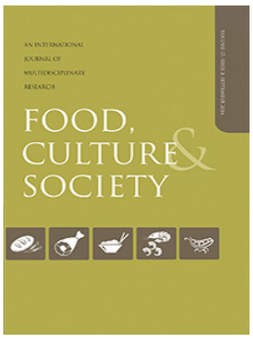

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Perspectives on Teaching

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Teaching about Globalization and Food in Ecuador

Abstract

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This article describes a course we taught while on exchange at the Universidad San Francisco de Quito during the spring semester of 2006. Food studies provided a window through which to explore issues of race and class and the effects of globalization in this Andean country. The timing was also perfect in that Ecuador was being pressured by the United States into quickly signing a bilateral free-trade agreement. Popular pressure derailed the talks soon after our class was over. Protests by indigenous farmers, in fact, were happening at the same time as the class reached its apogee in the form of a field trip to the indigenous market of Zumbagua to restudy the work done there twenty years earlier by Mary Weismantel, recorded in her important book, *Food, Gender and Poverty in the Ecuadorian Andes*.

vol. 10 :: no. 3
fall 07

Keywords: Ecuador, food studies, food sovereignty, Andean market, free trade agreement, Zumbagua

Introduction

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A growing interest in the anthropology of food, increasing involvement in the food security movement where we live in the Willamette Valley in Oregon, and fluency in Spanish for one of us and a desire to improve for the other led us to plan a sabbatical centered on food issues in Ecuador. We had been corresponding for several years with a couple of Ecuadorian professors, Fernando Ortega and Marleen Haboud, about the possibility of exchanging houses and universities. We reasoned that this would give them greater access to research materials and more time to write, and it would give us access to Ecuador and contacts within the university system. Numerous details not worth recounting needed to be worked out, but ultimately we managed to job and house swap. Our end of the deal involved team teaching a course that could fit under the rubric "nutritional anthropology" at the Universidad San Francisco de Quito. As all students have to take at least one course in English, the administration decided that we could teach in our native language.

We were surprised and quite pleased to find that most of our students were Ecuadorian. We had four nutrition students, one pre-medicine student, one gastronomy student and two American anthropology students. (Universidad San Francisco de Quito has an important number of exchange students from the United States, as it lacks much of the bureaucracy and scheduling conflicts of the older universities.) It was certainly smaller than classes we were used to, but it made it much easier to organize out-of-class activities, which we emphasized from the beginning of the class.

In what follows we will touch upon some of the topics covered in class and then plunge deeper into a discussion of the central foci of the course: the

symbolic value of food and its linkages with race and class and the impact of globalization on Andean foodways. The rapid social changes that have swept over Ecuador in the contemporary period were illuminated by a class fieldwork project which involved a rapid restudy of the Andean market town of Zumbagua, two decades after it had initially been investigated by Mary Weismantel in her work, *Food, Gender and Poverty in the Ecuadorian Andes*.

Building Historical Background

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We began the course by asking the students to write about their favorite food and then tell us what they think it says about their identity. "Jamón Serrano" is what we received from one student with a Spanish mother in a society where Spanish heritage is a mark of distinction. "Chochos and tostados" (lupine seeds and toasted corn) from another who was proud of his national food traditions. "Soy milk" from the American vegetarian. With this exercise we wanted to introduce the symbolic importance of food, a theme that continued through much of our reading and revealed itself especially in the food lore that students collected throughout the term.

Their first assignment was to read excerpts from Sophie Coe's *Cuisines of the New World* about the diet of the Incas. Ecuador lay at the northern reaches of the Inca Empire. It had only been conquered 50–60 years before the Spanish Conquest. We discovered that, because of their Johnny-come-lately historical status and because of their bloody battles with several indigenous nations, such as the Caranguis and Cayambes, the Incas are regarded by Ecuadorians as the outside conquerors before the Spanish, rather than "our noble ancestors." Nevertheless, reading excerpts from Sophie Coe was a way of talking about a successful local food system. Students had to think about the ways people in the Andes fed themselves for thousands of years before the importation of European agricultural systems and products.

The next reading, by Olivas Weston in Spanish, focused on cuisine during the Viceroyalty of Peru, which included what is now Ecuador. At this point in the class we looked at the fusion of native, European and African products and methods of preparation. We read about the first coffee houses and bakeries in Lima and the institution of regulations. We spent some time talking about local connections between health and food, especially the importation of hot and cold foods; a belief system that persists in many indigenous communities today, but was once firmly entrenched in the high society of South American cities. Olivas Weston includes recipes from this period at the back of her book and this led us to our first "field" assignment. Students were asked to pair up and pick a recipe. They were then responsible for purchasing the ingredients together, asking the vendors

where the ingredients originated, meeting at the university kitchen at a certain time, preparing their dishes, and explaining them to the class, including the hot or cold nature of each of the ingredients. While we had imagined that they would be going to an open-air market, of which there are many excellent ones in Quito, we discovered that most middle-class Ecuadorians (as were our students) shopped in a supermarket. Just like in the US, supermarket workers had no idea where the products they sold originated. We did however learn that the recipes were well-balanced between hot and cold foods and the project provided a great bonding experience as we cooked together and sat down to eat at a long communal table.

Documenting Shopping and Eating Patterns

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In preparation for our fieldtrip to Zumbagua, we asked the students to do a bit of fieldwork on their own to get used to asking people questions and to provide some comparative information about how people were eating in Quito. This assignment had three parts. One part was a shopping journal. Students were to accompany the person who did the shopping for their household and document everything that was bought, where it was bought and what was its origin. Most people accompanied their mothers to do weekly shopping at Supermaxi.

Urban Ecuadorian women are not alone in shifting their shopping preferences to favor supermarkets. The whole of Latin America now lives with big box food stores. In 1990, supermarkets accounted for only 10–20 percent of the retail sector in Latin America. By 2000 they accounted for 50–60 percent. As one report put it, "In one globalising decade, Latin American retailing made the change which took the US retail sector 50 years" (Reardon and Berdeguë 2002: 371). The number of supermarkets in Ecuador has increased dramatically in recent years, going from 85 in 1998 to 160 in 2004. The majority of the stores are located in the two biggest cities of the country, Quito (dominated by SLF, parent company of Supermaxi and Megamaxi) and Guayaquil (dominated by IER, parent company of Hipermercado and Mi Comisariato) and are owned by Ecuadorians with very little foreign investment involved (Zamora 2004). (Interestingly, several people told us that the major supermarket chains in Ecuador are against signing free-trade agreements with the United States for fear that US box stores like WalMart will move in on their retail turf.)

Ecuador lags a bit behind the Latin American average in that only 34 percent of Ecuadorians bought food in supermarkets in 2002, spending on average $160 per month on food. People comprising that 34 percent come predominantly from the middle and upper classes, which together account

for about 30 percent of the total population of Ecuador. Another 25 percent of the population shops mainly in outdoor or covered markets (called "wet markets" in the literature), 10 percent in mini-marts (of which there were two hundred in Ecuador in 2002, most located in gas stations), and 25 percent in smaller grocery stores and independent neighborhood stores (Alarcón 2003). While these statistics link socioeconomic class to preference for supermarkets, they do not mention race, which is, of course, closely tied to social class in Latin America. Cholas (culturally part-Indian/part-mestizo) dominate markets all over the country (Weismantel 2001: 34, note 11). They are seen as very strong, outspoken women who often make richer, whiter women very uncomfortable. Rather than risking a confrontation, many middle class women prefer the sanitized anonymity of the supermarket. One of our Ecuadorian students had never even been to an open-air market before. Several of the students said that their parents shopped in the supermarket because the quality of the food was higher and it was cleaner. We don't mean to ignore these reasons just as we don't mean to downplay the ease of being able to do one-stop shopping late into the night at Supermaxi. However, we think that the underlying tensions between racial/class groups in Ecuador, while not always directly expressed, do create a desire for separation. Evidence for this emerged in the students' final reflection papers on their market fieldwork in Zumbagua. One student wrote, "I think that it was very nice to realize the reality of these people who live in the same country as us, but are totally different from us." Another student wrote, "What I liked the best was to speak with the people of the market and to see that they are not like one thinks. They didn't bother us and they weren't rude. They even liked telling us about their history and traditions."

The second fieldwork assignment was to document eating habits. The students first had to write down everything they ate in a day. After doing that, they were supposed to do the same with two other people who differed from them in some demographically salient way. Gender, age, social class and region were all variable aspects recorded by different students. When the students completed their food journal exercises, we had them write their results on the board. We then analyzed the results as a class. Having done this exercise in the US, it was refreshing to see the variety of fruits eaten by Ecuadorians: apples, bananas, blackberries, *taxo*, strawberries, limes, *naranjillas*, mangos, cherries, *granadillas*, and pineapple were all recorded.[1] Generational differences could be seen in the amount of fast food eaten by the younger set, usually at American chains. Some regional differences could be seen in coastal people eating more plantains and yucca (manioc) and people in the mountains eating more quinoa and fava beans. Most salient was the lack of variety in the diets of poor people. Starches made up a much larger part of their diets. We talked about how the data generated by the class were skewed, as the poorer people they interviewed were maids in their

homes. These employees ate what they prepared for the student's family for the largest midday meal which included far more protein and a greater variety of fruits and vegetables than what they prepared for their own families.

We started the next section of the course by reading food-related excerpts from Benitez and Garcés' *Culturas Ecuatorianas Ayer y Hoy*. This led us into a discussion of the different ecological regions of Ecuador and how they affect eating habits. We had discussed the important notion of verticality when discussing the Incas. Now we were reading about how pre-Colombian Ecuadorians traded and bartered foods across the different zones and how these practices still continued to a certain extent.

Tackling Weismantel's Work: Race, Class and Food

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With an overview of traditional eating habits in Ecuador under our belts, we then focused on a particular indigenous town in the *paramo*.[2] We were very pleased to be leading the students through Mary Weismantel's food-centered ethnography on Zumbagua, *Food, Gender and Poverty in the Ecuadorian Andes*. Not only does it point out the symbolic values of food and eating in a very specific ecological zone, but Zumbagua lies only 3–4 hours from Quito. The experience of visiting the place where the ethnography was researched had a way of elevating the material in importance and engraving it on students' memories. We were a bit surprised to find out that only one of our students had ever been there and that was to help direct a bike race through the area. Weismantel's fieldwork was done in the early 1980s and we were now in 2006. We began planning a fieldtrip to the Zumbagua market in order to document what had stayed the same and what had changed over twenty plus years.

Weismantel's book has become something of a culinary classic, and has certainly put the parish of Zumbagua, Ecuador on the map as a must-see stop for students of Andean anthropology. The author sensitively analyses a fascinating wealth of data on social and economic relations as they are symbolically reproduced through the production, distribution and consumption of food, both at the micro level, that is, within and between households, as well as at the macro level of ecological zones and national regions. The study goes further to analyze in provocative ways how structures of culinary distinction inform matters of personal and group identity, particularly concerning gender and racial identities.

Weismantel was sensitive to the historic specificity of the time in which her study was carried out, as witnessed by the importance she attributed to the contemporary transformations of asymmetrical social relations between "Indians" and "whites" which dated back to the hacienda period that ended

approximately twenty years before her study. The historical contingency of her analysis was further addressed when she predicted that the ideology of reciprocity and the dense networks of interaction that bound kin and neighbors were slowly giving way. In their place were evolving new arrangements in which households were becoming more and more characterized by the isolation of market relations caused by ever greater capitalist penetration into the Zumbaguan countryside (1998: 189).

It worked well to spend part of the class period talking about Zumbagua and the other part talking about food habits in Quito because it continuously emphasized class and race differences in Ecuador. The two American students seemed far more interested in discussing racism, probably because they did not feel implicated in the social/racial hierarchies in Ecuador, but also perhaps because they were anthropology students and had gotten used to discussing the topic. Weismantel spends a fair amount of time in the book discussing ethnicity and the historical precedents to relations between groups, in particular between "Indians" and others. Zumbagua was a hacienda until 1964 and the discriminatory practices inherent to this system were still rather fresh in people's memories when Weismantel did fieldwork twenty years later. Our students were aware and not proud of this fact. One of our students was descended from a hacienda family and had tried hard to relate to the Indian workers in a less hierarchical fashion. However, when he visited the hacienda, the workers still bowed down to his grandmother, bringing her traditional gifts of food. The Ecuadorian students had grown up hearing racist comments against Indians, but as they were training to be healthcare professionals, they knew they should be more open-minded. Nevertheless, we sensed a certain level of resistance to giving such importance to Indian foodways. As nutrition students, they knew that quinoa and chochos were healthier than bleached white flour, but they were learning a scientific formula for nutrition that de-emphasized the symbolic value of certain foods.

Being foreigners made it more appropriate for us to ask about race directly as we were unfamiliar with the culture. When we asked, "What would your parents say if you came home with an Indian boyfriend?" a couple of the girls indicated that they would be in big trouble with their families. They told us that some of their parents took offense at being called "mestizo," preferring to identify as "blanco," but that their generation was comfortable with the term.[3] Weismantel (2001) points out that the popular triple-layered ethnic model (blanco, mestizo, indio) of Latin American society disguises what is really a biracial, lived existence for the majority on the bottom. "In actual practice within specific social contexts, there is no intermediate or 'mixed' racial category: race operates as a vicious binary that discriminates superiors from inferiors … [S]ocial life in the Andes is fundamentally a matter of Indians and whites." (Weismantel 2001: xxxii). The increasing self-

determination of Afro Latinos also challenges this popular three-tiered model by adding, rather than subtracting, a dimension. As proud as Ecuadorians were of their World Cup soccer team, which is almost exclusively Afro-Ecuadorian, several people commented their belief to us that the world was going to think that Ecuador was in Africa. One of our students told of an Afro-Ecuadorian in the military who was not allowed to swim in the base pool with everyone else.

Taking advantage of the many copies of Peggy McIntosh's *White Privilege* article on the web and the turn of our discussions, we added that article as an assignment, having them think how white-skin privileges in Ecuador intersect with privileges concerning food, nutrition and healthcare. We found an excellent example posted on the department's bulletin board. It was a job announcement that specified that the applicant be above a certain height with no reason given as to why this attribute might be important. The students had not recognized the racism and classicism inherent in the ad. Yet, when we talked about it, they quickly acknowledged that the average Indian is much shorter than the average mestizo, largely due to poverty and malnutrition.

We had asked the students to write down questions that occurred to them while reading Weismantel and to send them to us by e-mail, so that we could compile a list. We incorporated their questions into our questionnaire concerning the Zumbagua market and how things might have changed in twenty years. Realizing that we had only one chance to gather market information with the students, we wanted to make this fieldwork experience as straightforward as possible. We talked in class about ethnographic methods as well as how the students should dress and act and not interrupt people, but we also printed out specific questions for them to find the answers to and others that they could ask after developing more rapport with someone. Each pair of students had both overlapping and distinct questions pasted into small notebooks with pens attached. We handed these out a few days before, so that the students could familiarize themselves with the questions. We wrote the questions in English and discussed how they might be translated into Spanish. This meant that everyone had to develop their own comfortable style instead of reading the questions word for word from the notebook.

The students took the assignment very seriously and broke up in pairs to scour the market. We did the same, only rather than having a notebook, Joan carried her palm-sized video camera and recorded conversations that she had with vendors as she bought *arroz de cebada* and *machica* (cracked barley and toasted barley flour), two of the foods that Weismantel described as being central to the Zumbagua diet. David took pictures of the market with a still camera. Later, Joan edited the footage into a short film that she showed to the class and it spurred a lot of discussion as students compared

the words of the people interviewed on the film with their own conversations.

Changes in the Zumbagua Market

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So what has—and has not—changed in and around Zumbagua since the early 1980s? The parish of Zumbagua is still overwhelmingly an agricultural region. It is nestled high in the chilly but sunlit Ecuadorian sierra a couple of hours directly west from the main population centers scattered along the Pan-American highway running the length of the north-south central valley. Weismantel pointed out that the market used to be a starch market, a sign of local poverty. Men brought back luxuries like bread and noodles when returning to Zumbagua for the weekend from their jobs in the city (Weismantel 1998: 184). Meat used to be unavailable; vegetables were limited to carrots and onions; fruits were scarce.

Now, the road has been paved for several years, and global trade has increased with the result that the variety of products available in the Saturday market has grown immensely. Unlike in the 1980s when Zumbagua was mainly a starch market, it is now possible to find almost any vegetable available anywhere else in the country. The locally produced onions and carrots are omnipresent, but so are red and green peppers, broccoli, tomatoes, cabbage, avocados, green beans, radishes, squash, lettuce, parsley, beets, garlic, corn (rare), sweet potatoes, and regular potatoes (though only *Leona* and *Media Chola* varieties, which were still hard to find).

The fruits in the market also rivaled the variety at a Quito market. A strip of tables selling mainly bananas, apples, pears and *capuli*, or Sierra cherries, runs along the southern border street in the southeast corner of the market near the church; otherwise, fruit stands coexist with the vegetables. Besides the fruits already mentioned, it was possible to buy *babaco*, blackberries, strawberries, pineapples, plantains of various colors and sizes, papayas, *guayabas*, *tomate de arbol*, limes, *zapotes*, green oranges, passion fruit, and plums (*claudia*). In front of the church a small mountain of green plantains had been dumped off the back of a truck. The fruit famine is definitely over.

Various green plants, presumably used as food for guinea pigs, chickens and for other animals, were for sale throughout this area, as were medicinal plants such as chamomile, lemongrass, a species of mint (*hierba buena*) and *arruda*. Off to the side, parked in the street that formed the eastern boundary of the market, were people selling eggs from off trucks. Weismantel (1998: 118) mentioned that there were no fresh eggs for sale and Peltre-Wurz also noted a dearth of eggs in the country (2004: 45). This does not appear to be the case today. Lots of eggs were for sale and in more than one location.

Weismantel (1998: 96) also mentioned that even during her stay, *chicha* (locally called "*aswa*"), the barley-based home brew, was rapidly disappearing from the market. It is gone today. In its place, perhaps, a woman in the market was selling fresh juices made from carrots and alfalfa and eggs in beer—all presumably thought to be healthy for the consumer, and thus indicative of the presence of clients with a well-cultivated appreciation for fresh, raw products and new-age health advice.

The marketplace of Zumbagua has been paved since Weismantel's sojourn, so dusty winds and muddy pathways no longer characterize the site. The market is still divided into areas where different products are sold, but there is always some overlap and fuzzy borders. The only strong division is between the upper and lower sections which are physically separated by a four-foot drop connected by several stairs. The lower area, unlike in the early 1980s, now contains a dozen little enclosed concrete and cinderblock stalls in rows in the northeast quadrant where barbers and a few other service providers set up shop. Next to them in the center of the lower area is a cinderblock slaughterhouse containing butcher shops; again, something that did not exist in the 1980s. The butcher shops in and around the slaughterhouse sell meat, cutting to order chunks of whatever size the customer wants. The meat appeared to be mainly goat, mutton and beef with some stalls selling precooked pork. Llama and sheep heads were also sold as individual items. Live chickens could also be purchased in this section, but processed chicken meat stalls were located on the upper level and sold only heads and feet. We were told that these came from a poultry processing plant now operating in Latacunga. The rest of the lower level of the market was used to load and unload trucks and to sell and drink *trago*, which is locally produced sugarcane alcohol.

The mention of *trago* is significant for it brings up the question of gendered culinary behaviors in Zumbagua. In Weismantel's (1998: 137) time, only men drank *trago* in the market. This gender-specific behavior has continued into the contemporary period. Women we asked said that they drink *trago*, but only on special occasions, such as baptisms, etc, never at the market. Women at the market also confirmed that only men smoke, just as in Weismantel's day. Though cigarettes were for sale, we did not see anyone smoking in the market, male or female. The biggest gendered culinary change we could discover involved the consumption of aji, locally known as *uchu*, which is a hot pepper sauce considered in Weismantel's (1998: 136) time as exclusively men's food. The women at the market seemed amused when we asked about it today. They all said that both men and women eat it. Men may like some dishes hotter, but aji is no longer exclusively a male condiment.

In addition to fruits and vegetables were processed foods. The commercially manufactured processed foods ran the gamut, including soft

drinks, box wines, margarine, Quaker oats, toilet paper, paper towels, canned sardines, soaps, vegetable oils, Nescafé, gelatin, ketchup, as well as cookies, crackers and candies of all sorts. Situated along the platform edge that provided the foundation for the upper market were open-air sellers of *panela*—an unprocessed brown cane sugar from the coast often formed into balls or wheel shapes. Other, more locally-prepared foods included mainly fried fish and potato tortillas, fried breads, fried corn cakes with egg, beet and cabbage salad, but also fresh cheese chunks dunked in panela honey, hard-boiled eggs, gelatin in a plastic glass covered with a white topping, small, round breads that were sprinkled with sugar and covered in pink, blue or green sprinkles, bizcochos, and soups with pork or sheep heads in them (many jaw bones were scattered about on the ground near these booths). Another booth near the breads sold various juices. Finally as far as food was concerned, there was a small area along the street in the southwest corner of the market where a few vendors sold fried potatoes and sausages (*salchipapas*).

There are at least two exceptions to the generalization that the market has expanded over time, and they involve yucca and salt. Weismantel (1998: 106, 118) describes how trucks piled full of plantains, salt and yucca used to be a standard feature of the market. Plantains by the truckload are still there. However, we found no trucks full of yucca. As for salt, it used to be sold off the back of trucks by the shovel full. That is no longer the case. In 1984 a law was passed requiring that all salt be iodized. The family of then president Cordero controlled 95 percent of salt production in Ecuador, so it was not difficult to win acceptance from the biggest producer. The law soon expanded to include the smaller producers operating in Manabí Province, the ones supplying places like Zumbagua. In about 1988, testing began being carried out in various rural communities to gauge whether and how much iodine was making it into the Ecuadorian diet. Dosages at the production end were duly adjusted. Today the goiters that used to plague many peoples' lives are gone and everyone buys treated salt sold in small bags (Dr. Fernando Ortega, personal communication).

A reexamination of the Zumbagua market in 2006 showed a much more prosperous market with lots of variety. However, while the region has grown in population, the people are poorer on average. A larger percentage has moved into town, but the average size of the plots of land farmed outside of the towns has shrunk. Today, 100 percent of the population of Zumbagua parish residing outside the town center is reported to live below the poverty line (Larrea 2005: 137). The cantón of Pujili, of which Zumbagua parish forms a part, is one of the 14 poorest in the whole country (Peñaherrera 2002: 100) and Cotopaxi province has recorded among the highest levels of malnutrition. (60.6 percent of children aged under five years suffer from chronic malnutrition according to the McKnight Foundation 2007). So,

while looking at the market presents the idea that the area has become wealthier, it is not, in fact, the case.

Starches provide the cheapest calories and have always been important in the Zumbagua market. They still occupy the center of the market. The first thing to strike us were bags and bags of noodles and also tables full of bread. Both these items were described in the luxury category by Weismantel, but today have taken over a good share of market space. Rice, another food symbol of upper class/mestizo status, was also very prevalent. We also found oats, dried corn, lentils, peanuts, barley and barley flour (*machica*), black beans, *mote* (corn kernels), *tostados* (fried corn kernels), *chochos* (lupine seeds), popcorn fava beans, dried peas and flour made from both dried peas and favas. Most of these dry goods were sold out of large gunny sacks. Salt was also being sold in smaller sacks in this area.

vol. 10 :: no. 3
fall 07

Peltre-Wurtz's study of poverty in Ecuador contains a graph of Ecuadorian wheat production versus wheat imports for the years 1961–1998. The graph reveals that the last year local production outstripped imports of wheat was in 1969. From then on imports have been on the rise and production on a steady decline (Peltre-Wurtz 2004: 67). In 1965, Ecuadorians consumed 21 kg of wheat per person, 56 percent of which was grown locally. By the year 2000, Ecuadorians were consuming 34.1 kg per person, only 3.9 percent of which was grown locally (Peltre-Wurtz 2004: 65). Peltre-Wurtz attributes this development to two factors: (i) Wheat is easy to transport long distances because it keeps well, particularly compared with other foodstuffs. (ii) US wheat delivers higher yields than Ecuadorian wheat. Perhaps more importantly, the exportation of the surplus produced is underwritten by US export subsidies dating back to the passage of PL480 in 1954 (Peltre-Wurtz 2004: 66). In the early 1980s, export subsidies shaved the cost of US wheat by a little over 13 percent, compared with the price of wheat on the international market (Peltre-Wurtz 2004: 72, note 25).

Weismantel (1998: 184) would probably argue that wheat consumption is on the rise in rural areas because noodles are a higher-status food. She already described the transition that was taking place in Zumbagua in the early 1980s as bread was moving from a luxury food to more of a staple (Weismantel 1998: 156–7). Peltre-Wurtz (2004: 65) also points out that noodles take half as long to cook as rice and are therefore cheaper and quicker to prepare, which may also be part of their attraction. There was a dramatic drop in barley production during the 1960s and 1970s and then a leveling off between 1985 and 2000, which, when compared with population growth, is still a decline in consumption per person (Peltre-Wurtz 2004: 49). In sum, local status considerations have supported the US agricultural subsidy program and undermined the local production of grains that can thrive in harsh, high altitude ecosystems. Our nutrition students were all very aware that the importation of bleached wheat and rice offered

a poor nutritional substitute for barley, quinua and lupine seeds. Several of the vendors we talked to at the market also recognized the superior nutritional value of traditionally grown grains, but it appeared that other considerations were more important.

The abundance of rice in the market today compared with the past is also supported by status considerations. The increased demand has been met internally instead of increasing the quantity through foreign imports. Ecuador instituted a rice program providing support for large coastal rice plantations. Weismantel points out that rice, during her stay, was one of the quintessential "white" foods, fetishized as a marker of the presence of cash in the household and thus the rising class position of the consumers, but rarely eaten by locals who were too poor to afford it. It stood in opposition to barley which acted as the foundational staple of the Zumbaguan diet. During Weismantel's (1998: 160) time there, the borrowed Spanish word for white rice, *arroz*, actually referred to barley in Zumbaguan Quichua, while *arroz de Castilla* was used to refer to white rice.

When we asked in the market in Zumbagua, we found that for some people, *arroz* still meant barley. However, the majority used it in reference to white rice. Barley, particularly in its breakfast form of *machica*, that is, toasted and ground barley mixed in hot water with a bit of *panela* added, is still considered good food, healthy food, food that binds those who belong to the household, just as it did during Weismantel's (1998: 160–1) time. But for other meals, and unlike in Weismantel's time, rice consumption appears to have increased considerably among Zumbaguans. Breakfast may still consist of *machica*, but lunch usually has rice included. The scarcity of potatoes in the market may be partly explained by the fact that many grow their own as a subsistence staple, not for sale; but it may also be due to a relative decline in potato consumption as a consequence of the rise in rice and noodle consumption. The fact that the production of root vegetables has declined by half over a thirty-year period supports this latter explanation (Peltre-Wurtz 2004).

Another change concerns the level of political organization on the part of the "indios." By the 1990s, an indigenous movement exploded in Ecuador, intent on spreading democracy and development at the local level. Nowhere was this movement stronger than in the province of Cotopaxi, where Zumbagua is located. In the elections of 2000 the Movimiento Indígena y Campesino de Cotopaxi (along with their political allies at the national level, Pachacutik) won the highest office in the province, the Prefecto, and put into gear their plans to decentralize power and control by turning it over to local governments and citizens' movements (Larrea 2005: 125). Since the first uprising of 1990, the movement has become a political force to contend with: it made and broke presidents, brought the country to a standstill with strikes and marches. Saturday market goers in Zumbagua now gaze on a

dilapidated wall on the perimeter of the market which announces in huge, weathered letters the presence of the newest political force in the province: "Pachacutik."[4]

During our stay in Ecuador, the indigenous political organizations were most vocal about their opposition to Ecuador's signing of the free-trade agreement with the US, the Tratado de Libre Comercio (Hugo 2004). Although many of our Ecuadorian students came from families who saw the free-trade agreement as a good thing for Ecuador, our readings in Vandana Shiva brought to light why medium and small agricultural producers in places like Zumbagua have reason to worry. This put the arguments that the Ecuadorian indigenous organizations were espousing in a global context. It was interesting for the students to see how the research of Ecuador's top economists lined up with the arguments of Shiva and others working on the effects of free trade on small farmers (Chiriboga 2004).

Assessing the Impact of Globalization

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In our restudy in 2006 we set out to determine what had changed about the market of Zumbagua since Weismantel's study in the early 1980s, whether those changes could be attributed to the greater penetration of market forces into the region, as she predicted, and how, exactly, those changes left traces in contemporary patterns of food production, distribution and consumption in the parish. It is certainly the case that the buyers gathered at the weekly Zumbagua market have greater purchasing power today than they did twenty years ago. This may plausibly be due to the greater overall wage packet brought home to the parish by the greater number of men temporarily migrating, as suggested originally by Weismantel. In that sense the penetration of capitalist relations of production at the expense of subsistence relations would seem to be at the root of such market changes as the greater abundance of red meat and chicken; of the huge variety of fresh fruits, vegetables and eggs today compared with Weismantel's time; and to the appearance of an impressive variety of nonfood items unknown in the past. The transformation from more traditional subsistence starches dominating the market to the case today where rice and wheat products predominate is another example of the consumer indulgence of higher-status tastes made possible by the greater penetration of wage labor relations. It is also, especially in the case of wheat, an example of the micro-level effects of global, asymmetrical trade policies. On balance then and in spite of the overall poverty of the area, the transformations witnessed in the Zumbagua market are plausibly the product of the intensification of capitalist relations at the expense of other, precapitalist arrangements, just as Weismantel envisaged.

Back in the classroom, we continued talking about the influence of global forces on local products while reading about coca production and consumption in the southern Andes and the havoc wreaked by the cocaine economy. Then, we turned our attention to banana production in Ecuador, especially how multinational companies now contract with individual plantations and accept none of the risk of production. More importantly, the work has been redefined as temporary labor, putting banana laborers in a very weak position to demand anything. We discussed the push for chemical enhancements and monocropping to produce quantities for export. At the same time, we talked about social movements that tried to counteract some of these processes that have led to massive rural to urban migration, the loss of traditional cultivars, and the increasing gap between the world's rich and poor. We talked about slow food, new agrarianism, organic gardening, local food movements and the interest in how many miles one's food travels. Our Ecuadorian students were very interested that young people in the rich, post-industrial world were involved in these movements. One of our students decided to do his final project by trying to eat only local food. This brought him into contact with a local organic food processor.

Towards the end of the semester, we organized a meeting with Stephen Sherwood, the Andean director of the non-governmental organization World Neighbors. World Neighbors focuses on promoting sustainable agriculture that is driven by local initiative. Sherwood has spent a dozen years promoting sustainable foodways throughout Latin America. His wife, Myriam Paredes, focuses her doctoral work on agriculture and community wellbeing in Ecuador. We invited both of them to talk to the class. The students were very interested to find out about agriculture and its links to nutrition from people who had spent years working in specific Ecuadorian communities.

Steve and Myriam put their ideas about sustainability into practice on their own organic farm that lies about forty minutes from Quito. The class went out one weekend so Steve and Myriam could show the students how they collected rain water, dug ditches and used terracing to prevent erosion on steep hillsides. They have also started a native plant nursery and several demonstration plots so that they can show their farming neighbors the costs or benefits of different techniques. Finally, they prepared a delicious meal for us that came directly from their garden. The students were duly impressed.

Conclusion

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If we had only one part of the course to take away with us and use again, it would be the fieldtrip to the market. Granted, that success depended on the existence of Weismantel's work and the nearby presence of Zumbagua.

Nevertheless, the same exercise would be possible using another community food outlet and asking students to think about it in terms of its immediate physical attributes as well as the larger structural forces determining who and what is present there. Why certain products are given space, where they are from, who buys them, what no longer sells are questions that can be followed up in almost any food vending venue. If time permitted, then the final task would be to try and determine how the outlet had changed over time. No small task, any of it, but in our experience, a very worthwhile undertaking.

Acknowledgments

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Notes

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1 We have not been able to find English translations for the names in italics. The word *limón* is used for both lemons and limes, but in our experience in Ecuador, limes are far more common.

2 Paramo is an ecological zone characterized by bunch grass and cushion plants that lies above 3,300 masl (meters above sea level) and below the snow line. Zumbagua lands range from 3,200 to over 4,400 masl.

3 According to Hernán Ibarra (1998) the Latin American interpretation of the mestizo/a as a positive representation of the nation dates back to the Mexican Revolution, where the Mexican state supported its diffusion as a way of encouraging a new nationalist sentiment. On the heels of the Mexican revolution, positive identification of the mestizo/a became official ideology in the 1930s in Brazil, and then spread around Latin America. Somewhat as an exception, according to Prieto (2004 [mentioned in Torre 2006]), *mestizaje*, that is, the nationalist policy of assimilating Indians by transforming them into mestizo/as, did not develop in Ecuador as completely as in some other Latin American countries.

4 César Umajinga, the indigenous Prefecto of Cotopaxi Province opened an eye-care clinic in the city of Latacunga in June, 2006 funded by the Cuban government (*El Comercio* 2006: 6). Even more impressively, on January 14, 2007, the recently elected president of Ecuador, Rafael Correa, attended a ceremony in Zumbagua with Hugo Chavez, president of Venezuela, and Evo Morales, president of Bolivia. The event took place the day before Correa's official inauguration in Quito (Vinueza 2007). The ceremony mixed Catholic and indigenous rites and was held as a symbol of Correa's professed attachment to the indigenous poor of the country and in recognition of his having spent a year there during his youth, volunteering at the Silesian Mission and learning some Quichua (Kozloff 2006).

Appendix: Class Reading List

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The class read excerpts from the sources listed below.

Allen, C. 1988 *The Hold Life Has: Coca and Cultural Identity in an Andean community.* Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution Press.

Altieri, M. 2004. *Genetic Engineering in Agriculture: The Myths, Environmental Risks, and Alternatives*. Oakland, CA: Food First Books.

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Hugo, Jácome E. 2004. A las puertas del abismo: Les implicaciones del TLC para Ecuador [At the Doors of Hell: Implications of the Free Trade Agreement for Ecuador]. *Íconos* 20: 6–13.

Ibarra, Hernán. 1998. *La Otra Cultura: Imaginarios, mestizaje y modernización* [The Other Culture: Imaginaries, *Mestizaje* and Modernization]. Quito: Abya-Yala.

Kozloff, Nikolas. 2006. The Rise of Rafael Correa: Ecuador and the Contradictions of Chavismo. *Counterpunch*, November 26. Available from: http://www.counterpunch.org/kozloff11272006.html (accessed February 14, 2007).

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