed in overcrowded cities (Rosset, 2008; Harvey, 2003). High prices continue to push food, and desperately needed nutrients, out of the reach of many. Yet the number of the world’s food insecure has been increasing steadily over the last 20 years throughout periods of both high and low prices (Sundaram, 2008; Watts and Goodman, 1997; McMichael, 2007a; FAO, 2004; FAO, 2008). The current food crisis can be seen as a manifestation of a much wider problem, one of increasing vulnerability of the poor, in both number and degree, to food insecurity, market volatility and global capitalism’s capricious cycles of boom and bust.

Dominant and popular conceptions of the causes of increasing food prices, and subsequent growing food insecurity, have focused largely on the ineluctable forces of

¹⁸ In 1974 definitions of food security were founded on notions of scarcity. They emphasised the need to increase volumes and stability of food supplies. In this way, the 1974 World Food Summit defined food security as the “availability at all times of adequate world food supplies of basic foodstuffs to sustain a steady expansion of food consumption and to offset fluctuations in production and prices” (FAO, 2003: *no page number*). In 1983 however, the emphasis had shifted. The concept of food security was now expanded to include notions of securing access to food supplies, accentuating a need to focus equally on both issues of supply and demand. Accordingly, food security as defined as the need to ensure “that all people at all times have both physical and economic *access* to the basic food that they need” (FAO, 2003, no page number).

global supply and demand (Ghosh, 2008). Common among these has been the emphasis on rapid economic growth in emerging economies such as India and China, ostensibly resulting in a massive increase in income and middle class growth (ADB, 2008b, 6; CDRI, 2008a; Minot, 2008; Magdoff, 2008; Pretty and Hine, 2001). Given greater impetus through its endorsement by former US President George W. Bush, this is believed to have put significant pressure on global demand for more high-quality foods. In particular, it is believed to have increased demand for meat and dairy, therefore shifting arable land into the service of maize and corn for animals rather than staple food crops (Ghosh, 2008). It is argued that growing middle classes not only consume more food generally, but rising demand for meat requires more grain and land to be converted into animal feed, increasing pressure on global production¹⁹ (ADB, 2008b). Despite the simplistic appeal of this explanation, it is significantly misleading (Ghosh, 2008; Shafaeddin, 2008). Although there has been economic growth within both India and China, the benefits of this have accrued to only a very small part of the population (United Nations, 2005; Ghosh, 2008). Income distribution and inequality has been worsening rapidly within both these countries, with the bulk of the population continuing to live in conditions of poverty; thus hardly contributing to increased food grain consumption and diversification (Ghosh, 2008; Wan, 2008; Dossani, 2008). According to Jayati Ghosh (2008), the overall per capita consumption of food grains in India is actually lower than it was before the 1980s. Furthermore, food grain consumption in China fell significantly between 1996 and 2005, and although it has subsequently increased, is still lower than these previous 1996 levels (Ghosh, 2008).

The rise in the use of grains and vegetables in the production of ethanol, as a substitute for petroleum, has also been emphasised as a major contributing factor to food price increases. Again, this is seen as competing with the production of staple foods for human consumption (World Bank, 2008a; World Bank, 2008c; ADB, 2008; Bello, 2008c; Rosset, 2009). There has been a substantial increase in the use of food crops for biofuel production in the US, Europe, and also Brazil, in response to subsidisation policies introduced by governments attempting to reduce oil insecurity (Ghosh, 2008;

¹⁹ It is estimated that the production of one kilogram of beef requires around 7 kilograms of grain (ADB, 2008b; Pretty and Hine, 2001).

Tabb, 2008; World Bank, 2009a). The US has been the largest global protagonist of this shift. It has provided large subsidies for its farmers in an attempt to reduce its reliance on petroleum in the face of failing imperialist efforts to control Middle Eastern oil supplies (Ghosh, 2008). In 2006, the US diverted more than 20 percent of its maize production into biofuels, putting in place a year later a 2007 Energy Bill mandating a five-fold increase in ethanol production by 2022 (Ghosh, 2008; Tabb, 2008, 12). Similarly, Brazil has converted half of its total sugar cane production to ethanol over this period, while the European Union has committed the majority of its oil seed production, as well as imported vegetable oils, towards this cause (Ghosh, 2008). This is believed to be significantly contributing to rising food prices, putting substantial upward pressure on demand for raw biofuel materials (including wheat, maize, palm oil and soy), while increasing competition for arable land (World Bank, 2009a).

Other explanations of the advent of the food crisis have focused on corresponding increases in global oil prices throughout 2008. This has been coupled with a weakening of the US dollar, believed to be adding to inflationary pressures through contributing to high energy, transport and fertiliser costs (World Bank, 2008a; World Bank, 2008c; CDRI, 2008a; ADB, 2008). Droughts in Australia, cyclones in Bangladesh, coupled with climate change and global population growth, are all factors which are believed to be contributing to an outstripping of global demand over supply (World Bank, 2008a; World Bank, 2008c). Furthermore, as will be discussed and critiqued below, international financial institutions (IFIs) are increasingly pointing to the introduction of protectionist policies in developing countries as exacerbating the impacts of the food crisis (World Bank, 2008a; World Bank, 2008c; CDRI, 2008a; ADB, 2008; Angus, 2008). Many developing countries, such as India, Vietnam, Argentina and Cambodia have implemented trade restrictions, export controls, and food subsidies in an attempt to stabilise and lower domestic food prices (World Bank, 2008c). However, organisations such as the World Bank (2008c) have deemed these efforts to be “counter-productive,” instead contributing to rising food prices while “undermining trust in the market and leading to worse outcomes for all” (World Bank, 2008c: 4).

What these short term explanations all have in common is a failure to acknowledge wider relations of power and structures of inequality which continue to inform and

perpetuate certain people's vulnerability to hunger (Sundaram, 2008; Watts and Goodman, 1997; McMichael, 2007a; Angus, 2008; Pretty and Hine, 2001). In order to understand the current food crisis, and rising food insecurity more generally, hunger needs to be positioned within the wider social, historical, and political processes which produce and maintain it (Edkins, 2000; Watts, 2002; Bush, 2007). Rising food insecurity, and the current food crisis, can be seen as a direct manifestation of growing inequality and polarisation within and between rich and poor countries over the last 30 years; particularly exacerbated by neoliberalism's ascendancy to dominance throughout the 1980s and 1990s. However, little attention has been paid to the impact of agricultural restructuring and liberalisation reforms imposed on developing countries, and the impact this has had on food security. As a consequence, high level forums such as the recent 2008 food summit held in Rome, have resulted predominantly in the production "palliative measures, under the influence of developed countries, rather than curative ones" (Shafaeddin, 2008: 2). However, much like poverty rising vulnerability to food insecurity is embedded within the broader trajectory, development and restructuring of global free-market capitalism (Bush, 2007). It can be seen as the result of the ever increasing commodification of food and other natural resources- inherent in the very nature of globalised capitalism- and the increased inequality, vulnerability and market volatility which this ensues (Bush, 2007; Edkins, 2000).

The Political Economy of Food and the Shaping of Our Current Global Food System

The roots of our current global food system can be found in the construction of the post-war food regime in the 1940s (McMichael, 2000). This arose as part of a greater shift to the establishment of a new international 'embedded liberal' order after the devastating impacts of the Great Depression and Second World War (Helleiner, 2006; You, 2002; McMichael, 2000). Reeling from the traumatic impacts of these globally transformative events, allied governments sought to establish a more stable, peaceful and securing global economic system. This was to be based on regulated international trade and government intervention. The creation of the Bretton Woods Institutions (BWIs), the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF), in 1944 was central to the development and implementation of this 'embedded liberal' vision. These

institutions were created to bring about the orderly and regulated development of the world's economy, predicated on the reconciliation of classical international liberalism and Keynesian influenced domestic interventionist economics (Helleiner, 2006; You, 2002). This was to be achieved through the maintenance of a stable currency system, pegged to the US dollar, with the aim promoting financial stability and smoothly maintaining international trade. While the IMF was endowed with financing to provide short-term balance of payment relief, the role of the World Bank was to distribute funding for more long-term reconstruction and development projects²⁰ (You, 2002; Helleiner, 2006). From their very inception the BWIs were liberal institutions. However, while a central goal was to promote peace and security through international trade, this was to be a highly regulated trade, moderated through domestic interventionism.

As demonstrated in Chapter Two, the roles of these institutions have changed dramatically since their creation, shifting along with broader global changes in dominant economic thinking (You, 2002). As Jong-Il You (2002) asserts, both the World Bank and IMF have “evolved into agents of structural reform for debt-ridden developing countries, with loans as inducement and conditionality as the weapon” (You, 2002: 213). These institutions have become increasingly influential in not only the shaping of the international economic system and trade, but in the construction of development policy and discourse. Moving beyond their original mandates, they have become central players in defining the way in which issues of poverty, inequality and food security are discursively conceptualised and perceived. As a consequence, they have been fundamental in expanding the reach of global liberalism, drawing developing countries into the wider global liberal order in very particular ways.

Throughout the post war period of the 1950s and 1960s, the concept of development was conceptualised as synonymous with a shift from agrarian societies to a more Western inspired modernisation and urban-industrial growth. Epitomised by Rostow's infamous ‘stages of growth’ model, conditions in post-colonial societies were dominantly characterised as ‘backwards’ and ‘poor’ and in the very early stages of a

²⁰ Initially, funding was predominantly given to advanced capitalist governments at lower interests rates than market levels, in order to support development and reconstruction initiatives.

linear and universal path to modernisation (Gore, 2000). Discursively, the world was separated into countries considered to be modern and ‘developed’ and those who were not, with conditions in the West constructed as the standard by which all other countries were measured and encouraged to emulate (McMichael, 2000; Gore, 2000). Of course, as McMichael (2000) suggests, this completely ignored the fact that unlike the West newly independent societies were unable to develop through exploiting the labour and resources of others (McMichael, 2000). As will be discussed below, this conceptualisation of developing economies as backwards and poor, opened up spaces for all kinds of “neo-colonial interventions to gain access to strategic resources and markets in the context of the Cold War” (McMichael, 2007a: 172).

The goal within post-colonial economies was to replicate the development and modernisation trajectory of the United States and Europe. As a result, throughout the post-war era many developing countries adopted an “idealised national economic model” which emphasised the dual and mutually reinforcing relationship between state led industrialisation and agricultural growth (McMichael, 2007b: 32; see also Krueger, 1996; Hall and Midgley, 2004). Informed by Keynesian economics, import-substitution industrialisation became the dominant development orthodoxy, with “planning and public resources considered legitimate partners of private enterprise” (McMichael, 2000). The nation-state was seen as central to the development project, with governments directly involved in the support of industrialisation through the use of infant-industry protections, subsidies and tariffs (Hall and Midgley, 2004; Friedmann, 1993). Within this paradigm social provision was equated with government intervention; with the state, rather than markets, seen as the central provider of social services and food security. Public planning, based on employment-generating public investment, was to be coupled with government funding of key social services such as employment, education and healthcare (Gore, 2000; Hall and Midgley, 2004).

Development was believed to involve a move away from small-holder agricultural production, seen as backwards and primitive, to be replaced by the development of agro-industrial plantations (Ross, 2003). The goal of the state was to provide protections for farmers, while ‘modernising’ agriculture through public investments in technology, as well as physical and social infrastructure (Havnevik et al., 2007; Hall and

Midgley, 2004). In certain politically strategic countries,²¹ such as India, Mexico and the Philippines, this was kick started through the transfer of ‘green revolution technologies’ from the West, often in the form of development aid (McMichael, 2000; McMichael, 2007b). At the same time, significant supports were put in place to protect farmers. These included state marketing boards and crop authorities, as a means of ensuring stable prices for both producers and local consumers. In many countries, these protectionist policies were employed as a means of promoting national food self-sufficiency for domestic supply (Havnevik et al., 2007). Ideally, both the agricultural sector and industrialisation were to condition each others growth. Rising industrial development was to feed back and support the technological advancement of agriculture. While correspondingly, resources from rural areas, such as food, raw materials and excess labour, were to be transferred into the service and support of rising manufacturing and industrialisation in the urban sector (Havnevik, et al., 2007).

At the same time, developing country agriculture became increasingly subject to global political economic forces, as markets were slowly pried open in response to the growing problem of over-accumulation in the global North (Friedmann, 1993). Unable to acquire resources through colonial extraction, developing countries relied heavily on the financial and technological resources of the West in order to subsidise their industrialisation. This was provided predominantly through a series of bilateral aid programmes implemented by the United States, which had emerged from the Second World War as the world’s most economically powerful country (Friedmann, 1993; McMichael, 2000). The support of developing country industrialisation had become increasingly central to US international development policy, as a means of opening up vast new markets as outlets for its own surplus capital²² (Mousseau, 2005; Friedmann, 1993).

²¹The choice of which countries were supplied with green revolution technologies was largely geopolitically motivated; limited to those deemed central in the weakening and prevention of further communist expansion in the context of the Cold War. The increased provision of food and capitalist agro-industrial employment in certain developing countries was seen as central to securing of stability of capitalism and the weakening of fermenting communist insurgency (McMichael, 2007b; Friedmann, 1993).

²² As the former US Assistant Secretary of State William L. Clayton suggested, supporting industrialisation “would certainly be very good for US agricultural exports, because as you help develop them [underdeveloped countries] industrially, you will shift their economy to an industrial economy, so that in the end you would create more markets for your agricultural products” (as cited in Mousseau, 2005: 9).

Following a similar model of nationally regulated growth, the US had implemented a series of domestic agricultural protections over this period as a way of fostering its own national farm programmes (Friedmann, 1993). Protected behind a rising barrier of price subsidies and import controls, US farmers began producing far more food than could be absorbed domestically (McMichael, 2000). In order to dispose of this, the US government instituted the Public Law 480 (PL-480) food aid programme in 1954, with the goal of channelling surplus food commodities into third world economies.²³ By 1956 almost half of US aid to developing countries was in the form of food aid (McMichael, 2000; McMichael, 2007a). However, while this resolved the over-production problem in the US, this also increased developing country dependence on US surpluses, which were to be used for the subsidisation of cheap food in support of national industrial development in third world cities.²⁴ European economies were able to resist the dumping of US food commodities (which would undermine the goal of agricultural reconstruction) through carefully regulated trading agreements. However, there were no such provisions for the developing world (Friedmann, 1993). What resulted was the gradual creation of food dependence over a period of only two decades “in countries which had been mostly self-sufficient in food at the Second World War” (Friedmann, 1993: 38).

Until the 1970s, publically regulated food commodities meant that prices of global agricultural products remained relatively stable. For the first 25 years after the Second World War, regulation seemed to be working. However, wider geopolitical shifts over this period began to undermine this, and by the mid 1970s the post war food regime had begun to unravel (Friedmann, 1993; Walton and Seddon, 1994). In 1972-73 global food stocks went from surplus to deficit, rapidly inflating food prices, as Cold War tensions eased and the world's excess grains were quickly emptied into opening Soviet economies (Watts and Goodman, 1997; Friedmann, 1993; McMichael, 2000). This was coupled with massive spikes in global oil prices which had severe impacts on the

²³ The stated goal of the PL-480 was to “increase the consumption of US agricultural commodities to foreign countries, to improve the foreign relations of the US and for other purposes” (as cited in McMichael, 2000: 60).

²⁴ The distribution of aid in the form of food and technology was in no means evenly distributed and was significantly shaped by Cold War geopolitical tensions. Similar to the provision of green revolution technologies, food aid became part of the US containment policy, attempting to prevent the spread of communism throughout the developing world. More resources were transferred to countries deemed of strategic and political significance (McMichael, 2007a; McMichael, 2000; Friedmann, 1993).

balance of trade in many oil importing countries. This further increased commodity prices which lead to the onset the 1977 food crisis (Walton and Seddon, 1994; Friedmann, 1993; You, 2002). In response to this, many developing countries began to borrow heavily, especially from transnational banks, which were overflowing with surplus capital deposited by oil-rich states (Friedmann, 1993). What resulted was a significant rise in indebtedness throughout a large proportion of the developing world. The total external debt of developing countries rose from \$64 billion in 1970 to \$686 billion in 1984 (Walton and Seddon, 1994: 14; see also Murphy and Santarius, 2007). This set the stage for what became known as the global debt crisis, “to which the response of international financial institutions was ‘stabilisation’ and ‘adjustment’” (Walton and Seddon, 1994: 11).

Neoliberal austerity policies rose to prominence throughout the 1980s as the answer to both rising Third World debt and the deepening crisis of overaccumulation in the industrialised North (Razavi, 2003; Harvey, 2003). Overall, the world was experiencing what David Harvey (2003; 2007) has described as a crisis of capital accumulation, which ushered in a period of chronic global stagflation (Harvey, 2003; Harvey, 2007). Highly subsidised Western agricultural commodities were becoming an increasingly chronic problem; as industrial capitalist economies were faced with a growing profit squeeze, resulting from overaccumulation and stagnating domestic demand (Friedmann, 1984; Harvey, 2003). According to Harriet Friedmann (1982), the constant search for solutions to this crisis of overaccumulation “produced the step-by-step construction” of our current global food system (Friedmann, 1982: 259). The international debt crisis provided a decisive opening for IFIs to impose a neoliberal agenda of open capital accounts, free trade and privatisation on highly-indebted poor countries (Razavi, 2003). Attached as conditions to loans, developing governments were forced, through the mechanisms of the World Bank and IMF’s SAPs, to reduce public spending and privatise national assets as a way of servicing foreign debt. As David Harvey (2003) suggests, with the rise of neoliberalism “assets previously held by the state or in common were released into the market where overaccumulating capital could invest in them, upgrade them, and speculate in them” (Harvey, 2003: 158). Coupled with the rapid removal of barriers to trade, this opened up new markets as an outlet for international capital and goods, which helped to moderate the

overaccumulation problem (Harvey, 2003). It is within this framework that the way in which food security was framed and conceptualised began to shift. No longer was the state to be intimately involved in the protection of agricultural production and the provision of food security for the poor. Instead, food security became defined as synonymous with open markets, private entrepreneurship and liberalised international trade.

Paving the Way for Crisis?: Neoliberalism, Hunger and the Global Food System

Privatising in full stream and getting more hungry by the day (Balogun, as cited in Davis, 2006: 152).

The rise of neoliberalism in the 1980s has had significant and deep-rooted impacts on the shape and structure of the current global food system, as well as the dominant development policies employed to address rising instances of food insecurity and hunger in the global South (Patnaik, 1996; Oya, 2004; Davis, 2006; McMichael, 2007a). Unlike the previous development agenda of the 1960s and 1970s, which emphasised food self-sufficiency as a central responsibility of the state, food security became increasingly associated with the smooth operation of global food markets (Bernstein, 2005; McMichael, 2007a). This in turn reflected a wider shift in dominant development policy, which conceptualised poverty reduction and economic growth as intimately connected to national participation in global free-market processes. Food security was now coupled with the concept of accelerated growth in agricultural productivity. This was to be achieved not through any investment or involvement of the state, but through the rapid liberalisation of national markets (Patnaik, 2004). Developing countries were to shift their attention away from the production of staple foods for domestic supply, to the promotion of high value cash crops for export on a global scale (McMichael, 2000; McMichael, 2007a; Harrigan, 2008).

Self-sufficiency was now viewed as an unwanted and inefficient concept of the past. Food security was to be achieved through the opening up of markets to an influx of cheaper food imports from the North. Governments were to shift their attention on

fostering healthy environments for the development of the private sector and economic growth; leaving the provision of food for the hungry to the market (McMichael, 2007a; Harrigan, 2008; Bello, 2008a). This ideology was most clearly demonstrated by US Agricultural Secretary John Block in 1986 when he announced that, “the idea that developing countries should feed themselves is an anachronism from a bygone era. They could better ensure their food security by relying on US agricultural products, which are available in most cases at lower cost” (as cited in Bello, 2008a: 452).

Neoliberalism’s tenuous relationship with food security and agricultural development was most clearly demonstrated in the World Bank’s Berg report on African agriculture, published in 1981, as well as the organisations 1982 *World Development Report* (Havnevik et al., 2007; Owusu, 2003; Oya, 2004). As one of neoliberalism’s most fervent enforcers, these reports established a framework for the pervasive implementation of neoliberal agricultural reforms throughout the 1980s onwards (Oya, 2004). Within these publications state interventions in agriculture, particularly in the form of state parastatal marketing boards and producer subsidies, were framed as the primary obstacle to increasing agricultural productivity and economic growth. The removal of these policies was seen as fundamental to the reduction of fiscal deficits and public spending, a goal perceived as central to macroeconomic reforms (Oya, 2004). Stagnant and deteriorating economic growth, skyrocketing debt, and uncompetitive agriculture were perceived as the consequence of price distortions within local economies. These were believed to have resulted predominantly from inappropriate government policy interventions and state failure (Walton and Seddon, 1994; Owusu, 2003). Blame was placed entirely on internal government failures. Notably absent was any acknowledgement of wider global economic shocks resulting from the oil crises of 1973-74, or the growing debt crisis which had had devastating impacts on developing countries balance of trade (Havnevik et al., 2007; Oya, 2004). Rendered invisible were the significant improvements in productivity, and food security, which had resulted from the implementation of agricultural subsidies by many developing governments (Havnevik et al., 2007).

Overall neoliberal agricultural reforms were characterised by a two-pronged policy approach. The first was aimed at the deregulation and liberalisation of agricultural markets, and the other towards the removal of any kind of direct state support for farmers (Oya, 2004: 7). SAPs, which can be seen as the operational manifestation of this wider agenda, were implemented throughout developing countries in the name of ‘getting the prices right.’ This is a call which became the defining mantra of the neoliberal agenda for agricultural development in the global South (Bryceson, 2002; Oya, 2004). It was to be achieved through the rolling back of state involvement in agriculture production, thus unleashing the productive potential of previously stifled private entrepreneurs (Oya, 2004). It was widely believed that preceding state involvement in the economy had only served to repress the competitive nature of small holder and ‘peasant’ farmers. Removing these barriers, through the rolling back of the state, would ostensibly enable peasants to fully participate in commodity, capital, land and labour markets. This in turn would ostensibly enable poor farmers to compete their way out of poverty (Oya, 2004; Havnevik et al., 2007). Constructing rural farmers in this way- as competitive, individualised and private market actors- largely removed them from the complex, culturally diverse and historically specific agrarian structures of which they were part. Rural populations were viewed as a predominantly “homogeneous mass of atomised peasant farmers, who, in the absence of policy distortions, would behave like competitive firms in almost perfectly competitive markets” (Oya, 2004: 3; see also Havnevik et al., 2004).

The emphasis on privatisation and market liberalisation within the neoliberal movement placed the goal of ‘enclosure of the commons’ at the very heart of government policy. All productive assets previously held by the state, or in commons, were now laid bare and opened up for the increased speculation and commodification of overaccumulating international capital (Harvey, 2003). Based on these central tenants, the World Bank and IMF (with the support of large bilateral donors) implemented a plethora of neoliberal agricultural reforms throughout the developing world, in an attempt to transform the global food industry into the neoliberal ideal. Wading in unmanageable foreign debt, developing countries had little alternative but to follow orthodox prescriptions (Oya, 2004). In adopting these reforms, governments were required to implement massive reductions in social spending on food and other

basic necessities, as a way of freeing up government revenue for debt servicing (Patnaik, 1996; Walton and Seddon, 1994). Other policies included the rapid deregulation and liberalisation of trade, opening up domestic markets and resources to private capital; the overall dismantling of state protection mechanisms, such as food and agricultural subsidies; significant currency devaluations, in an attempt to increase the competitiveness of local exports; the elimination of parastatal marketing boards; as well as significant reductions in wages in the hope of increasing the competitiveness of local labour on global scale (Oya, 2004; Patel, 2007; Patnaik, 1996; Walton and Seddon, 1994).

Though the timing and intensity of the implementation of these reforms may have varied from country to country, the devastating impacts of these policies on agricultural development, food security, and the poor have manifested themselves in very similar ways throughout the developing world (Harvey, 2003; Bello, 2008b). The integration of developing countries into an increasingly globalised capitalist agricultural system has transformed previously self-sufficient economies into countries dependent on imports; resulting in the steady marginalisation and dispossession of farmers and the poor (Harvey, 2003; Bryceson, 2002). While international financial institutions (IFIs) forced poorer countries to lower their barriers to an ever increasing influx of international capital and trade, wealthy nations continue to swaddle their farmers in a thick wall of protection; pumping billions of dollars into agricultural subsidies and import restrictions every year (Harvey, 2003; McMichael, 2000; Bello, 2008a).

These inequities were institutionalised with the signing of the World Trade Organisation's (WTO) Agreement on Agriculture (AoA) in 1995. Under its provisions, developing countries are required to deepen their reliance on cheap, and highly subsidised, Northern food commodities by further opening their agricultural markets to trade. This is to be coupled with the banning of all import quotas and the removal of any form of government subsidy or support for farmers (Bello, 2007; McMichael, 2006; Madeley, 2000; Gordon, 2008; Menezes, 2001). Most importantly, the agreement demands that no country raises its level of agricultural protection above what they were in 1993. As a consequence, wealthy countries which already had extensive protections in place have been able to keep their defences, while developing countries are unable to

increase their own protections to anywhere near the same levels (Madeley, 2000; Bello, 2007). Rather than making any dent in European Union or United States agricultural subsidies, levels of Western subsidisation have significantly increased since the implementation of the AoA (Bello, 2007; Madeley, 2000). Subsidies provided by OECD member states rose from \$182 billion in 1995 to almost \$300 billion in 2005. This accounts for an estimated “40 percent of the value of production in the European Union and 25 percent in the United States” (Bello, 2008a: 20; see also Madeley, 2000). Rising Western subsidisation has also corresponded to an increase in developing country food imports, with import levels in 1995-99 far exceeding those in 1990-94.²⁵ Small holder farmers in the global South are often required to survive on less than \$400 a year, while farmers in the US and Europe “receive, respectively, an average of \$21,000 and \$16,000 a year in subsidies” (Bello, 2007: 3).

This “one-two punch” of IFI-implemented structural adjustment, coupled with WTO mandated liberalisation, has led to the overwhelming erosion of national food self-sufficiency and the displacement of millions of farmers worldwide (Bello, 2008a: 19). David Harvey (2003) has defined this as ‘accumulation by dispossession,’ where global market forces, working through the mechanisms of structural adjustment, expropriate the rural poor in order to enable the “consolidation of corporate agriculture” and capital accumulation (Harvey, 2003: 159). The contemporary global food system, characterised by economic liberalisation, persistently pushes “small farmers into an expanding circuit of casual labour, flexibly employed when employed at all” (McMichael, 2006: 409). Vulnerability to food insecurity has increased significantly in both rural and urban settings. This can be seen as resulting from liberalisation which increases market uncertainty and food price volatility, which negatively impacts both producers and net food importers (Oya, 2004). Highly efficient and subsidised Northern imports have completely overwhelmed local production in the South, forcing millions of rural labourers and producers to abandon their land, augmenting an ever-growing “pool of unemployed in already overcrowded cities” (Harvey, 2003: 160). This has resulted in what Deborah Bryceson (2002) defines as the ‘depeasantisation’ or ‘semi-proletarianisation’ of the developing world, relating to the “phasing out of a

²⁵ This is based on a study of fourteen countries conducted by the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) (Bello, 2008b).

whole mode of production to make the countryside a more congenial site for intensive capital accumulation” (as cited in Bello, 2008a: 453; see also Bryceson, 2002).

In Mexico for example, following the adoption of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), nearly two million *campesinos* have been displaced from their land as a result of huge influxes of highly subsidised US corn (McMichael, 2007a: 175; see also McMichael, 2006; Harvey, 2003). The flood of US corn which poured into Mexican markets after the adoption of this agreement reduced the price of local corn by half; “plunging the corn sector into chronic crisis” (Bello, 2008a: 451). This has largely contributed to the transformation of the Mexican economy from one of self-sufficiency to one of dependence on US imports (Bello, 2008a). The Philippines has a similar story. Once completely food self-sufficient, with warehouses full of state controlled rice stocks, the Philippines is now the world’s largest rice importer (Bello, 2008a). IMF and World Bank imposed agricultural reforms have completely gutted local agricultural productivity. In the name of redirecting government revenue to debt-servicing, public spending on agriculture, including farming supports, input subsidies and infrastructure spending, has been reduced by half (Bello, 2008a). This was coupled with increased trade liberalisation which further undermined local production. The incorporation of the Philippines into the WTO in 1995, meant even further reductions in agricultural protections, resulting in the decline of agricultural employment from 11.2 million in 1994 to 10.8 million in 2001 (Harvey, 2003).

These effects have been paralleled throughout the developing world as rampant neoliberal policies, in the name of ‘food security’ and ‘development’, have up-rooted and displaced rural communities in one country after another (Harvey, 2003; Patnaik, 2003; Bello, 2008a). Cheap imports and lack of government protections are displacing thousands of rural producers in countries such as Taiwan, Japan, Sri Lanka, Brazil and Indonesia, to name a few (Tabb, 2008; Harvey, 2003). In India, collapses in rural livelihoods and income has resulted in rapid and severe reductions in household food consumption, with an average household consuming 76kgs less in 2003 than they were in 1998²⁶ (Bello, 2007). In China, it is estimated that more than half a billion people

²⁶Collapsing local prices and increased market volatility is believed to have led to a sharp increase in farmer suicides in some rural Indian communities. This has been particularly apparent in the Indian state of Andhra

will be forced into cities over the next ten years, as rural agricultural employment diminishes (Harvey, 2003).

Liberalisation policies imposed on developing countries were coupled with substantial reductions in government and donor spending in agriculture throughout the 1980s and 1990s. Informed by an unmovable belief in the positive power of markets to promote development, reductions in spending were championed on the basis of allowing the private sector to stimulate the countryside and foster growth (Bello, 2008). As a consequence, agricultural policy and funding has been significantly neglected by governments, the donor community and IFIs over the last 30 years (as cited in Sundaram, 2008b). Donor assistance and aid for agriculture decreased by half in the 25 years after 1980, with the total share of development aid directed to agriculture falling from 17 to 3 percent over this period (Sundaram, 2008b: 3). This has significantly eroded agricultural capacity throughout developing countries, exacerbating the undermining of agriculture productivity while deepening rural poverty and unemployment (Havnevik, et al., 2007).

A primary target of IFI agricultural reforms was the dismantling of state run marketing boards and other parastatal enterprises which maintained grain reserves (Patel, 2007; Tabb, 2008; Rosset, 2009; Oya, 2004). This was ironic given that the World Bank had worked so hard throughout the 1970s to develop and support such institutions; demonstrating the monumental shift in policy direction experienced by the Bank throughout this period (Patel, 2004). Marketing boards were established as a way of ensuring stable and predictable prices for farmers for important agricultural commodities. They were also often part of wider national strategies to increase food security through the guaranteeing of local food supplies. Through these institutions, governments would typically purchase commodities from producers at a fixed price; high enough to ensure farmers could cover their costs and achieve a profit (Patel, 2007). IFI insistence on the dismantling or privatisation of marketing boards, coupled with increased trade liberalisation, has left developing countries extremely vulnerable to import surges, exposing local food production to “unfair competitive pressure from

Pradesh, with farmer suicides rising from 233 in 1998 to over 2,600 in 2006 (Bello, 2007). According to Walden Bello (2007) it is estimated that “some 100,000 farmers in India have taken their lives owing to collapsing prices stemming from rising imports” (Bello, 2007: *no page number*).

international markets” (Shafaeddin, 2008: 1; see also Tabb, 2008). These reforms have significantly increased local food price volatility, in turn increasing the vulnerability to food insecurity of both food producers and consumers (Oya, 2004; Patel, 2007). With states no longer able to moderate food prices, they are unable to provide protections for the vulnerable, thus forcing the poor to take the brunt of international food commodity boom and busts (Oya, 2004).

Furthermore, an increasing reliance on the self-regulating market as a means of ensuring food security has led to the significant decline in national grain reserves over the last 20 years (Moyo, 2008). According to Peter Rosset (2009), dwindling food stocks have meant that we are now faced with “one of the tightest margins in recent history between food reserves and demand, which generates both rising prices and greater market volatility” (Rosset, 2009: 190; see also Moyo, 2008). Grain reserves have been a central element in healthy and functioning food systems for decades, helping to ameliorate people’s vulnerability to food price fluctuations and volatility (Gordon, 2008; Rosset, 2009). When food prices are high, governments are able to release grain into the market, averting hunger by keeping prices low. In addition, if food prices drop, reserves are able to purchase surplus grains, protecting local farmers through the creation of better prices. However, current food inventories have been increasingly concentrated in the hands of the private sector. In particular, they are predominantly dominated by large transnational corporations which tend to “behave in an inverse fashion to the public sector when crises emerge” (Rosset, 2009: 190). In many cases, global capital has produced the same uncompetitive practises that marketing boards were accused of perpetuating (Oya, 2004: 10). This has been most clearly demonstrated in the recent global food price crisis. With food prices on the rise, speculators have been able to withhold or ‘hoard’ food from the market, artificially driving up food prices to increase their own profits at the expense of the poor (Rosset, 2009; Gordon, 2008).

The ever-increasing ‘borderlessness’ of international finance capital, and consequent increased speculation on food commodities, has been a major contributing factor in recent food price spikes and volatility. Free market fundamentalism, which privileged the wonders of open markets and capital mobility, led to the proliferation of policies

designed to deregulate agricultural commodity markets throughout the 1980s onwards. This has contributed to the wider Polanyian disembedding of global finance capital from the regulatory boundaries and constraints of the state (McMichael, 2006; Harvey, 2003; Gordon, 2008; IATP, 2008). Deregulation policies gradually “loosened oversight of complex commodity derivatives and created loopholes for large speculators, allowing them to trade virtually unlimited amounts of corn, wheat and other food futures” (Stewart and Waldie, 2008: *no page number*). Volatile food markets and recent unprecedented price spikes can be seen as a direct consequence of this deregulation, as global capital has become increasingly stateless, mobile and uncontrolled (Rosset, 2009; Gordon, 2008; McMichael, 2006). Historically, trading in food commodity futures has been extensively regulated, limiting the amount of agricultural products, such as corn, wheat and soybeans, which can be traded by investors outside of the food industry ²⁷(Stewart and Waldie, 2008). However, neoliberal policies opening up trade in agriculture, coupled with ongoing financial deregulation, have paved the way for substantial increases in private sector speculation in global food markets.

Hedge, risk and index funds, as well as the US and Canada’s growing baby boomer pension and retirement plans, have been increasingly investing capital in futures markets for commodities such as grains and other food products (Rosset, 2009). It is estimated that the amount of “fund money invested in commodity indexes has climbed from US \$13 billion in 2003 to a staggering \$260 billion in March 2008” (Stewart and Waldie, 2008: *no page number*). This increased speculation has been one of the leading factors in recent soaring food commodity prices and rising hunger. With the collapse of the United States sub-prime mortgage bubble in 2007, investors, desperate for safer and more reliable places to direct their investments, rapidly poured capital into agricultural commodity futures, dramatically driving up food prices (Rosset, 2009; Dossani, 2008). According to Peter Rosset (2009), “these funds injected an additional 70 billion dollars of extra investment into commodities, inflating a price bubble that has pushed the cost of basic foodstuffs beyond the reach of the poor in country after country” (Rosset, 2009: 191; see also Stewart and Waldie, 2008).

²⁷ As Stewart and Waldie (2008) suggest, this was to prevent “manipulation and distortion in what are relatively small markets, while at the same time allowing for a small amount of speculative activity, in order to provide liquidity for trading” (Stewart and Waldie, 2008, *no page number*).

Neoliberalism has successfully integrated developing countries into a globalised food system in which export-orientated production is increasingly concentrated in the hands of just a few corporate elite (Bello, 2008a; Patel, 2007; Tabb, 2008). As Gretchen Gordon (2008) suggests, the deregulation of global agriculture has effectively replaced “local market access for the majority of small holders, with global market access for a few global producers” (Gordon, 2008). This is demonstrated by the fact that the majority of global grain trading is now controlled by just three large corporations- Bunge, Cargill and Archer Daniels Midland- with more than one-fifth of the global seed market dominated by Monsanto (Gordon, 2008; Patel, 2007). Further, only six corporations control three-quarters of the world’s pesticide market, while in Peru, for example, just one transnational corporation dominates 80 percent of the countries milk production (Patel, 2007).

This concentration in market power is directly related to trade and financial liberalisation. Neoliberal policies employed to devalue local currencies, coupled with the opening up of domestic economies, enabled large foreign companies to be able to take control of substantial segments of developing markets (Patel, 2007). Wealthy companies, employing US dollars, were able to buy up local businesses for next to nothing, significantly undermining local ownership and control (Patel, 2007). Blind faith in the power of free-markets to efficiently allocate resources continues to justify the implementation of these reforms, despite their obvious negative effects. There is little to no recognition on the part of IFIs of the impacts of unequal market and political power on increasing market monopolisation. Instead, the World Bank blames what it has defined as ‘barriers to access’ preventing small and medium producers from participating in international markets, obfuscating structural inequalities and relations of power (World Bank, 2006a; Patel, 2007).

To Market, to Market: Dominant Policy Responses to Rising Food Insecurity

Neoliberalism’s relationship with agriculture over the last 30 years can be seen as epitomising Polanyi’s concept of the disembedding and destructive nature of unregulated global capitalism (McMichael, 2006; Polanyi, 2001). The 2008 food crisis

and substantial increases in hunger the world over, can be seen as a direct consequence of the subordination of social relations to market processes. As Moyo (2008) asserts local and regional “food and agriculture policies have become perversely embedded into the vagaries of the global financial, commodity (especially oil) and food markets” (Moyo, 2008: 3). While espousing the rhetoric of poverty reduction and food security, IFIs have championed the disembedding of food markets from the regulatory boundaries of the state. This has paved the way for the increased, unfettered penetration of unregulated market forces into social relations of food production and consumption. The current food crisis clearly demonstrates the negative impacts of this on the worlds most vulnerable. The severing of food markets from state control has made the threat of food insecurity even more imposing, with the regulation of global food trade now far removed from the control of those countries involved in it (Menezes, 2001). Rather than creating an equal and efficient global food system, neoliberalism has resulted predominantly in the entrenchment of unequal capitalist relations of power throughout the developing world. Rising food insecurity, and the increasing concentration of power in global agricultural markets, is evidence of the myth that is the “equilibrium-seeking, self-corrective mechanism of the market” (Halliday, 2008: *no page number*).

Despite continuing evidence to the contrary, food security continues to be linked to, and subsumed within, the development and growth of global free-market capitalism. Private sector development and uninhibited international trade continues to be championed as the most effective and necessary way to ensure food security for the poor. This was demonstrated most clearly in recent publications by the World Bank (2009) and Asian Development Bank (2008b). In response to food price increases, these documents outline several predominantly market-lead prescriptions deemed central to moderating the impacts of high prices on the poor (World Bank, 2009a; ADB, 2008b). Significantly discouraged throughout these reports is any direct state intervention in the provision of food for the vulnerable, particularly in the form of bread and grain subsidies. The World Bank deplores recent 2008 efforts by Pakistan to implement a ration card system as a means of distributing subsidised wheat. These food subsidies are described as resulting only in high fiscal costs and market inefficiency, while acting as apparent disincentives for domestic production (World

Bank, 2009a, 4; ADB, 2008b; IMF, 2008c). While there is a definite acknowledgement of the need for state-funded food provisions in times of crisis, such as conditional cash payments, food aid distributions or food-for-work schemes, these measures are to be temporary and resorted to only in particularly exceptional circumstances (World Bank, 2009). Throughout these reports, policies aimed at lowering or stabilising domestic food prices, such as temporary bans or increased taxation on exports or the reinvigoration of national food and grain reserves, are also largely dismissed.

Many countries have in fact implemented export tariffs and bans in response to rising food prices, in an attempt to protect local farmers, foster domestic production and stabilise local prices. These policies are often put in place as a way of moderating the seemingly incongruous situation of exporting staple foods while local people continue to go hungry. However, labelled as ‘beggar-thy-neighbour’ policies by the ADB, dominant development institutions are increasingly attributing protections such as these with further exacerbating the impacts of the crisis²⁸ (ADB, 2008b, 7; IMF, 2008). Paradoxically, neoliberalism over the last 30 years has created a global system in which the protective measures in one country can have severe impacts in another. However, rather than questioning such a system- which prevents poor countries from being able to protect their poor and vulnerable without furthering the vulnerability of others- IFIs seek to further entrench the poor within this very structure.

Neoliberal free-market policies, which have directly contributed to the current crisis, continue to be unquestioningly promoted as its primary solution. As will be discussed in more detail in Chapter Four, rather than protecting the vulnerable from market failures IFIs continue to champion the further incorporation of developing countries and the poor into global free-market processes (World Bank, 2009a; ADB, 2008b). Developing governments are being encouraged to reduce tariffs and taxes on the importing of staple foods, ostensibly allowing global commodity markets to provide for the poor (World Bank, 2009a; World Bank, 2008c; ADB, 2008b). As the World Bank President Robert Zoellick recently declared, “if ever there is a time to cut distorting agricultural subsidies and open markets for food imports, it must be now”

²⁸ For example, India’s recent attempts at rebuilding their domestic rice stocks are believed to have contributed to food unaffordability in other countries dependent on its imports (Angus, 2008).

(World Bank, 2008d, *no page number*). Global commodity markets are to be ‘kept open,’ with governments focusing on creating a “well functioning global trading system” based on the removal of infant industry protections, food subsidies and tariffs (World Bank, 2008c: 1; see also IMF 2008c). According to the World Bank (2009), “policy responses that seek to control markets through mandated grain prices, export restrictions, forcible procurement, or direct government involvement in marketing activities are likely to lower the food supply response over the medium term” (World Bank, 2009a).

Focusing on agriculture for the first time in 25 years, the World Bank’s *2008 World Development Report: Agriculture for Development* (WDR) has been viewed by many as representing a welcome shift in the organisation’s relationship with rural development (Murphy and Santarius, 2007; World Bank, 2007b). However, while certainly nuanced the ideological assumption that trade liberalisation and private sector development will lead to poverty alleviation remains a central theme (World Bank, 2007b; Bretton Woods Project, 2007; Murphy and Santarius, 2007). While agricultural development is emphasised as essential to poverty reduction, liberalised national markets remain the primary mechanism for the achievement of this goal (Havnevik et al., 2007). Countries which have adopted a neoliberal model are particularly championed, and held up as examples of the possibilities of unfettered free-markets and trade (Patel, 2007: 10). While the differing impacts of trade liberalisation across, and within, countries is acknowledged, this is overshadowed by the continuing and incongruous assertion that markets must be opened and liberalised (Murphy and Santarius, 2007). Unequal power relations inherent in the global food system, particularly in the form of market concentration and the dominance of transnational corporations, are consistently dismissed and undermined. Rather than proposing solutions which would actually curb and regulate the power of multinational firms and increase corporate accountability, the 2008 WDR encourages corporate social responsibility and the increased incorporation of small enterprises into global markets. The emphasis is on the implementation of policies which avoid any actual government involvement in regulating capitalism (Murphy and Santarius, 2007; World Bank 2007b).

While the WDR claims to champion the plight of small holder farmers and rural labourers, this is embedded within the contradictory “conviction that large-scale commercial farming is the inevitable future” of agriculture in the developing world (Havnevik et al., 2007: 57; see also Murphy and Santarius, 2007). Commentators have in fact described the WDR 2008 as a practical framework for the transformation of rural communities into large scale hubs of agro-industrial commercial farming (see Bello, 2008; Bryceson, 2002; Patel, 2007). Adopting a matter-of-fact approach, the World Bank suggests that although small farmers may be productive they are also uncompetitive on a global scale. It is implicitly assumed that they will eventually need to abandon agriculture, instead working as wage labourers or contractors in large agro-industrial firms. As clearly demonstrated in the following WDR 2008 section:

Production is mainly by smallholders, who often remain the most efficient producers, in particular when supported by their organisations. But when those organisations cannot capture economies of scale in production and marketing, labour-intensive commercial farming can be a better form of production, and efficient and fair labour markets are the key instruments in reducing rural poverty (World Bank, 2007b: 8).

This position significantly contradicts any professed concern for the welfare of rural communities. Rather than protecting the poor, the World Bank (2007b) is championing a development trajectory which seeks to further displace and uproot small holders from their land and livelihoods, instead making space for the increased speculation of global capital. As Havnevik and colleagues (2007) suggest, “beneath the WDR’s public relations spin about poverty alleviation, they are conferring *carte blanche* support to a ‘survival of the fittest’ economic trajectory,” where small producers are pitted against the “grossly imbalanced commercial interests” of multinational corporations, large scale agribusiness and highly subsidised northern producers (Havnevik et al., 2007: 58). This report refuses to acknowledge the historically devastating social, political and economic impacts of its previous neoliberal policy prescriptions. Instead, legitimised through its apparent commitment to poverty reduction, the World Bank continues to promote policies which it openly admits will result in the large scale redundancy of

small scale producers throughout the developing world (Havnevik et al., 2007; Murphy and Santarius, 2007; World Bank, 2007b).

Moving away from previous policies demanding the complete and absolute removal of the state from agriculture, the 2008 WDR acknowledges the importance of the “visible hand” of government in the provision of social services and “desirable social outcomes” (World Bank, 2007b: 2). However, as discussed in Chapter Two, this involvement is constrained and limited in particular ways. Coupled with ensuring increased market liberalisation, the function of the state is seen as creating an enabling institutional environment for the smooth and efficient functioning of market processes. As the WDR asserts, governments are to:

correct market failures, regulate competition, and engage strategically in public-private partnerships to promote competitiveness in the agribusiness sector and support the greater inclusion of smallholders and rural workers (World Bank, 2007b: 8).

Markets continue to be conceptualised as the central mechanism for poverty reduction and food security, with the state to play a supporting role. Although there is a definite recognition of the need for the state to protect the poor, this is contradictory given that it is coupled with an unrelenting faith in the supremacy of global free-market capitalism. Direct interventions in markets such as income redistribution policies, infant industry protections, and food subsidies remain strictly of the table for debate. Social protections involve the provision of certain social services and public goods, while avoiding any real state involvement, or interference, in wider market processes.

Interestingly, despite the acknowledgement by most that hunger is largely connected to people’s inability to access food, implicit Malthusian notions of scarcity and food production continue to dominate discussions of food insecurity. New technology as a means of increasing food production remains the most commonly proposed solution to the current food crisis (Angus, 2008). In 2008 for example, World Bank President Robert Zoellick called for “a ‘new deal’ to combat world hunger and malnutrition through a combination of emergency aid and long-term efforts to boost agricultural

productivity in developing countries” (World Bank, 2008: *no page number*). Similarly, the International Rice Research Institute (IRRI), based in Manila, is initiating public-private partnerships “to increase rice production across Asia via the accelerated development and introduction of hybrid rice technologies” (IRRI, 2008: *no page number*; see also Angus, 2008).²⁹ One could argue that this focus on increasing production relates to the way in which the causes of the current food crisis are conceptualised. As discussed above, rather than exploring the inequalities inherent in the global food system, the food crisis is predominantly conceptualised as a result of variabilities in global supply and demand. As a consequence, woven throughout many responses to the food crisis is the implicit assumption that once supply and demand imbalances are rectified food security will even out. This continues to be informed by the underlying belief in the equalising hand of the market to effectively provide food for the poor.

As has been demonstrated above, it cannot be denied that an increased focus on agricultural production in low-income countries is an important development issue. However, it is the direction of this focus which is problematic. Narrowly focusing on technological advancement as a means of increasing food production largely obfuscates wider political economic factors and unequal relations of power which are integral to the perpetuation of hunger and the current crisis. Furthermore, the production of food commodities for export in international markets continues to be problematically privileged over any real concern for providing food for the domestic consumption of the poor. Implicit assumptions of food scarcity, in a world characterised by abundance, effectively depoliticises food insecurity, reducing issues of hunger to a technical rather than social and political problem. As will be discussed in Chapter Three, this depoliticisation sets up a framework for particular kinds of technical and apolitical interventions, which continue to sustain and perpetuate global liberal governance while maintaining vulnerability to hunger (Ferguson, 1990; Edkins, 2000).

²⁹Another clear example can be seen in the goals of the Alliance for a Green Revolution in Africa, funded by both the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation and the Rockefeller Foundation. This organisation aims to produce more “productive and resilient varieties of Africa’s major food crops” in an attempt to intensify small-holder production, as well as increasing reliability and diversity (as cited in Angus, 2008: *no page number*)>

Alternatives to the Current Food System and the Rise of Food Sovereignty

The 2008 food crisis is not the first time the world has experienced such food price spikes. However, neoliberalism has shaped our global food system in such a way that governments are no longer able to provide food or protection for the most vulnerable in times of need. As the myriad of recent food riots and protests would suggest, the impacts of neoliberalism on poverty and food insecurity are being increasingly met with opposition and contestation from organisations around the world (Desmarais, 2002; Patel, 2005; Bello, 2007; Tabb, 2008). *La Via Campesina*, which emerged in 1993, has risen to become one of the leading global peasant and farming movements in opposition to our current food system. It incorporates differing organisations, peasants, small farmers, agricultural labourers, rural women and indigenous communities from around the world (Menezes, 2001; Rosset, 2008). Emerging in direct opposition to neoliberalism, *La Via Campesina*- directly translated as the peasant's path- has been accredited with the development of the food sovereignty approach; a movement which is gaining increasing ascendancy within the context of the current global food crisis.³⁰ The concept of food sovereignty offers a sophisticated attempt at creating a comprehensive, in-depth and localised alternative to the current global food system (Patel, 2005; McMichael, 2006). At its core, it champions the right of governments to be able to maintain and develop their own food and agricultural policies, while “producing the staple foods of its peoples, respecting productive and cultural diversity” (Menezes, 2001: 30; Patel, 2005). In contrast to the one-size-fits-all agricultural prescriptions which continue to dominate development policy, food sovereignty offers a “vision of an international agricultural economy composed of diverse national agricultural economies trading with one another but focused primarily on domestic production” (Bello, 2008: 454).

The food sovereignty paradigm calls for a return to the protection of national food production. Governments should be able to protect their vulnerable from both the dumping of artificially cheap foods, which undermine local production, and against the

³⁰ The suicide of Korean farmer Lee Kyung Hae, at the WTO's 5th Ministerial Conference in Cancun in 2003, brought Via Campesina to international attention. Hae, a member of Via Campesina, committed suicide under a banner which read 'WTO Kills Farmers,' highlighting the increasing number of farmer suicides in poor rural communities around the globe, believed to be resulting from the devastating impacts of neoliberal inspired liberalisation in rural communities (Bello, 2008).

artificially expensive foods we are currently encountering; largely as a result of deregulated global food commodity markets and speculator hoarding (Rosset, 2008; Bello, 2008). Overall, it champions an alternative understanding of food security. Rather than subordinated to market processes and trade, the material needs of the world's population should be "embedded in ecological principles of cooperative production relations and forms of agroecology" (McMichael, 2006: 414). Food sovereignty calls for the reconsolidation and protection of small-holder agriculture, which would mean the rebuilding of state run marketing boards, food and grain reserves and infant industry protections (Rosset, 2008). It also campaigns for the end of the Agreement on Trade Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights, or TRIPS, which allows corporations to patent plant seeds; a move towards more sustainable agricultural processes, which includes the rejection of the use of genetically modified foods and harmful agro-chemicals; equitable and redistributive land reform policies; and the increased regulation, and significant removal, of the involvement of transnational corporations and the private sector in national and international food systems (Rosset, 2008; Bello, 2008). Ultimately, it is a call to re-politicise food insecurity; to be achieved through an acknowledgement of the unequal relations of power inherent in the current food system and by placing the needs of the world's food insecure above those of the market and international trade.

Concluding Section

Rising hunger and skyrocketing food prices can be seen first and foremost as a result of market failure. Yet it is free-markets and liberalised international trade which continue to be championed as the primary solution for hunger in the developing world. The recent global food crisis is a particularly salient demonstration of the dislocating and disruptive impacts of unregulated free-market capitalism on developing country agriculture, poverty, and food security. The dominance of neoliberalism, championing free-trade, deregulated international markets and export-orientated growth, has patterned our global food system and vulnerability to hunger in very particular ways. Imposed in the name of poverty reduction and economic growth, neoliberal reforms have undermined local productivity, employment and food self-sufficiency, while

exacerbating inequality and poverty in one low-income country after another. Promoting the rolling back of government involvement in agriculture, neoliberalism has created a global system in which the poor are increasingly vulnerable to market volatility and failure, and yet the states capacity to protect them has been consistently undermined.

The purpose of this chapter was to re-politicise and re-contextualise rising food insecurity. It has situated hunger within a broader historical, political and economic context, often largely obscured with current development policy. While it is high prices that have characterised the current food crisis, it has been an ongoing trend of low prices and increased market volatility which has devastated rural communities throughout the developing world. Both the current high prices and longer term low prices can be seen as a consequence of neoliberal market liberalisation, deregulation and state retrenchment policies. In this way, rising food prices can be seen as further exacerbating what was already a significant crisis of worldwide hunger and inequality, with skyrocketing food prices impacting the vulnerable in already devastated communities. Examining the globality of neoliberalism and its impacts on food security has established a useful contextual and analytical framework for the exploration of approaches to food security in Cambodia. The following chapter will explore the way in which approaches to rising food security are approached within the localised context of Cambodia's PRSP, looking particularly at the way this continues to be informed by, and perpetuates, wider 'inclusive' liberal dominance.

CHAPTER FOUR: POVERTY REDUCTION AND FOOD SECURITY IN CAMBODIA

“At the World Bank, we believe that trade plays an important role in the fight against poverty. It creates the potential for higher economic growth and employment. By helping the Government to increase trade and employment in trading sectors, all development partners contributing to this program will help Cambodians enjoy better lives” (World Bank, 2009b).

Cambodia, like most countries in South East Asia, has not been exempt from the impact of rapidly rising food prices and hunger. Considered one of the poorest countries in South East Asia, Cambodia has one of the highest rates of malnutrition in the region. This is despite the fact that the country has been producing a rice surplus of around 2 million tons for export every year (CARD, 2008). Despite claims to increased poverty reduction and economic growth over the last decade, inequality throughout the country is rising rapidly and deprivation continues to dominate the lives of millions. This has been further exacerbated by skyrocketing food prices, pushing food and much needed nutrition out of the reach of many. It is within this context that I will begin to explore some of the complexities of the PRSP framework and its relationship to food security in the country. Adopted in 2006, Cambodia’s current PRSP, the National Strategic Development Plan (NSDP), can be seen as an important national tool through which approaches to food insecurity and poverty reduction are framed. The purpose of this chapter is to tease apart some of the complex and non-linear connections between the PRSP approach, rising food insecurity and liberal governance. Like large puzzle pieces, I will use the Cambodian experience as a way of demonstrating the interconnected and mutually reinforcing nature of these issues; situating local food insecurity within a wider political economy and policy context. In doing so, I hope to illuminate the way in which approaches to poverty reduction, inequality and hunger remain firmly embedded within a wider ‘inclusive’ liberal approach to development.

After outlining the poverty and food security situation in Cambodia, this chapter will critically examine the way in which hunger is framed and conceptualised within the NSDP framework and surrounding policy documents. In this manner, I hope to

capture some of the complex interplay between the local and the global, thereby addressing the way in which ‘inclusive’ liberalism manifests itself in particular ways within Cambodia’s policy discourse and practice. As we will see, while development policy is increasingly linked to concepts of empowerment, inclusion and pro-poor growth, it remains centered around the belief in the power of liberalized free-market capitalism to pull people out of poverty. This, coupled with the ongoing failure to recognize unequal relations of power, undermines any real commitment to poverty reduction and food security for Cambodia’s most vulnerable.

Dimensions of Poverty in Cambodia

Cambodia is one of the poorest countries in South East Asia (Beresford et al., 2004; Hughes, 2006). Out of a population of around 14.1 million, it is estimated that 4.5 million live in conditions of poverty, with one in every five falling below the food-poverty line³¹ (Ballard et al., 2004; World Bank, 2006a). Attempting to gain an overall picture of the poverty situation in Cambodia is difficult. Up until now, household surveys and attempts to gain poverty estimates throughout the country have been marred by a lack of comparability, with differences in geographical coverage,³² conflicting methodologies and inconsistent sample sizes making it difficult to interpret national estimates produced since 1993 in “any meaningful comparative way” (Beresford et al., 2004: 21). Reports produced by the World Bank, the Royal Government of Cambodia (RGC) and other development partners suggest that poverty has significantly decreased throughout the country over the last decade, having declined 11 percent between 1994 and 2004 at a rate of around 1 percent a year³³ (World Bank 2006a; Ballard et al., 2007; RGC, 2008a; World Bank, 2009d). More recent figures, based on the latest 2007 Cambodian Socio-Economic Survey³⁴ (CSES),

³¹ The poverty line was estimated at 2124 riels (USD 0.53) in 2004, with the food poverty line estimated at 1684 riels (USD 0.42). Food poverty is measured in terms of calories, with those households characterised as food poor earning an income lower than the cost of a food basket corresponding to the average dietary requirements of 2120kcal per day (CARD, 2008; Beresford et al., 2004, 21; Ballard et al., 2007).

³² Differences in regional coverage can be seen for example, between surveys conducted in 2004 and those conducted in 1993/1994. Ongoing insurgency and conflict in certain areas during 1993 and 1994 meant that it was impossible to cover all the provinces. This differed in the 2004 survey where the threat of conflict and insurgency had significantly decreased.

³³ These poverty estimates are based on data collected from Cambodian Socio Economic Surveys (CSES) conducted since 1993/1994.

³⁴ The 2007 Cambodia Socio-Economic Survey (CSES) is the latest in a series of multi-objective national household surveys that have been conducted by the Cambodian National Institute of Statistics (NIS).

estimate that poverty is continuing to decrease throughout the country, falling from 34.8% in 2004 to 30.1% in 2007³⁵ (Broderick, 2009). This is believed to be primarily a result of high rates of economic growth which have characterised Cambodia's economy over the last ten years. Cambodia has had an average per capita GDP growth of around 7 percent per annum over the last decade, increasing to double digit figures since 2005; making it one of the fastest growing economies in the region (World Bank, 2009d; Sidgwick, interview with author). According to the World Bank (2006a) this growth is the consequence of "peace and economic liberalisation," which "starting from a base of very low output and very high poverty at the start of the 1990s...has made possible a decade of rapid growth and relatively rapid poverty reduction" (World Bank, 2006a:i).

Despite high rates of economic growth, there are those who seriously question the validity of these poverty estimates and remain sceptical in regards to how much of this growth is in reality benefitting the poor (Ballard et al., 2007; Beresford et al., 2004; Richmond and Franks, 2007). For some, it is argued that narrow sources of GDP growth, unequal rural and urban distribution, inadequate state intervention, and insufficient "backward linkages, have meant that benefits of growth filter down to the poor only slowly" (Ballard et al., 2007: 23; see also St John, 1997; Peou, 2005). In contrast to the more positive picture painted by the World Bank, Beresford and colleagues (2004) argue that economic growth has had almost no impact on poverty reduction within Cambodia; and may in fact be worsening the situation further (Beresford et al, 2004; Ballard, et al., 2007). For these authors, this seems particularly evident in signs of decreasing "per capita consumption (measured in riel); fewer public health facilities and rising infant and child mortality; poor education outcomes; increasing population pressure on cultivable land with rising rural underemployment...and a lack of growth in non-farm employment" (Beresford et al., 2004: 12; Richmond and Franks, 2007). Conflicting statistics, produced by the Economic Institute of Cambodia, suggest that poverty has in fact risen throughout the country, from 39.4 percent in 2000 to around 42.4 percent in 2004 (Richmond and Franks, 2007; Peou, 2005). According to UNICEF, child mortality rates are also on the

³⁵ Due to small sampling size however, these estimates are not statistically significant.

increase, rising from 115 per 1000 in 1990 to 141 in 2004 (Richmond and Franks, 2007).

While there may be some disagreement around the actual extent of poverty reduction in Cambodia, what is acknowledged by all is that inequality throughout the country is increasing dramatically (Beresford et al., 2004; World Bank, 2007; World Bank, 2006a; Richmond and Franks, 2007; Jalilian, 2007; CDRI, 2008b). Benefits of economic growth have not trickled down to the poor, and are instead being enjoyed by only a small sector of the population (Jalilian, 2008; Sovannarith, 2009; Beresford et al., 2004). While the standard of living of the poorest 20 percent of Cambodians has risen on average by only 8 percent over the last decade, the standard of living of the wealthiest 20 percent has risen almost 6 times as much, increasing by 45 percent (World Bank, 2007; Jalilian, 2008). Within those areas surveyed by the government in 1994 and again in 2004, inequality has increased significantly, rising from a Gini coefficient of 0.35 to 0.40. Overall, inequality for all of the country in 2004 was estimated at 0.42, “making Cambodia one of the more unequal countries in the region” (World Bank, 2006a: VI). Economic growth may have been rapid, but it has also been highly uneven; heavily and narrowly influenced by developments in the garment sector, tourism and the construction industry (World Bank, 2009c). This has resulted in the narrow concentration of growth in urban areas, contributing to widespread disparities in income (World Bank, 2007; CDRI, 2008b; Beresford et al., 2004; Koop, interview with author).

‘From a Battlefield to a Market Place’: The Rise of Neoliberalism in Cambodia³⁶

The later part of the twentieth century saw Cambodia as host to nearly three decades of war, marked, as Simon Springer (2009) suggests, “most significantly by three appalling atrocities”(Springer, 2009b: 143). In 1969 the US-Vietnam war spilled over neutral Cambodia’s borders, culminating in an American-lead bombing campaign

³⁶ This was a statement declared by Thailand’s resolutely capitalist Prime Minister Chatichai who, vocal in his desire to see free-market capitalism take root in the region, declared that it would be transformed “from a battlefield to a market place” (as cited in Springer, 2009b).

which lead to the deaths of around 600,000 Cambodians, and the displacement of millions more (Springer, 2009b; Hughes, 2006). Secondly, 1975 saw the rise of Pol Pot's Democratic Kampuchea genocidal regime which, over a period of only 4 years, resulted in the deaths of nearly a quarter of the population (an estimated 1.5 million people), as a consequence of over-exertion, torture, execution or starvation (Le Billon, 2000; Springer, 2009b; Mysliwicz, 2004; Sodhy, 2004; Nagasu, 2004). Thirdly, wider Cold War geopolitics meant that after the devastation of the Khmer Rouge, Cambodia was left isolated and cut off from international aid and trade through embargoes imposed by Western countries attempting to distance themselves from the failure of the Vietnam War (Springer 2009). After almost a "decade of silence", Cambodia's isolation was lifted only with the signing of the UN peace agreement in 1991 (Springer, 2009a: 143). This ushered in a new period of rapid change as the country transitioned from war to relative peace, authoritarian rule to democracy and from a planned to free-market economy (Hughes, 2003; Mysliwicz, 2004; Hughes, 2006).

Unlike many developing countries in the 1980s, Structural Adjustment reforms were "not part of the platform used to push markets into Cambodia" (Springer, 2009a: 143). Rather, after the failure of the country's devastating experiment with full collectivisation, Cambodia's transition to a free-market economy was gradual, taking place by degrees (Godfrey et al., 2001; Hughes, 2003; Springer, 2009a). Privatisation slowly took root throughout the country with the reinstatement of privately owned farms in the first half of the decade, progressing to the full adoption of market relations in all areas of the economy by 1989 (Hughes, 2003; St John, 1997). Cambodia's lack of SAP's throughout the 1980s can be seen as a result of the continuing presence and influence of communist Vietnam within the country, as well as ongoing civil war,³⁷ and the enduring reluctance of Western countries to become "further embroiled in the Indochina quagmire" (Springer, 2009a: 143; see also Hughes, 2003; Hughes, 2006). Geopolitical shifts in 1989 however, characterised by the fall of the Soviet Union, signalled the end of the communist era in Cambodia, and the

³⁷Civil war continued throughout the 1980s between the Phnom Penh based constitutional regime, initially called the People's Republic of Kampuchea (PRK) (installed by the invading Vietnamese army in 1979), and a resistance made up of three earlier regimes based on the Cambodian/Thai border (Hughes, 2003: 1). This resistance was made up of the National Army of Democratic Kampuchea (NADK), or Khmer Rouge, which was comprised of those previously involved in the Pol Pot's infamous 1975-79 regime and had fled to the Thai border after the Vietnamese invasion (Hughes, 2003).

withdrawal of Vietnamese troops from the country (Hughes, 2006: 70). This was coupled with the rapid decline in Soviet aid, which had accounted for over 90 percent of the country's budget. Requiring new avenues of financial support and legitimacy, the Cambodian government was obliged to shift its attention to the West. This in turn entailed the adoption of Western free-market economic and democratic ideals. As a result, the Cambodian government initiated a number of neoliberal economic reforms, in an attempt to rapidly liberalise the economy. These reforms included the privatisation of land, natural resources and state-owned enterprises; the deregulation of markets and reduction of government subsidies; the decreasing of state controls on prices, imports and goods; and changes in investment law intended to attract foreign capital (Springer, 2009b; Hughes, 2006; Hughes, 2007; St John, 1997).

Neoliberal free market reforms were further entrenched with the establishment of the United Nations Transitional Authority in Cambodia (UNTAC) in 1992, where “under the banner of ‘democracy,’ a host of neoliberal reforms washed in along with the expediting and expansion of those already started by the ruling Cambodian People's Party (CPP)” (Springer, 2009b: 143; see also Richmond and Franks, 2007). Alongside the establishment of peace, the initiation of democracy, and the promulgation of a new constitution, the adoption of neoliberal policies by Cambodia's post-transitional government was a core mandate and requirement of the UNTAC's operation in the country (Richmond and Franks, 2007; Springer, 2009a; Hughes, 2006). As discussed in Chapter One, embedded within wider dominant ideological conceptions of ‘good governance’, these reforms championed democracy and market liberalisation as mutually reinforcing and inter-related processes; both ostensibly necessary for any progression towards peace, poverty reduction and economic growth (Abrahamsen, 2000).

While a global phenomenon, neoliberalisation manifested itself in Cambodia in quite particular ways. As argued by Simon Springer (2009), what makes “actually existing neoliberalism in Cambodia distinctly Cambodian is how local elites co-opted, transformed, and rearticulated neoliberal reforms” (Springer, 2009a: 144). Rather than initiating broad based democratic participation and poverty reduction throughout the country, the rapid liberalisation of Cambodia's economy, under the auspices of the

UNTAC, had the opposite effect; effectively concentrating power, influence and wealth, into the hands of a few ruling elite (Hughes, 2007; Global Witness, 2009; Richmond and Franks, 2007). Neoliberal reforms operated to the advantage of those in positions of power. They created frameworks through which regime leaders were able to seize Cambodia's valuable assets, ensuring the monopolisation of landholdings and any benefits of resource exploitation (Hughes, 2007; Global Witness, 2009). As Global Witness (2009) suggests, the "misappropriation of the country's rich natural resources- forests, land and fisheries- was central to the accumulation of wealth and the consolidation of political power" in the country (Global Witness, 2009: 15; Le Billon, 2000). Although there are significant areas where this consolidation has been illicit, neoliberalism provided a framework through which the powerful were able to legally and 'legitimately' control the privatisation of public assets. This ensured that only the wealthy and politically powerful accrued the rights to private ownership³⁸ (Springer, 2009a).

What resulted was the proliferation of complex networks of patronage and corruption, as well as 'shadow state' activities, throughout the country (Hughes and Conway, 2005). The concept of the shadow state refers to a "system through which leaders draw authority from their abilities to informally control markets and material rewards" (Springer, 2009: 144; see also Le Billon, 2000). According to Simon Springer (2009a), the rise of shadow state activities in Cambodia can be seen as part of the states response to the challenges and political restrictions created by neoliberal governance (Springer, 2009a). Similarly experienced in most developing countries, neoliberal reforms rolled back and hollowed out the ability of developing governments to effectively control and regulate their own economies. This was commonly coupled with the reduction of local control over political and social conditions; undermining the state's ability to meet the needs of its citizenry, while at the same time promulgating reforms which exacerbated conflict and increased inequality (Springer, 2009a; Pugh, 2004). For Springer (2009a), this process effectively contributed to the consolidation of

³⁸This was particularly apparent in the creation of land and forestry laws, which were strongly skewed in favour of those with money, education, as well as political and economic connections (Hughes, 2006). The Land law of 1992 for example, through a multiple inadequacies, was central in the promulgation of widespread land expropriation by those with wealth and power. This law defined the possession of land as the "issue of a local authority receipts, rather than the act of occupancy itself, entailing that ownership rights could be obtained by those who bribed local authorities to issue receipts" (Hughes, 2007: 6).

authoritarianism in Cambodia, rather than democratic participation (Springer, 2009a). Cambodian elites were able to co-opt and reshape neoliberal policies into an “instrument of coercive power,” taking hold of the opportunities these reforms presented for the accumulation and entrenchment of private wealth (Springer, 2009a: 144; Le Billon, 2000).

Neoliberal reforms can be accredited with the establishment of structures and patterns of power which continue to shape Cambodian governance to this day. While consolidating wealth into the hands of a few and perpetuating inequality, these reforms have significantly undermined the ideals of democracy, human rights and poverty reduction apparently so central to the UNTAC (Richmond and Franks, 2007; Koop, interview with author). As will be discussed below, Cambodian governance continues to be characterised by elite capture, neopatrimonialism, surveillance, intimidation and oppression (Hughes, 2003). Violence was, and still remains, a central method of controlling those who oppose the dominant political and economic elite; as well as protecting the interests of local and international capital at the expense of the poor (Biddulph, interview with author; Hughes, 2003; Springer, 2009a).

It is within this context that any exploration of poverty reduction in Cambodia must be situated, as we continue to see global liberalism manifested in particular ways throughout development policy and practice. The role of PRSPs in Cambodia cannot be understood in isolation from the impact of neoliberalism on relations of power, embedded inequality and the shape and structure of the state. Cambodia’s PRSP framework reflects wider global shifts in development policy, away from the dominance of raw and market-orientated neoliberalism, towards an emphasis on inclusion, poverty reduction and ‘pro-poor’ economic growth. However, as we will see below, unequal relations of power and liberal conceptions of the market and the state continue to dominate the way in which poverty and food insecurity is constructed within this approach. Clearly demonstrating a move towards a wider ‘inclusive’ liberal form, Cambodia’s PRSP framework, and responses to rising hunger within this approach, reflect an ongoing attempt to including the poor within the wider global free-market economy.

Food Security and Cambodia's National Strategic Development Plan (NSDP)

At the stage that the country is now at, it would be by far the best option if government efforts are directed to getting the growth right; succeeding in this area would resolve most of the challenges that the country is faced with, particularly in poverty reduction efforts (Jalilian, 2008:4).

The World Bank's PRSP approach was adopted in Cambodia in 2000 amid broader global shifts in development policy. As discussed in Chapter One, the global adoption of PRSPs signalled a move away from the dominance of neoliberal, one-size-fits-all SAPs as a framework for development, to the adoption of a more country-driven and poverty-orientated approach. Historically, development policy and practice in Cambodia has been significantly donor driven (Conway, interview with author; Koop, interview with author; Eiichiro, interview with author). This can be seen as resulting from the introduction of the UNTAC in 1993, and the massive influx of international donors, development aid and NGOs which this ensued. This rising international presence was coupled with neoliberal reforms which engineered increasing restrictions on the role of the state. While undermining government capabilities, this in turn opened up a range of new spaces for the increased involvement and influence of external, non-state actors in domestic policy processes (Tan, 2005; Ferguson, 2006; Springer, 2009a).

As a consequence, despite claim to country ownership, Cambodia's first PRSP, the National Poverty Reduction Strategy (NPRS), was a document heavily influenced by donor interests and ideals (Conway, interview with author; Eiichiro, interview with author). For a period, Cambodia effectively had two parallel national development plans; the NPRS which was significantly shaped and influenced by the World Bank and UN agencies; and Cambodia's second Socio-Economic Development Plan (SEDP-II) which was predominantly produced by the Asian Development Bank (ADB) (Biddulph, 2001; Malaluan and Guttal, 2002; NGO Forum, 2006b; Conway, interview with author). Due to the highly donor dominated and fragmented nature of these plans, government ownership was very weak and as a consequence implementation was minimal (World Bank, 2006b; Biddulph, 2001; Nagasu, 2004).

Cambodia's second and current PRSP, the National Strategic Development Plan (NSDP), endeavours to rectify this. Produced in 2006, it is an attempt to bring these two documents together, creating a single, more country owned and locally driven national development plan. In contrast to the previous plans, the NSDP is said to be produced predominantly by government ministries, in consultation with the private sector and NGOs. Thus, it is believed to reflect the interests of the RGC, rather than those of its donors (Lingnau, interview with author). In the spirit of national ownership, in 2003 the RGC also established their own set of Cambodian Millennium Development Goal's (CMDGs), tailoring the more broadly defined MDGs to meet Cambodia's specific development needs (UNDP, 2008). The purpose of the NSDP is to incorporate the ideals espoused in the CMDGs, with those of the SEDP-II and the RGC's Rectangular Strategy, into one overarching national development framework.³⁹ These national policy documents are some of the key tools utilised in framing poverty reduction and development responses in Cambodia. As such, they are central in framing food security and defining the parameters of how the government, along with donors and multilateral development agencies, respond to the food crisis.

Cambodia's apparent commitment to reducing food insecurity, malnutrition and hunger is a consistent and recurring theme in the country's national policy frameworks and sectoral policies. This can be seen in the first of the CMDGs which clearly prioritises the reduction of food insecurity in its aim to "eradicate extreme poverty" and "halve the proportion of people who suffer from hunger" by 2015 (MoP, 2009). Similarly, the NSDP, developed in 2006, acknowledges the importance of food security in its commitment to "ensure that poor and food-insecure Cambodians, by 2010, have substantially improved physical and economic access to sufficient, safe, and nutritious food at all times to meet their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life" (RGC, 2006: 58).

Cambodia produces a rice surplus of 2 million tons for export every year. However, malnutrition, hunger and food insecurity continue to be widespread throughout the country (Sovannarith, 2009; CARD, 2008). Data from the 2004 CSES estimated that 23

³⁹ The Rectangular Strategy is the RGC's political platform of the Third Legislature of the National Assembly.

percent of the population (a total of around 3 million people) were critically food poor, consuming less than the minimum dietary energy requirements (MDER) of 1715 kcal per day⁴⁰ (CARD, 2008). The nationwide prevalence of food poverty is around 57 percent; with households earning an income lower than the cost of a food basket corresponding to the average dietary requirement of 2120kcal per day (CARD, 2008). In 2005 it was estimated that 37 percent, a total of over 630,000, Cambodian children under 5 were suffering from chronic protein-energy malnutrition, otherwise known as stunting. In some areas, rates of chronic stunting in children can be as high, or higher, than 50 percent⁴¹ (ADB, 2004: 4; CARD, 2008). There are also indications of rising infant mortality and child mortality rates, largely influenced by malnutrition, with 50.3 percent of children under the age five being underweight⁴² (Ballard et al., 2007)

Like many developing countries, Cambodia experienced a significant and rapid increase in the price of essential foods and fuel throughout 2008. This was particularly apparent in the price of rice, Cambodia's main staple food crop (constituting half of the total food consumption of the poorest households), which increased 100 percent between May 2007 and May 2008 (CDRI, 2008a, UN, 2009a). Prices of other food products also significantly increased, with the cost of meat, as well as fish and vegetables, increasing by 50-70 and 20-30 percent respectively (CDRI, 2008a; Sovannarith, 2009). Although food prices have slightly decreased from their 2008 peaks, they are still considerably higher than they were in 2007⁴³ (Sovannarith, 2009). This, coupled with the rapidly rising prices of both fuel⁴⁴ and agricultural inputs, has put substantial and increasing pressure on Cambodia's poor and vulnerable (CDRI, 2008a; World Bank, 2009a).

⁴⁰ 'Critically food poor' is defined by those households earning a combined income less than "the cost of a food basket corresponding to the minimum dietary energy requirement (MDER)" (CARD, 2008, 34).

⁴¹ Areas such as Pursat, Siem Reap and Mondulakiri/Rattanakiri have chronic malnutrition rates of more than 50 percent in children under the age of five (CARD, 2008).

⁴² As under-nourished children face increased risks of infection, illness and premature death, 54 percent of all cases of under-five mortality in Cambodia are associated with malnutrition (CARD, 2008).

⁴³ In November 2008, the price of rice was still 77 percent higher than it had been a year earlier in November 2007.

⁴⁴ Global oil prices increased in successive waves from late 2007, reaching a record level of US\$147 per barrel in July 2008; increasing 121 percent from US\$66.47 in April 2007. At the time of writing, oil prices have decreased, to around US\$100 per barrel, however they are still much higher than they were in April 2007 (RGC 2008a).

The impact of rising food prices on Cambodian households varies considerably according to socioeconomic status, with the poor and already food insecure taking the overall brunt of its impacts (World Bank, 2009a). Certain vulnerable groups, particularly land-poor and landless rural households, net-food buyers, fishing communities, fixed salary workers and the urban poor have been most acutely affected (CDRI, 2008a). Impacts also vary according to geographic region, which are linked to higher rates of poverty, with those living in the Tonle Sap and plains regions demonstrating significantly increased vulnerability to food deprivation. It is estimated that on average the poorest 40 percent of the population spend 70 percent of their income on food; increasing to over 83 percent for those in the poorest quintile (CARD, 2008). With no formal social safety nets, any increases in food prices can have significant negative impacts on people's overall wellbeing. Vulnerable households are being forced to reduce their food intake, remove their children from school or to take on increasing debt in order to buy food, pushing people deeper into poverty.⁴⁵ For the poor and already food insecure, further reductions in food intake can have significant negative impacts on general health, increasing the risk of malnutrition and vulnerability to illness and disease (UN, 2009a).

The ADB facilitated the largest donor response to the food price crisis in Cambodia, implementing an emergency food assistance project of US\$3.5 million (ADB, 2008a). This contributed to the subsidising of seeds and fertilisers for small holder farmers, as well as free food distributions and food-for-work programmes for selected households in particularly hard-hit areas (ADB, 2008; Sidgwick, interview with author; Sovannarith, 2009). The RGC responded by placing a two month temporary ban on the export of paddy rice in order to increase internal stocks and keep prices low. This was coupled with the subsidisation of rice to be sold at lower prices to targeted poor, as well as the reduction of import taxes on agricultural inputs and fuel (Sovannarith, 2009; Ngo, 2008; CDRI, 2008a). In addition, low interest loans were granted to traders and millers in an attempt to encourage the purchasing of more rice for sale on the domestic market. Unfortunately however, it has been the wealthy who have predominantly benefitted from government policies removing taxes on imported fuel and agricultural

⁴⁵ It is estimated that out of the 32 percent of households who took out new loans in the first half of 2008, 60 percent used these loans to buy food, cover health expenses and agricultural inputs (Ngo, 2008).

inputs, as it is this group which consumes the majority of these commodities (Ngo, 2008).

Overall, responses to the food crisis have been slow. Many have argued that as an overarching framework for the implementation of long term poverty reduction policies, the NSDP is not set up to adequately deal with such a rapid crisis of increasing food prices (Koop, interview with author; Sidgwick, interview with author; Conway, interview with author). As a result, short term responses have been largely implemented outside of the NSDP framework; in the form of ad hoc, individual donor sponsored or government initiated projects. However, in regards to long term responses to hunger, rising food insecurity as well as market vulnerability, the NSDP is an important national framing tool. As previously discussed, rather than simply related to short term issues of food supply, food insecurity is intimately connected to wider issues of poverty and inequality, as well as the policies which are put in place in the name of addressing these issues. The way in which poverty and food insecurity are defined and conceptualised within policy frameworks, such as the NSDP, impacts on how they are approached and the types of policies and programmes which are put in place. These policies in turn have very real impacts on people's livelihoods and experiences of food insecurity.

As demonstrated throughout Chapters One and Two, how poverty and 'the poor' were constructed throughout the 1980s and 1990s gave impetus to the implementation of radical neoliberal Structural Adjustment reforms throughout this period. These reforms had deep-rooted impacts on the shape of our current food system, significantly influencing rising food insecurity and the current crisis. For this reason, critically exploring the NSDP and the way it constructs food insecurity is of crucial significance. This becomes increasingly salient given that there are plans to extend the NSDP until 2013, which means it will continue to be a central document in the way in which poverty and food insecurity is framed and conceptualised for another five years (Conway, interview with author; Sidgwick, interview with author; Lingnau, interview with author).

Written before the onset of the food price crisis, Cambodia's NSDP emphasises the importance of rural development for overall poverty reduction throughout the country, stating that the "greatest and quickest gains in poverty alleviation will be possible in rural areas where most of the poor live" (RGC, 2006: 6). In order to achieve this, the NSDP promises to "direct over 60% of resources to rural areas, with increased attention to productive activities like agriculture [and] rural development" (RGC, 2006: 6). It is within this framework of agricultural development that the issue of food security in Cambodia is centrally placed. Within both the NSDP and its Mid-Term Review (MTR), produced in November 2008, discussions of food security remain limited to within the parameters and context of small holder farming and agricultural development (RGC 2006; RGC, 2008a). Despite the fact that Cambodia's Mid-Term Review was written during the very height of the food price crisis, only one section is allocated to food security and this is limited to two or three sentences under the wider auspices of agricultural economic growth (Kauffman, interview with author; RGC, 2008a). While there is an acknowledgement that food security is a "cross-sectoral issue... requiring concerted efforts in various sectors outlined in the NSDP," there is no mention or incorporation of food security in any other section of the National Plan (RGC, 2006: 20). As one interviewee remarked:

You have this reminder [in the NSDP] that food security is important, but you find it under agriculture, and not one single specific indicator on nutritional outcomes. You have for sure indicators which are relevant for food security, like yields and so on, but these are not per se food security indicators, because yields can increase and the vulnerable people in a country can also increase; they are not automatically linked (Kauffman, interview with author).

The lack of food security in other relevant sections of the national plan can be seen in the NSDP's health and gender sections where food security is noticeably excluded. This seems highly incongruous given the importance of food and nutrition in overall health indicators such as child and infant mortality, malnutrition, underdevelopment and stunting, as well as maternal mortality and women's health. Furthermore, there is no discussion of food security, or poverty reduction more broadly, in regards to particular vulnerable or marginalised groups such as fishing communities (which are

highly impacted by rising food prices), women, indigenous communities, the urban poor or the elderly (Sothath Ngo, interview with author). It excludes any exploration of inequality, by geographical location, class or social status, which makes some far more vulnerable to food insecurity than others (Biddulph, interview with author). This is problematic given that rates of poverty, malnutrition and child mortality differ considerably across different regions, according to geographical area and social group (SFFSN, 2008, 15).

Importantly, after 20 years of neglect on the part of the government and its development partners, an increased focus on rural and agricultural development can be seen as a positive step (World Bank, 2009c). Like many developing countries over the last 30 years, agriculture in Cambodia has experienced a significant reduction in funding and policy attention⁴⁶ (Havnevik, et al., 2007; Bello, 2008; Sundaram, 2008b). However, it is important to think critically about the emphasis and focus of this shift. Poverty reduction and food insecurity in Cambodia's NSDP remains firmly embedded within a wider 'inclusive' liberal approach to development. Rural poverty reduction is conceptualised as resulting predominantly from increasing market relations and export-orientated economic growth. Within this framework, increasing food security is seen as synonymous with economic growth in the agriculture sector, which is believed to be driven exclusively by private sector investment, increased productivity, liberalised international trade and export orientated production (RGC 2006; RGC, 2008a). The emphasis is on investing in the private sector in order to encourage "export-led, pro-poor growth through diversification" and increased "production and productivity" (RGC, 2006: 65). As the World Bank's Cambodian Country Manager, Qimiao Fan, suggests:

A specific government objective is to promote higher productivity and greater diversification in agriculture...Cambodia has considerable potential in increasing agricultural output and exports. Realizing this potential, however, will require effective coordination of a complex set of public sector actions in irrigation,

⁴⁶ As discussed in Chapter Two.

agricultural research and extension, access to finance, quality of inputs, and improvements in storage, transportation and marketing⁴⁷ (Fan, 2008).

The NSDP can be seen first and foremost as “a strategy to boost trade in agricultural exports” (Bush, 2007: 158; see also RGC, 2006; World Bank, 2007). Agricultural development is about boosting private wealth which is assumed to trickle down to the rural poor, through agricultural related employment, thus reducing inequality and vulnerability to food insecurity. As suggested by the World Bank (2007), “there is a need for continued effort in and improvement of investment climate. *Maintaining the economy’s openness and global outlook* will be the best strategy for continued growth and sustained poverty reduction” (World Bank, 2007: xv, *emphasis in original*). Within this framework, the role of the government and development partners is to facilitate, support and maintain private sector development through such means as increased rural infrastructure, roads and extension services, market access and education (RGC, 2006; CARD, 2008; Bush, 2007). This was a common theme woven throughout interviews conducted with those involved in the NSDP and food security issues. It is believed that if the government would only increase support and investment into private sector agricultural development, removing structural constraints inhibiting agricultural productivity, then food security would be largely improved (Eiichiro, interview with author; Ngo, interview with author; Sovannarith, interview with author; Sidgwick, interview with author). Once again, as discussed in Chapter One, it is markets which are perceived to be the answer to the countries ills. However, unlike raw and conservative neoliberalism, which championed large scale agri-business at the expense of small holder farmers and local communities, agricultural development in Cambodia is about removing barriers to market processes. The focus is on including small holder farmers, the rural poor and the vulnerable in market relations and international trade (World Bank, 2006a; CARD, 2008).

The role of the Cambodian government in protecting the vulnerable from food insecurity remains firmly embedded within a wider ‘inclusive’ liberal, free-market

⁴⁷ This was part of an address given by Qimiao Fan at the second Cambodian Development Cooperation Forum (CDCF) held in December 2008. Previously called the Consultative Group (CG) meeting, the CDCF is an annual high level meeting between the Cambodian Government and its development partners, co-chaired by the World Bank, to review developments in the country as a whole and to coordinate and pledge development aid.

approach to governance. Earlier neoliberal reforms which attempted to hollow out and ‘roll-back’ state interference in market processes, are now coupled with the ‘rolling-out’ of state functions and institutions designed to support and maintain them (Springer, 2009a; Peck, 2001; Crawford, 2006). As the NSDP tellingly asserts,

The private sector is considered the prime mover of economic growth, while the government plays its role as the strategist, guide and manager of the development process, and the facilitator in creating a wholesome climate conducive to private investment and enterprise (RGC, 2006: 65).

Here, as discussed in Chapter One, the state is positioned as subordinate to wider market processes. The role of the government, inspired by the belief that poverty reduction, and with that food security, will be achieved through the furtherance of the private sector, is to foster and maintain a favourable environment for markets to function more efficiently. In order to achieve this, as clearly outlined in the NSDP, the Cambodian government will continue to increase “economic integration of Cambodia into the economies of the region and the world;” create suitable environments to foster foreign investment and international capital flows; identify and speedily remove any barriers potentially impeding private sector growth; and put in place policies which strengthen the “legal framework for enterprises, including laws, regulations and institutional capacity that facilitate business, trade and private investment in a climate of fair competition, transparency, accountability and predictability” (RGC, 2006: 65-66).

The embedding of food security within an ‘inclusive’ liberal paradigm is further apparent in other national policy documents. The purpose of the NSDP is to function as a national overarching guide and framework for the implementation of poverty related policies through particular government ministries and sectors. However, although food security and nutrition have been consistently identified as important priorities within existing national policy frameworks, no comprehensive sectoral plan has yet been developed by the government and its development partners (CARD, 2008). In 2007, the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries (MAFF) in partnership with the Ministry of Water Resources and Meteorology (MOWRAM),

formulated a national Strategy for Agriculture and Water (SAW), which included food security as one of its five development goals and programme areas. The overarching goal of this strategy is to “contribute to poverty reduction, food security and economic growth through enhancing agricultural productivity and diversification” (RGC, 2007: 9). Once more, food security is directly linked and limited to a select narrative of agricultural production and economic growth. This is believed to occur through the creation of an environment which encourages private sector investment. Core policy requirements believed to increase food security are seen as the development of infrastructure and irrigation systems; increasing access to farming inputs to further enable market access; and the expansion of commercial agribusiness which will encourage “resource-poor and vulnerable smallholder farmers to engage in more risky, high value production” (RGC, 2007: 10-13).

This policy framework champions the removal of barriers believed to inhibit the involvement of rural communities in market processes, while ‘empowering’ poor farmers and communities to “take responsibility for their own socio-economic development” (RGC, 2007: 10-13). Empowerment here is limited to the parameters of increasing the poor’s involvement in free-market trade and capital accumulation. It effectively diverts the position of responsibility onto the poor, putting the onus of development on poor communities themselves and their ability to take up opportunities offered to them for market participation. Development programmes are to focus on encouraging training, education and access to credit as a means of including those who have been excluded from free-market processes; effectively enabling the poor to take control of their own development and pull themselves out of poverty (RGC, 2007: 22). As outlined in the agriculture and water policy document, “an important aspect of food security is to empower households who are most at risk to *protect themselves* against disaster. For instance, at-risk communities can establish and maintain rice banks and other types of ‘safety nets’” (RGC, 2007: 22, *emphasis added*). This statement, while ignoring structural inequalities and unequal relations of power, removes responsibility for protecting the vulnerable from the state and onto communities themselves. It remains embedded within the problematic assumption that removing ‘barriers to entry’ for small holder farmers will enable them to compete

equitably and efficiently; obfuscating wider issues of vulnerability to market failure and volatility.

The national Strategic Framework for Food Security and Nutrition (SFFSN), although significantly more nuanced, similarly champions an ‘inclusive’ liberal approach to food security (CARD, 2008). This document was produced by the RGC’s Council for Agriculture and Rural Development, in consultation with the Technical Working Group on Food Security and Nutrition (TWG-FSN) in 2007. It acts as a reference framework to guide and foster the increased ‘mainstreaming’ of food security and nutrition into wider sectoral development plans. It attempts to tease apart some of the complexities surrounding food security, looking at both the issue of food availability as well as recognising aspects of unequal access to food and nutritional requirements.

In line with the NSDP, and other policy documents discussed above, the SFFSN champions the importance of escalating infrastructure development, agricultural production, diversification and access to international markets as a means of ensuring food security (CARD, 2008). However, it also takes into account issues of employment and unequal income opportunities in the poor’s ability to access food. It explores the role of not only agricultural production but also the informal sector and casual wage labour on people’s vulnerability to food insecurity. Nonetheless, the solutions proposed to address unequal income opportunities are primarily reliant on the private sector. It is argued that “improving economic dimensions of food security is overwhelmingly dependent upon positive changes in the private sector to augment the capacity of the food insecure to cope with food shortages and malnutrition” (CARD, 2008: 33). The creation of employment is perceived as solely the result of investments within the private sector, which is believed to respond to market impulses (RGC, 2008a). The state is to create an effective climate for free-market capitalism to flourish so that employment will ostensibly follow, trickling down to the poor. Thus, the focus is on improving wage employment opportunities through increased market infrastructure,⁴⁸ skill based vocational training and micro-enterprise business

⁴⁸ Market infrastructure includes market buildings, storage facilities, cold stores, market electricity and water supply as well as access to market information services such as commodity prices, input prices and commodity trade volumes (CARD, 2008: 37).

opportunities. This reputedly better equips the poor to participate in a free-market economy.

A ‘Golden Opportunity’ for Cambodian Poverty Reduction?: Food Insecurity as Failure and Responses to the Food Price Crisis⁴⁹

For many commentators, increased food prices represents a potential opportunity for poverty reduction and economic growth, despite the current negative impacts on Cambodia’s most vulnerable (CDRI, 2008a; Conway, interview with author; Ngo, interview with author; Kauffman, interview with author; Sovannarith, 2009; Ngo, 2008). This sentiment can be found not only in the documents of the government and bilateral donors, but also by civil society and NGOs⁵⁰ (Ngo, 2008). Woven throughout discussions surrounding rising food prices is the belief that if farmers were only able to increase agricultural investments, productivity and access to markets, they would then be able to capitalise on higher prices. This in turn would benefit the poor and increase poverty reduction through boosting economic growth (CDRI, 2008a). In this way, rather than a crisis per se, increased food prices may be a cause for optimism. This is based on the belief that if prices of agricultural commodities remain at the present level, poverty reduction will occur much faster than before (CDRI, 2008a). As discussed below, this conviction rests problematically on the assumption that, as most Cambodians are rural, they are also mostly farmers, relying heavily on agriculture in some way. What is perceived as necessary in order to decrease the poor’s vulnerability to food insecurity are policies and programmes which further enable farmers (perceived to represent the majority of the poor) to have access to and participate more fully in market processes.

⁴⁹ Sothath Ngo, from the NGO Forum on Cambodia, referred to the global food crisis as a “golden opportunity for the country to improve the livelihoods of rural Cambodians where 91% of the poor live and depend on agriculture” (Ngo, 2008, 29). This sentiment was also repeated, among other places, in the 2008 NGO Statement to the Cambodian Development Cooperation Forum (NGO Forum, 2008a, 2).

⁵⁰ Conceptualising the food crisis as opportunity can be found in the documents of organisations such as the NGO Forum on Cambodia, CDRI and in joint NGO statements. As a recent joint NGO statement declared, “given the condition that Cambodia is an agrarian society and a net exporter of agricultural products (rice and others), soaring food prices is viewed as a *golden opportunity* for the country to improve livelihoods of rural Cambodia where 91% of the poor live and depend on agriculture, forestry and fisheries” (Ngo, 2008: 29, *emphasis added*).

As a consequence, a major aspect of the debate around food security has been focused on identifying various obstacles and “binding constraints” preventing small holder farmers from participating in local and international food commodity markets (Conway, interview with author; Ngo, interview with author; Sidgwick, interview with author; World Bank, 2006a; CDRI, 2008a; NGO Forum, 2008a). These have been identified as a lack of access to credit; inadequate infrastructure and irrigation systems; high prices of fertilisers and other agricultural inputs; inadequate knowledge, training and ‘human capital’; insufficient access to international and local market information; and the unequal distribution of land and secure tenure (CDRI, 2008a; World Bank 2006a). As a recent donor-sponsored report, looking at the impact of rising food prices on the poor, suggests “policies to remove these constraints may result in an increase in production and help reduce the poverty and vulnerability of farmers” (CDRI, 2008a: 81). Further, “with improved conditions, agricultural producers will be able to seize the opportunity of rising agricultural prices by increasing production for export” (CDRI, 2008a: 10).

There are a number of assumptions here which are worth exploring. Firstly, this ‘food-crisis-as-opportunity’ narrative continues to be based on the underlying belief that free-market, export orientated economic growth is synonymous with poverty reduction. It is argued that in order to reduce inequality and “to make growth more inclusive, it is important that the private sector takes a much larger and meaningful role in economic activities in the country” (Jalilian, 2008: 3). The focus is on what one interviewee described as addressing ‘imperfect markets’ (to be differentiated from the concept of ‘market failure’) which he defined as barriers preventing farmers from being able to participate in international trade (Sovannarith interview with author; Sovannarith, 2009).

This ‘food-crisis-as-opportunity’ narrative relates closely to what Jenny Edkins (2000) has described as the construction of food insecurity as ‘failure’. According to Edkins (2000), famine and hunger are very often defined as disaster, or failure, perceived as resulting, not from the “normal run of things,” or as an inevitable consequence of the system, but as an anomaly or exception. Food insecurity is conceptualised as “the equivalent of a technical malfunction of a mechanism: once the cause of the problem is

identified, it can be solved by prompt, expert action and the machine returned to working order” (Edkins, 2000: 53). As Edkins (2000) suggests, defining food insecurity as failure has particular power effects. In Cambodia, and globally, the construction of rising food prices and hunger as a ‘crisis’ produces it as a phenomenon or event, enabling it to “be detached from its embeddedness within a set of historically specific and locally based economic and political processes” (Edkins, 2000: 53). Vulnerability to food insecurity is constructed, not as a result of wider free-market capitalist processes or unequal relations of power, but as a failure of the vulnerable to be further incorporated and ‘included’ in that very system. Emphasising the need to ensure farmers participation in international markets in order to benefit from higher prices, removes the current situation from a specific place and time within a broader historical, political, social and economic context. In this way, it obfuscates vulnerability to market fluctuations, failing to take into account the historical factors leading to the vulnerability of all or part of a population to hunger (Edkins, 2000: 51).

Food insecurity in Cambodia is perceived as a malfunction within an otherwise efficient and equalising global market system. As a result technical, rather than structural, solutions are sought, embedded “within (and reproducing) existing structures of (state) power” (Edkins, 2000: 48; Bush, 2007). As we have seen above, rather than challenging and exploring wider structural causes of inequality and vulnerability in Cambodia, the emphasis is on identifying and correcting ‘imperfect markets’ which are perceived to inhibit the functioning of capitalism in rural areas (Sovannarith, interview with author; Ngo, interview with author). Technical solutions to the problem of imperfect markets, such as the promulgation of irrigation systems or the improvement of infrastructure, have the effect of depoliticising and decontextualising food insecurity. This obscures any need to explore wider political and economic structures through which vulnerability is formed. Within this technical approach, the food deprived are produced as victims, able be intervened upon by experts from above, and in need of aid and development projects rather than any kind of political empowerment or voice. As Edkins (2000) suggests “far from being a problem that could be solved if only the technical procedures were improved, famine [and food insecurity] is a product of power relations” (Edkins, 2000: 156). In Cambodia, technical solutions to food insecurity fail to explore or acknowledge the

unequal and asymmetrical nature of market processes and power, as well as the continuation of elite capture and the furtherance of neoliberal policies which perpetuate inequality within the country. Rather, through attempting to further embed and include the poor in market relations, technical solutions effectively maintain, reproduce and support structures of power in which poverty and food insecurity occur (Edkins, 2000; Bush, 2007).

While there is some recognition that food prices may indeed one day go down, this appears to be sidelined as more emphasis is placed on mobilising development resources around further entrenching and integrating the poor into market processes (Bush, 2007). What this ignores however is market volatility, and more specifically, the poor's particular vulnerability to this. As a result of the country's rapid integration into regional and international markets since the late 1990's, food prices have historically been very volatile in Cambodia; rising for example along with oil prices in 2005. As So Sovannarith (2009) suggests, "high and low price events are not rare in agricultural markets in Cambodia" and "high prices are often short lived compared with low-prices" (Sovannarith, 2009: 9). Constructing the food crisis as opportunity, which champions the need to encourage the increased participation of small holder farmers in free-market processes, ignores the potential negative impacts of market fluctuations and volatility on the poor.

The production of cassava is a useful demonstration of this. Cassava is one of Cambodia's largest cash crops, grown in the North-East region of the country (Kauffman, interview with author). During 2007 and the first half of 2008, prices for the root vegetable, like many other food products, reached a record high. In order to capitalise on rising prices, many farmers were encouraged to move away from growing other crops in order to invest more money, land and labour, into cassava production (Thet and Mcleod, 2009; Phnom Penh Post, 2008). In the Battambang province alone, the overall acreage dedicated to the production of cassava reportedly tripled from 10,000 hectares in 2007 to 30,000 hectares in early 2008 (Thet and Mcleod, 2009). However, for many Cambodian farmers this increased investment in cassava production has had devastating consequences. Prices of the root vegetable have plummeted. They are now 35-38 percent of what they were in 2008, having dropped

more than threefold, from 300 riels (seven US cents) per kilo in February 2008 to 90 riels per kilo in March 2009 (Kimsong, 2009; Kauffman, interview with author; Sovannarith, 2009). Among other things, recent moves in Thailand (Cambodia's largest export market for the cash crop) to subsidise and protect their own cassava producers, has resulted in the demand for Cambodian cassava to fall dramatically.⁵¹ Farmers, expecting a bumper payout in return for their investments, now find themselves with potentially hundreds of thousands of tonnes of surplus product to sell and very little buyers (Kimsong, 2009). The incomes of many cassava growers have reportedly halved, with countless farmers barely covering the costs of their investments (Thet and Mcleod, 2009; Kauffman, interview with author). As Peter Kauffman asserts, in this case even those who may have potentially benefitted from initially higher prices, "due to the volatility of prices" and market fluctuations, "now see themselves in a very desperate situation" (Kauffman, interview with author).

Predominant within much of the discussion around the food crisis, and food security more generally, is the underlying assumption that as 90 percent of Cambodia's poor are rural, they are also predominantly farmers; garnering their livelihoods from farm based agricultural activities (World Bank, 2006a; CARD, 2008; RGC, 2008a). This was demonstrated in a recent joint statement by several Cambodian NGOs. According this statement, rural development and agricultural sectors "deserve to be prioritized for the *obvious* reasons that 91 percent of the poor live in the rural areas and that public investment in these sectors can help small farmers to increase their production and make a better living *now that prices are high*" (NGO Forum, 2008b: 3; *emphasis added*). Consequently, dominant solutions to food insecurity are believed to lie in the invigoration of small holder farming and agricultural production (Rigg, 2006). As discussed above, this is demonstrated most explicitly in the NSDP, and its Mid-Term Review, where food security is discussed only within the context of agricultural productivity (RGC 2006; RGC, 2008a). Although it cannot be denied that many Cambodian households rely on agriculture for their livelihoods in some way, defining the rural poor as farmers has the potential of ignoring and obscuring a range of other

⁵¹ The headlines of the Phnom Penh Post give a nice demonstration of the volatility in cassava prices over the last year. On May 15th, 2008 the Phnom Penh Post's headline read 'Cassava develops as a popular cash crop.' Just months later, on February 11th 2009, the paper reported 'Cassava prices nosedive' (see Phnom Penh Post, 2008; Thet and Mcleod, 2009)

complex ways in which those living in the countryside generate their incomes. Thus, it has the potential of overlooking other important factors which may impact on the poor's vulnerability to food insecurity (Biddulph, interview with author). As Peter Kauffman suggests, "in Cambodia, you could say that we are still living in a subsistence agricultural system, but it's not really true. If you look at the income sources, even of poor farmers, they are more diversified than people normally recognise" (Kauffman, interviewed by author.).

A staggering 46 percent of Cambodia's households are landless or land-poor (owning less than half a hectare of land per household), with only 25 percent producing enough rice to meet their nutritional needs (World Bank, 2007; NGO Forum, 2008b; United Nations, 2009a). Many households do not produce enough food in order to sustain them throughout the year, let alone provide them with an income for other expenditures, such as health, education and other food and non-food necessities (Biddulph, interview with author). Those with no land, very little land, and even those involved in farming a majority of the time, garner their incomes from a range of other activities, which are not necessarily related or limited to agricultural production (Monyrath, 2005; SFFSN, 2008). It is estimated, for example, "that cash income from the formal or modern sector economy, notably employment in large garment sector enterprises, is an important source of income and remittances for more than 300,000 mainly rural and poorer women" (SFFSN, 2008: 33). Furthermore, the informal sector, such as casual wage labour and household microenterprises, also plays a significant role in the provision of cash to purchase food for many of Cambodia's rural poor and food-insecure. However this is often overlooked as a source of income (Monyrath, 2005; SFFSN, 2008: 33). It is estimated that as little as 15 percent of the Cambodian labour force earns an income from regularly paid wage employment (CARD, 2008). Although many government and development agencies acknowledge the role of non-farm activities, these are usually framed as additions to the central role of agricultural production and farming (Rigg, 2006).

Defining the poor as rural, and thus as farmers, limits the parameters of what kinds of poverty reduction policies and programmes are put in place. It connects people to a specific space and place, constructing them as fixed and stable, and able to be

intervened upon from above (Biddulph, interviewed by author). However, the actual reality of the lives and livelihoods of those living in rural areas is often far more complex, and may differ considerably from how they are constructed within development policy. What can often result is a disconnect between what development agencies and donors attempt to implement and what is actually happening on the ground (Biddulph, interview with author; Kauffman, interview with author; Rigg, 2006). This was demonstrated most recently in a report produced by So Sovannarith (2009), from CDRI, which looks at the latest data produced by the World Bank's 2008 Poverty Dynamics Study. This report explores the amount of households who have received some sort of development and food assistance from the government or development partners between March 2005 and March 2008. Out of 1000 households surveyed, from 9 study villages, it was found that 17 percent of households received a distribution of milled rice, with 36 percent receiving food in the form of grains, vegetable oil, or sugar (Sovannarith, 2009). Those receiving milled rice were given 50 kilograms, which is only enough to feed an average household for less than a month. Importantly, due to the mobility of the very poor, many households were excluded from receiving any food distribution or social assistance during this time. This can be seen as a result of narrow and static conceptions of 'the poor,' which meant that only those who were situated in the village at the time of distribution were able to receive, and have access to, any government support (Sovannarith, 2009).

Jonathon Rigg (2006), drawing on a wide range of studies, attempts to explore the shifting nature of livelihood creation in the 'rural south,' particularly in South East Asia. He argues that this shifting nature in livelihood creation undermines dominant conceptions of the rural poor as farmers. According to Rigg (2006), it is non-farming activities which are becoming increasingly central to rural livelihoods, with an "increasing number of rural households having no connection to farming whatsoever" (Rigg, 2006: 181). He attempts to identify and highlight a number of broad features of change which he believes are becoming more apparent and pronounced over time; significantly transforming the dynamics within rural communities. These include the increasing diversification of rural occupations and livelihoods; the shifting balance of household incomes from farm to non-farm activities; the increasing delocalised and mobile nature of people's lives and livelihood creation; the growing average age of

farmers; and the rising role of remittances in rural household incomes (Rigg, 2006: 183). These features significantly challenge the common sense understanding of rural poverty as discussed above. They demonstrate the need to move beyond narrow and simple notions of 'the poor' to a more nuanced and complex understanding of a wider range of factors influencing people's vulnerability to crisis, poverty and food insecurity (Bush, 2007). As Rigg (2006) suggests, constructing development policy within the limited parameters of agricultural development largely "overlooks the direction and trajectory of change in the Rural South, and therefore, also overlooks the emerging spaces for development intervention" (Rigg, 2006: 180).

Exploring Relations of Power, Inequality and Elite Capture

The authorities have been instrumental in demolishing villages, setting homes ablaze and making poor people homeless without due process and at the behest of those who wield economic and political power (Amnesty International, 2008).

Limiting discussions of food security to agricultural development, economic growth and simplistic constructions of the rural poor as 'farmers', shifts attention away from any exploration of more controversial issues and structures of power which maintain and perpetuate the poor's vulnerability to poverty (Biddulph, interview with author; Bush, 2007, 152). As is discussed below, focusing on small holder farmers means that development programmes and policies are often implemented in spaces away from more capital rich areas, where the interests of the powerful may be challenged (Biddulph, interview with author). Dominant characterisations of the food crisis effectively divorce the poor's vulnerability from any issues of inequality, elite capture, unequal capital accumulation or state violence which create and perpetuate food insecurity. Causes of poverty and deprivation are situated in specific locations and places, reducing poverty to a local level, while obscuring structural impacts of the wider political economy. Most significantly, there is no analysis or discussion of the impact of inequalities inherent within the global food system. While there are cursory acknowledgements of the globality of the food crisis, these remain limited to discussions of international supply and demand. There is no challenge of the powerful on behalf of the powerless. Rather approaches to poverty reduction, through their

omission of unequal relations of power, and continuing insistence on incorporating the poor into global markets, further legitimate and maintain inequality.

While the RGC and its development partners continue to profess their upmost commitment to rural poverty reduction and small-holder agricultural growth, millions of hectares of land are being sold off, or leased, to wealthy foreign governments, investors and private international companies, at the expense of the poor (RGC, 2006; Sam Ath, 2008; NGO Forum, 2008a; Economist, 2009). According to the United Nations over 943, 069 hectares, or one third, of the country's most productive land has been granted to private investors in the form of Economic Land Concessions (ELCs) for the expansion of export orientated agro-industrial plantations (OHCHR, 2007; Global Witness, 2009; Brady and Sovan, 2008). Out of 59 concessions granted, 36 have been given in favour of "foreign business interests or prominent political and business figures" (OHCHR, 2007: 1). Cambodia has become part of a global scramble for agricultural land. Wealthier nations such as Kuwait, Qatar, South Korea and China are vying for control of large tracts of Cambodian farm land in an attempt to bolster and secure their own food stocks⁵². With the complicity of government officials these are often granted in exchange for development aid and the financing of infrastructure projects such as the building of bridges and roads⁵³ (Brady and Sovan, 2008; Petras, 2009; Minder, 2008). Alarming, significant preconditions for the granting of concessions, such as the conducting of public consultations, environment and social impact reports and the "registration of land as state private land" have been largely overlooked (OHCHR, 2007: 1). There is increasing concern that ELCs are encroaching on local agriculture and grazing land. This is restricting people's access to forests and non-timbre forest products, resulting in a loss of livelihoods for many, as well as contributing to environmental degradation. Furthermore, Cambodia's indigenous communities are being particularly affected. ELCs are further alienating these

⁵² Korean multi-national, Daewoo, has recently signed a 99 year lease with the government of Madagascar to lease 1.3 million hectares of farmland for the production of maize and palm oil. Covering an area almost half the size of Belgium, this constitutes half of the country's arable land (Independent, 2009; The Economist, 2009). This represents only one of hundreds of similar land deals which have taken place throughout developing countries over the last 12 months. In Sudan alone, the United Arab Emirates has signed deals for 400,000 hectares, with South Korea having recently secured 690,000. The International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI) has estimated that around 15-20 million hectares of arable land in low-income countries have been under review for international investment since 2006 (as cited in the Economist, 2009).

⁵³ Cambodia has been holding talks with all of these countries with the potential of receiving as much as 3 billion dollars in agricultural investment in return for millions of hectares in land concessions (Minder, 2008)

communities from their indigenous land, which is central to their livelihoods, as well as cultural and traditional wellbeing (Chhim, 2005; OHCHR, 2007).

Also problematic, and in significant contrast to the governments 'pro-poor' rhetoric, is the increasingly common practice of the forcible eviction of thousands of predominantly poor Cambodian's from their villages and homes. While concentrating land in the hands of a few local and international elite, ELCs are often granted in areas where local people already reside. This is significantly compromising the rights and livelihoods of rural communities throughout the country (OHCHR, 2007; Chhim, 2005). Under the 2001 Land Law, anyone who has used land for a minimum of 5 years is entitled to claim full ownership. However, due to lack of resources the poor are often unable to pay for lengthy claim processes. This has enabled the government to take over and sell land that 'legally' belongs to no-one.⁵⁴ Large companies that are awarded concessions are then able to forcibly remove farmers and residents from the homes they occupy, often with very little or no compensation (Global Witness, 2009). Rather than protecting the poor, government agents, the police and the Cambodian military have been complicit in forcibly, and often violently, evicting thousands of Cambodians from their land. On behalf of large companies and international capital,⁵⁵ they have been involved in demolishing entire villages and setting homes ablaze (Amnesty International, 2008; Global Witness, 2009). Amnesty International has reported around 27 forced evictions in 2008 alone, impacting an estimated 23,000 people (Chamroeun and Corey-Boulet, 2009). The forced eviction of 105 households from a village in Sihanoukville in 2007, by members of the Cambodian Armed forces and military police armed with guns, tear gas and electric batons, is one among many examples of this⁵⁶ (Global Witness, 2009).

⁵⁴ The majority of rural Cambodian's do not have title documents recognising their ownership of land, either because they have not seen the need to obtain titles, or cannot afford to do so (OHCHR, 2007).

⁵⁵ In the words of a woman from Sihanoukville, who lost her home in April 2007, "I lost my house, rice and belongings like clothes and utensils. All houses were burned down and destroyed by the excavator and the bulldozer. They kept good-condition corrugated steel and planks of wood for themselves. They even took water jars and looted our chickens and ducks. They never came to evict us like this before" (as cited by Amnesty International, 2008).

⁵⁶ Boeng Kak Lake in Phnom Penh is another salient and recent example. This lake area is home to thousands. However, the RGC has recently leased the lake and its surrounding areas for 99 years to a private company for US\$79 million with the aim of filling in the lake and creating a new 'satellite city'. Although this was state public property, this will lead to the forced eviction of around 4200 predominantly poor households, who have been told to relocate to make way for private interests (Sam Ath, 2008).

Social Land Concessions (SLCs) have been championed by the NSDP and other development policy documents as a means of lessening the impacts of this land grabbing on the poor. They are promoted as an important aspect of rural poverty reduction, as a means of resolving increasing inequalities between rich and poor throughout the country (RGC, 2006; World Bank, 2006a; CARD, 2008). Yet there is a considerable discrepancy between the rapid identification and allocation of land for ELCs, and “the very slow progress made to identify land to be allocated for SLCs to Cambodia’s poorest and most vulnerable” (Sam Ath, 2008: 66; see also NGO Forum, 2008a). Furthermore, a number of NGOs have highlighted increasing accounts of SLCs which are being allocated in places already occupied for agricultural and residential use, effectively causing more landlessness (Sam Ath, 2008).

Systematic Land Titling (SLT) projects are also being implemented in certain communities as a way of increasing farmer’s participation in markets and reducing poverty⁵⁷. The increased land security which purportedly arises from SLT is believed to foster production through encouraging farmers to invest more in agriculture (such as technology, equipment, labour, and land), while also enabling further access to credit (World Bank, 2006a; Biddulph, interview with author). However, research currently being conducted by doctoral candidate Robin Biddulph suggests that SLT programmes being predominantly implemented in areas and communities where land security is not up for contention, and where agricultural production is not a significant aspect of livelihood creation (Biddulph, interview with author). There is no implementation of these programmes near or within capital rich forest or mining areas, or in areas where there are conflicts over land ownership, such as in the case of contested ELCs (Biddulph, interview with author). According to Biddulph, this is an example of the disconnect between how the poor are constructed within development programmes and actual realities on the ground. It is also a demonstration of how development projects are being implemented in spaces where relationships between the powerful and the powerless remain unchallenged.

⁵⁷ The aim of Systematic Land Titling (SLT) is to improve land tenure, promote efficient land markets, reduce land conflicts and facilitate the access to credit of small holders through increased collateral. They are also supposed to provide incentives for increased investment in land use and agricultural production.

In what can be seen as a more positive outcome of the current crisis, rising food prices have led to a significant increase in debate around the need for increased social protections and safety nets for the poor. Cambodia's lack of social safety nets has become a significant focal point in high level policy discussions and documents produced by donors, the government and NGOs⁵⁸⁵⁹(Sidgwick, interview with author; Conway, interview with author; World Bank, 2009c; RGC, 2008a). In August 2009, the World Bank approved a US \$13 million Smallholder Agriculture and Social Protection Support Operation Programme (DPO).⁶⁰ This is aimed at supporting the government's "efforts to address weaknesses in smallholder agricultural production and social protection systems which have come to light during the food price crisis" (World Bank, 2009c: 7). This programme is centred on two central tenants. It aims to increase agricultural production, which is again linked as synonymous to food security. Further, it aspires to support state mechanisms needed to better protect the poor and vulnerable from exogenous shocks, such as the food price crisis and the global financial recession⁶¹ (World Bank, 2009c). These protections include targeted subsidies and tax relief on essential commodities, food relief and targeted cash transfers, as well as labour intensive food-for-work programmes. The strengthening of social services such as healthcare and education is also a central goal (World Bank, 2009c). Here, rather than pulling the state out of protecting the poor, the government is being encouraged by donors and a range of high level forums to develop better services to protect the vulnerable.

⁵⁸At present, Cambodia has very little in the way of government protections, and what it does have is largely donor funded. Even its largest and most long-running programme, the WFP's food for work and feeding schemes, do not have full national coverage (Sidgwick, interview with author).

⁵⁹ The Cambodian government is attempting to increase its focus on social protections through expanding the coverage of its official targeting system for safety net assistance, the Identification of Poor Households Targeting Program of the Ministry of Planning (World Bank, 2009c: 23-24).

⁶⁰ This project consists of a US\$8 million grant from the Global Food Response Program, as well as US\$5 million in International Development Association (IDA) credits. It has been described as a "stand-alone, single tranche operation intended to support key policy actions which strengthen the enabling environment for direct support poor households" (World Bank, 2009c: 7).

⁶¹ The 2008 global financial crisis is having significant negative impacts on Cambodia's economy. Cambodia has a particularly narrow economic base, and three out of four of its "engines of growth"- tourism, the garment industry and construction- are substantially vulnerable to spillovers from the global recession (World Bank, 2009c; Sidgwick, interview with author). The country's garment industry for example, has developed largely on the back of exports to the United States. Thus, weak retail sales in the US are having a large impact on unemployment throughout Cambodia's garment sector. Both the construction and tourism sectors are experiencing similar slow downs, with devastating consequences for Cambodian employment (World Bank, 2009c).

In light of previous neoliberal development orthodoxies, which championed reductions in state spending on social provisions, this increased attention to social protection can be seen as a positive step. However, this seems particularly incongruous when coupled with the continuing promotion of liberalised international trade and free-market capitalism as a means of increasing food security. As Ray Bush (2007) asserts “there is a fundamental contradiction between the rhetoric of promoting food security for smallholders and the declared strategy that trade and agribusiness can become the catalyst for helping poor farmers” (Bush, 2007: 153). This increased emphasis on the promotion of social protection remains embedded within an ‘inclusive’ liberal conception of poverty reduction and development. Humanitarian provisioning and social services are being linked with the promotion of liberalised trade, private sector development and export orientated growth. Paradoxically, social safety nets are being implemented in the name of protecting the poor. Yet they are being put in place alongside policies which maintain and perpetuate the poor’s vulnerability to market failure, thus undermining any significant claim to poverty reduction.

Overall, patterns of patronage and elite capture which have dominated Cambodia’s political economic landscape continue to persist throughout the country. This ensures that only a very few wealthy elite benefit from any kind of economic development and growth. There is concern that these structures of inequality, which have dominated resource exploitation throughout the forestry and timber sectors, are now being replicated in Cambodia’s extractive industries; with “the same political elite who squandered the country’s timber resources now responsible for managing its mineral and petroleum wealth” (Global Witness, 2009: 8). Neoliberal reforms contributed to the development of unequal structures of power which continue to ensure the interests of the wealthy and powerful prevail over those of the poor. Approaches to food insecurity, and poverty reduction more broadly, do very little to challenge this status quo. While development policy espouses the importance of poverty reduction, inclusion, and ‘pro-poor’ economic growth, continuing structures of power continue to benefit local and international capital at the expense of the poor.

Concluding Section

Approaches to hunger and rising food insecurity in Cambodia remain firmly embedded within a wider ‘inclusive’ liberal framework of poverty reduction. We can see the NSDP and dominant development responses to the food crisis as a demonstration of the way in which ‘inclusive’ liberalism attempts to further expand and embed the global liberal paradigm. Policies and solutions advocated are resolutely centred around the need to further incorporate the poor and marginalised into the contemporary global food system. This is founded on the underlying belief that the prevalence and recurrence of food insecurity results predominantly from the exclusion of Cambodia’s poor from participation in world markets (see Bush, 2007). ‘Inclusive’ liberalism is further expanded and embedded through the employment of concepts such as pro-poor growth, empowerment and inclusion, aimed at offering the poor a place in a wider neoliberal order. Free-market policies aimed at fostering private sector development and export orientated growth are linked with, and legitimated through, the adoption of humanitarian concerns for social protection and human capital provisions. Absent from the NSDP, and other policy documents discussed above, is any exploration of the role of wider free-market capitalist processes or unequal relations of power in rising food insecurity. There is no analysis of the inequities inherent in our current global food system, or the increasing vulnerability to food insecurity which this creates. Rather, hunger is constructed as the failure to further incorporate the poor into this very system.

The conceptualisation of hunger as failure effectively divorces the current food crisis from a specific place and time within a broader historical, political and economic context. In this way, it obfuscates wider historical factors leading to the vulnerability of all or part of a population to hunger. As a result, issues of elite capture and unequal relations of power which perpetuate inequality and food insecurity within the country remain unchallenged. Rather than exploring relations of class and dynamics of power which render the poor vulnerable to food insecurity, dominant responses to the food crisis further legitimate private sector development and the continuation of free-market based solutions to poverty reduction. Despite increasing focus on pro-poor growth and empowerment, liberal ideology and market-orientated reforms continue to be woven throughout the NSDP approach. In this way, dominant development policies remain

ideologically reinforcing, perpetuating and maintaining inequality and market vulnerability, significantly undermining any serious commitment to poverty reduction and food security in the country.

CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUDING DISCUSSION

The rapid onset of skyrocketing food prices throughout 2008 incited significant discussions throughout the development community regarding the need to further enhance food security as part of the wider poverty reduction project. Although nuanced, dominant development responses to rising hunger clearly illuminate the way in which approaches to poverty reduction remain embedded within a wider ‘inclusive’ liberal approach to development. It is this very dominance of ‘inclusive’ liberalism inherent within development policy discourse that this thesis has sought to demonstrate. In order to do this I have explored the World Bank’s PRSP framework, and in particular Cambodia’s NSDP, in order to look at the way in which food security has been discursively constituted within this framework. By utilising the 2008 food crisis as a foundation for my analysis, I was able to explore the complex interplay between global development frameworks and approaches to a particular poverty problem within a localised context and place. Responses to food insecurity present a salient demonstration of the importance and power of discourse in development policy. Hunger, poverty and inequality are being framed and constructed in very particular ways, in turn shaping the implementation of certain kinds of policies and interventions. As Lewis and colleagues (2008) suggest, we can understand large policy documents such as the NSDP “as ‘narratives’ that frame what and how development problems are discussed by powerful actors” (Lewis et al., 2008: 7). These narratives ideologically validate and legitimate certain ways of thinking about and approaching food security, while markedly obfuscating and excluding others. As we have seen, dominant development discourses effectively obscure the deeply historical and political-economic nature of the current food crisis. This makes way for the implementation of technical and depoliticised solutions which seek to further entrench the poor within the very structures and unequal relations of power, which act to perpetuate vulnerability to hunger (Edkins, 2000).

The recent global food crisis, and rising food insecurity more generally, can be seen first and foremost as a consequence of market failure. Yet it is liberalised global markets which continue to be unquestioningly championed as the primary solution for

hunger in the developing world (Bush, 2007; Bello, 2008b; Rosset; 2008). As discussed throughout this thesis, the ideological dominance of neoliberalism within development policy throughout the 1980s and 1990s had profound impacts on levels of inequality, poverty and food insecurity the world over (Harvey, 2005; Chang, 2004). Imposed throughout low-income countries through the mechanisms of the World Bank and IMF's SAPs, neoliberal reforms have significantly shaped our current food system, transforming relations of production and consumption on a global scale. As we have seen, these reforms have effectively paved the way for the current food crisis, while dramatically increasing the poor's vulnerability to hunger (Patnaik, 1996; Oya, 2004; Davis, 2006; McMichael, 2007a; Moyo, 2008; Bello, 2008a).

Neoliberalism's relationship with agriculture and food security over the last 30 years can be seen as epitomising Polanyi's concept of the devastating and destructive nature of unregulated capitalism (Polanyi, 2001). Rather than equitably and efficiently providing for the poor and reducing poverty, unregulated global markets have increased inequality, effectively concentrating power and wealth into the hands of just a few global elite (Hellinger et al., 2001; Tan 2005; Paloni and Zanardi, 2006; Davis, 2006; Kiely, 2007). IFI imposed SAPs, coupled with WTO mandated trade liberalisation, have largely undermined domestic agricultural production, devastating local employment and displacing millions of rural communities throughout the developing world (Bryceson, 2002; Harvey, 2003; Bello, 2008a). Furthermore, the promotion of rapid trade liberalisation, coupled with reductions in public spending on agriculture, has resulted in the erosion of national food self-sufficiency for many. Chapter Three demonstrates the way in which countries such as the Philippines, which were once food self-sufficient, are now predominantly dependent on volatile and often highly subsidised food imports from the West, which further acts to significantly undermine local production. In addition, the deregulation of international capital and food markets from the regulatory boundaries of the state has had overwhelming impacts on the increased vulnerability of the poor to market volatility and failure. These policies have made way for the increased speculation of global financial capital in food commodity markets, largely contributing to the unstable and explosive boom and bust nature of international food prices. This has been coupled with the removal of state marketing boards, subsidisation policies and national food reserves previously

established to protect the vulnerable from market fluctuations. In this way neoliberal reforms have effectively increased the poor's vulnerability to market volatility, while simultaneously rolling back the states capacity to protect them.

The way in which poverty, the poor and the state were framed throughout development policy in the 1980s and 1990s gave impetus to the implementation of these neoliberal reforms. Market fundamentalism, promoting uninhibited global capitalism as the most effective way to ensure poverty reduction, became the lens through which all development issues were conceptualised. However, as demonstrated throughout this thesis, while the central tenants of neoliberalism remain woven throughout current development policy, there has been a definite shift away from the narrow market-orientated neoliberalism characteristic of SAPs. While hegemonic global liberalism continues to define and shape the way in which development policy is conceived, this liberalism has been reshaped and reformulated into something new. We can see approaches to hunger and poverty as reflective of an emerging embedding moment in Polanyi's 'double movement' (Porter and Craig, 2004). There has been a move beyond the disruptive and disembedding phase so characteristic of neoliberal SAPs, to what Craig and Porter (2006) define as a more embedding, securing and 'inclusive' liberal form.

The rise of the PRSP approach can be seen as exemplifying this shift. Within the Poverty Reduction framework neoliberal free-market reforms are being joined-up with a range of human capital concerns and safety net provisions with the aim of increasing participation of the poor in a socially and economically 'inclusive' world economy. While remaining centred around the goal of global market integration, this is promoted with an increased emphasis on the need to enable those who were previously marginalised and excluded to participate in free-market processes. What we are seeing now, woven throughout the PRSP framework, is a more 'poverty-friendly' liberalism, bolstered and legitimised through an increased focus on concepts of empowerment, participation and pro-poor economic growth. However, as has been discussed, this convergence only goes so far. While an increased focus on empowerment and inclusion may be rhetorically alluring, it remains ideologically reinforcing and limited in both depth and scale. Rather than representing a significant move away from the

dominance of neoliberalism, PRSPs and approaches to hunger represent an ongoing attempt to further entrench, secure and expand the global liberal order.

Both the PRSP framework and approaches to food security are useful demonstrations of the way in which ‘inclusive’ liberalism continues to dominate development policy. Within Cambodia’s NSDP, and surrounding policy documents, hunger is characterised as the failure of the poor and marginalised to be included within the global free-market economy. As a consequence, a central focus of development policy is on increasing export-orientated agricultural production as a means of enabling small holder farmers to participate in international trade. Here, we have a powerful demonstration of the way in which the discursive framing of a poverty problem directly impacts the way it is approached. Food security continues to be perceived as synonymous with economic growth. As a result, the emphasis is on removing what have been defined as ‘barriers to access’ within the private sector, seen as preventing the poor from being involved in market processes. Core policy mechanisms in response to food insecurity focus on the development of rural infrastructure and irrigation; providing small holders with access to credit and agricultural technology; vocational training and education; as well as ensuring access to sufficient market information (see RGC, 2006; RGC, 2008a). These policies are believed to foster market participation within the agricultural sector, in turn generating private wealth which is believed to ‘trickle down’ to the poor, ensuring poverty reduction and increased food security.

As discussed in Chapter Four, this construction of hunger as ‘failure’ has significant power effects. It produces food insecurity as an isolated phenomenon or event, allowing it to become divorced from its embeddedness within a wider set of historical, political and economic processes (Edkins, 2000). In Cambodia, vulnerability to food insecurity is constructed not as a result of wider free-market capitalist processes or unequal relations of power, but rather as the failure of the vulnerable to be further incorporated and ‘included’ within that very system. This effectively depoliticises and decontextualises hunger, constructing it as a malfunction or anomaly within an otherwise equitable and efficient global market system. The framing of food security in this way further legitimates policies implemented in the name of increasing the poor’s participation in export-orientated trade. The underlying normative assumption is that

free-market capitalism works to the benefit of the poor, and if small holder farmers were only 'able' to participate, hunger and poverty would be reduced. This conceptualisation of poverty removes any impetus to investigate wider political or economic structures which create vulnerability. In this way, it opens up spaces for the implementation of technical, rather than social or political solutions (Edkins, 2000; Bush, 2007). The poor are constructed as in need of market assistance, which remains embedded within existing structures of power, rather than any kind of political empowerment or voice. Absent from any policy documents is an acknowledgement of the inequities inherent within the global food system, or the way in which this has been exacerbated by neoliberal reforms, with issues of market volatility, concentration and failure rendered largely invisible.

Within this 'inclusive' liberal framework, the role of the state is relegated to the creation and maintenance of institutions which enable markets and the private sector to flourish. In apparent contrast to the anti-statist agenda characteristic of SAPs, the state is understood as having once again manifested a key role within the development process (Crawford, 2006). However, as discussed throughout this thesis, in practise this idealised role remains limited and shallow at best. It is free-markets which continue to be perceived as the central mechanism through which economic growth must occur, causing the state to take the position of supporting role. It is for these reasons that I argue that in Cambodia the government's role in ensuring food security remains firmly embedded within this 'inclusive' liberal frame. The RGC is to foster and maintain a sound macro-economic environment for free-markets to function efficiently, while removing 'barriers to trade' which purportedly inhibit the poor from participating in capitalist processes. This includes continuing efforts to further incorporate Cambodia into the global economy; maintaining and protecting private property rights; while establishing a strong legal framework in order to attract international capital and investment (RGC, 2006). The states role in ensuring food security is limited to the implementation of policies which enhance the poor's participation in markets, so long as these policies do not interfere with the interests of private capital. It appears that any real government intervention that involves moderating the impacts of market failure on the poor, or challenging the power of private capital on behalf of the powerless, remains critically off-topic for discussion.

The dominance of ‘inclusive’ liberalism within Cambodia’s development policy, and the way this shapes responses to rising food insecurity, has significantly problematic effects. As discussed in Chapter Four, global liberalism was manifested in Cambodia in very particular ways, characterised predominantly by the manner in which local and international elites were able to co-op, transform and rearticulate neoliberal reforms (Springer, 2009; Hughes, 2007). Imposed within a complex environment of post-genocidal conflict, neoliberalism has contributed to the establishment of structures of power and inequality which continue to dominate the country’s political economic landscape (Springer, 2007). Operating to the advantage of those in positions of power, Cambodian governance continues to be characterised by political violence, neopatrimonialism, surveillance, intimidation and oppression. Unequal structures of power maintain inequality throughout the country, ensuring that any benefits of national resource exploitation and economic growth are enjoyed by just a few local and international elite. As we have seen, the implementation of problematic Economic Land Concessions (ELCs), state sanctioned land-grabbing and elite capture offer just a few cases in point that exemplify the multifarious ways in which the dominant interests of capital continue to be favoured before those of the poor.

Implicit Malthusian assumptions linking food security to notions of scarcity continue to be woven throughout development responses to hunger at both a global level and within the Cambodian context. As a consequence, discussions surrounding solutions to rising hunger predominantly focus on increasing food production and the balancing of global supply and demand. As we have seen however, rather than resulting from scarcity food insecurity is deeply connected to wider issues of poverty and inequality. Limiting discussions of global hunger to food production and availability obscures structural inequalities and power which reproduce people’s inability to access food. It shifts the focus from an analysis of social relations of hunger to one based on technical, depoliticised and often ideological conceptions of food availability. This is demonstrated most clearly within Cambodia’s Poverty Reduction framework where discussions of food security remain limited to within the narrow confines of agricultural production and economic growth (see RGC 2006; RGC, 2008a).

Importantly, after much development policy neglect, the significance of an increased focus on agricultural production needs to be acknowledged⁶² (Bello, 2008; Sundaram, 2008b). As discussed throughout Chapter Three, it has been the undermining of agriculture through the implementation of neoliberal reforms which has contributed to significant increases in unemployment, inequality and poverty throughout the developing world. For this reason, we can see this increased focus on small holder production and rural poverty as a much needed shift. However, as this thesis has sought to demonstrate, it is the direction and focus of this shift which generates cause for concern. Cambodia's NSDP, and surrounding policy documents, can be seen first and foremost as a strategy to boost trade in agricultural exports. The emphasis remains on the implementation of policies which will support private sector growth, and in particular promote agricultural production for liberalised, export-orientated international trade. Any real state involvement in regulating the negative impacts of capitalism on the poor, such as agricultural or small industry protections, tariffs, subsidies, and redistributive policies, are notably exempt from development discourse. This significantly undermines any serious commitment to protecting the vulnerable or ensuring a kind of agricultural development which benefits small holder farmers and the local poor.

Limiting discussions of food security and poverty reduction to agricultural development and economic growth fails to take into account wider issues of inequality and unequal relations of power which perpetuate certain people's vulnerability to hunger. There is no challenge of the powerful on behalf of the powerless (Biddulph, interview with author). Rather, depoliticised and technical solutions to hunger shift attention away from more controversial concerns. As discussed in Chapter Four, focusing predominantly on agriculture and small holder farming has meant that development programmes and policies are often implemented in spaces away from more capital rich areas, where the interests of the powerful may be challenged. Poverty is situated discursively within specific locations and communities, obscuring structural impacts of the wider political economy. The rural poor are overwhelmingly constructed as fixed, stable and agriculturally based, thus able to be intervened upon from above through a range of technical, rather than political, mechanisms. While depoliticising the

⁶² Refer to discussion in Chapter Three.

poor, constructing the rural poor as farmers obscures a wide range of other complex ways in which people living in the countryside generate their incomes (Rigg, 2006; Biddulph, interview with author). It effectively narrows the parameters of the kinds of poverty reduction policies and programmes are put in place, while simultaneously removing any necessity to evaluate relations of power. As a consequence, approaches to food insecurity and poverty reduction do very little to challenge the status quo. While development policy espouses the importance of poverty reduction, inclusion and 'pro-poor' economic growth, ongoing unequal structures of power remain left unchecked, continuing to benefit local and international capital at the expense of the poor.

While market orientated policies remain central to the development project, these reforms are being coupled with and legitimated through increased humanitarian concerns for social protections and human capital provision. There is a rising emphasis on the need for the state to provide safety nets, particularly in the form of social service provisions such as healthcare, education and targeted food and cash transfers (Conway, interview with author; Sidgwick, interview with author). It is important to recognise the potentially positive nature of this increased focus on social protections. As was discussed in Chapter Two, the rolling back of publically funded social services was a central element of neoliberal reforms throughout the 1980s and 1990s (United Nations, 2005). In the context of Cambodia, where such social protections are almost non-existent, an increased focus on safety nets can be seen as a much needed step. However, this remains highly incongruous and contradictory given the continued emphasis on the promotion of liberalised international trade and free-market capitalism as a means of ensuring food security. Rather, the continued adherence to the promotion of liberalised export orientated trade undermines any serious commitments to providing protection for the vulnerable. This can be seen as a clear demonstration of 'inclusive' liberalism in practise. What we are seeing is the continued dominance of market liberalism. However it has been re-shaped and rearticulated with a more 'poverty-friendly' face. Free-market policies aimed at fostering private sector and export orientated growth are legitimated through the adoption of concepts of empowerment, inclusion and pro-poor development. In this way, 'inclusive' liberalism

can be further expanded and embedded, offering even the most marginalised and excluded a place in the wider liberal order.

Overall, the continuing dominance of ‘inclusive’ liberalism within the PRSP framework and approaches to hunger undermines any real commitment to increasing food security for the world’s most vulnerable. It is the free-market which continues to be championed as central to the Poverty Reduction agenda. Rather than protecting the vulnerable from market failure, or ensuring the equal redistribution of resources to the poor, the principle focus is on bolstering private sector growth. The role of the state, while delivering some social services, is first and foremost to ensure that markets flourish. Great efforts are being made to include the poor, the marginalised and the vulnerable within wider capitalist processes, while avoiding the adoption of any policies which would actually challenge market power. It is this shift towards the incorporation of the poor within the wider liberal order which characterises ‘inclusive’ liberalism. In this way, it embeds and extends the reach of markets into areas where neoliberalism was previously unable to penetrate (Craig and Porter, 2006: 10). However, as the recent global food crisis clearly demonstrates, markets do fail and it is the poor who predominantly take the brunt of this failure. Yet there appears to be scarce acknowledgment of the way in which free-market capitalism has patterned rising hunger, inequality and poverty on a global scale. There is no recognition of the way in which neoliberalism has exacerbated unequal relations of power which continue to maintain and perpetuate certain people’s vulnerability to hunger. Instead, current proposed ‘solutions’ aspire to further entrench and embed the poor into this very system.

Deeply connected to issues of inequality and power, rising hunger cannot be examined in isolation from the wider historical, political and economic processes which produce it. The aim of this thesis is to contribute to recent development and political economic scholarship by re-politicising and re-contextualising hunger within the wider trajectory and development of global liberalism. In doing so, it has contributed to advancing the scholarship of ‘inclusive’ liberalism, illuminating the way in which this continues to inform development approaches to rising food insecurity in Cambodia. Overall, this thesis has sought to broaden the frame through which we examine the current food

crisis and approaches to poverty reduction. In doing so, it has highlighted the various contradictions and limitations inherent within the PRSP approach, while demonstrating the continuing powerful role of ideology and discourse in development policy and practice.

Appendix I: Interview Participants

Conway, Tim [Senior Poverty Specialist, World Bank Cambodia Country Branch]. Interview with author. Digital recording. Phnom Penh Cambodia, 24 February, 2009.

Sidgwick, Eric [Senior Country Economist, Asian Development Bank]. Interview with author. Digital recording. Phnom Penh, Cambodia, 6 March, 2009.

Kauffman, Peter [Council for Agriculture and Rural Development (CARD)]. Interview with author. Digital recording. Phnom Penh, Cambodia, 5 March, 2009.

Lingnau, Hildegard [Senior Advisor, Royal Government of Cambodia, Ministry of Planning]. Interview with author. Digital recording. Phnom Penh, Cambodia, 6 March, 2009.

Eiichiro, Hayashi [Aid Coordination Advisor, Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA)]. Interview with author. Digital recording. Phnom Penh, Cambodia, 26 February, 2009.

Sovannarith, So [Research Associate, Cambodian Development Research Institute (CDRI)]. Interview with author. Digital recording. Phnom Penh, Cambodia, 4 March, 2009.

Ngo, Sothath [Development Policy Project Officer, NGO Forum on Cambodia]. Interview with author. Digital recording. Phnom Penh, Cambodia, 20 February, 2009.

Koop, Gjis [Advisor Development Issues Programme, NGO Forum on Cambodia]. Interview with author. Digital recording. Phnom Penh, Cambodia, 20 February, 2009.

Sochivy, Khieng [Policy and Programme Development Manager, Oxfam Great Britain in Cambodia]. Interview with author. Digital recording. Phnom Penh, Cambodia, 4 March, 2009.

Biddulph, Robin [PhD Candidate and Field Researcher, University of Gothenburg]. Interview with author. Phnom Penh, Cambodia, 28 February, 2009.

Appendix II: Interview Themes

- What are the core elements and overarching objectives of the World Bank's PRSP/NSDP programme in Cambodia?
- In what ways are these objectives converted into actual programmes on the ground level, and what are some of the limitations of achieving this?
- How, and in what way, are issues of food security addressed within the World Bank's PRSP approach in Cambodia. How does the issue of the food crisis fit within Cambodia's NSDP framework?
- What does the World Bank, particularly the Cambodian Country Branch, see as the most vital policies and initiatives for tackling growing food security issues?
- What are some of the limitations within the PRSP approach in working with issues of food security?
- What are some particular complexities within the specific Cambodian context?
- What other development organisations, UN agencies and bilateral donors is the World Bank working with in Cambodia, particularly around issues of food security and poverty relief? And how is this different to other Poverty Reduction efforts?
- In what ways does the PRSP approach influence the policies and programmes of other development projects and initiatives in Cambodia?
- How influential is the Bank in establishing norms and practises of development and how does this interplay with how issues of food and livelihood security are approached?
- How influential is the World Bank in informing or determining the policy outcomes of the Cambodian government, around issues of Poverty Reduction and food security?
- How do international organisations, such as the World Bank, influence understandings of good governance, poverty reduction and food security? How does this support or undermine developing countries ability to determine and implement their own poverty reduction policies?

- How do continuing conditionalities (albeit, indirect) also continue to influence what kinds of poverty reduction policies or initiatives are put in place in Cambodia and what kinds of initiatives and policies are excluded?

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