

**Power and Pepper Sauce: Challenging Global
Hegemony Through State-Supported Agriculture**

Tess Delia Pooran©

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Faculty Supervisor: Dr. Gavin Fridell

Program Director: Dr. Cathy Conrad

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Abstract

This paper investigates the strengths and challenges of state-supported agricultural programmes in the eastern Caribbean island state of St. Vincent & the Grenadines (SVG). The state-supported agri-processing corporation Vincyfresh is used as a case study to argue the benefits of state-run corporations to challenge dependency and western imperialism in a post-colonial state. Drawing on a Gramscian theoretical framework, themes of colonialism, hegemony and independence are explored along with the benefits & challenges of fair trade and alternative models of trade and development. The paper explores how colonialism and neocolonial power relations play out in regard to agricultural trade in SVG and the international market taking into account political-historical relationships between Caribbean states and colonial powers in the contemporary context.

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The author would like to acknowledge that majority of this paper was written on unceded and unsurrendered Mi'kmaq land & to thank the Mi'kmaq people for their welcome as a guest on their land.

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Section 1: Introduction

Section 1.1: Land & Ancestors

My Grandma, at 82 years old, proudly talks about the house & small plot of land that she and my Papa owned in Caroni, Trinidad. My family worked the sugar cane fields, but it is the stories of 'Caroni', that still make her face light up. She tells me about the fruit trees, the dogs who were all named Lion, and how the property owned by her and my Papa, along with her parents house, means so much to her. My grandma worked in the cane fields, as did most of our family and neighbours in Caroni, and my Papa worked in a chemical factory, my great-grandfather went into the mountains to make coal, my great-grandmother raised children over generations and worked in the fields. Caroni was the site of a large and highly productive sugar plantation¹, where my ancestors worked as both slaves and indentured workers. Enslaved afro-Trinidadians prepared the swamplands of Caroni for growing, were forced into back-breaking labour in the fields and in the boil house², yet as a testament to their resilience, they built a home on unfamiliar land and helped create a unique culture. My ancestors were able to create a life that was beyond colonial rule. Each island in the Caribbean is unique, however we share some truths: dignity, autonomy and land are necessary for not only our survival, but for our spirits. Along with stories of land, my Grandma has ensured my understanding of the revolutionary spirit that has been with us since the Middle Passage through decolonization and continues today. The stories of my Grandma were continuously brought to mind throughout this

¹ McFarlane, J., & Samaroo, B. (n.d.). The Rise and Fall of King Sugar. *National Archives of Trinidad & Tobago*, 1-10.

² Bissessarsingh, A. (2013, August 13). Life of a plantation slave. Retrieved from <https://www.guardian.co.tt/article-6.2.404261.498cc4451f>

research and writing of this paper. My grandmothers' experiences and her influence on me as both a child and adult were an important factor in my decision to focus my research in the Eastern Caribbean. The region is dear to my heart and is only home of my ancestors that I can identify as much of our histories have been lost through the enslavement and colonization of our people. I begin this paper with a snapshot of my ancestral connection to the Eastern Caribbean and the importance of land in a effort to illustrate one of the reasons I chose to research this topic and to show the reader the spiritual connection and physical reliance between land and the people and to build a foundation to illustrate how these connections are part of the struggle to 'get free'³.

Trinidad & Tobago is 283 kilometres away from Saint Vincent & the Grenadines and the islands share many similarities from a cultural, social and historical perspective. Both were British colonies and had sugar plantations run by enslaved people. Cultural practices ranging from religious traditions to the social and political importance of Carnival tie my homeland and SVG together. There are, of course, differences: Trinidad & Tobago struck oil and have developed their manufacturing industry, whereas SVG has been much more reliant on agricultural production. Each Caribbean island has their own strengths and challenges, but the commonalities of resistance, the importance of land and autonomy and cultural practice are areas of connection and points of solidarity among Caribbean people.

I will explore some of the history of SVG and how it ties to the current context in one of the following sections. I will demonstrate the importance of possessing sovereignty over the land whether held individually or by a Vincentian government, not a foreign power, is tied to the

³ 'Get free' is a common term in Black liberation work

history of slavery and domination in the Caribbean. Backed by Cecilia Green's arguments on the cause of underdevelopment in banana producing states in the eastern Caribbean, I argue colonial and neo colonial relationships between wealthy, "super-states" in the west and small, "dependent" states⁴ like SVG is a barrier to the success of SVG achieving development success in the agricultural industry and accessing the international market in an equitable manner. A small, historically dependent state such as SVG marking its space in the international market is a complex and multi-layered topic, which is why this paper will focus on a case study of Vincyfresh in order to most effectively elucidate the challenges and benefits of the state playing an active role when challenging dominant systems of trade and development.

Section 1.2: An Argument for the an Active State Role in Getting Free⁵

This paper will investigate the challenges and benefits of state supported at agricultural programs and analyze the effectiveness of St. Vincent & the Grenadines (SVG) as a proactive development state to challenge contemporary imbalance of power and global hegemony in the international market, specifically in relation to agricultural products. Western countries have historically benefitted from production of food commodities in the global south traded through conventional markets⁶. This paper will discuss the efforts being made in SVG to diversify the agricultural sector from being reliant on banana exports to a system of value-added agri-processing of different kinds of produce through the state-supported corporation,

⁴ Green, C. A. (2007). Between the devil and the deep blue sea: Mercantilism and free trade. *Race & Class*, 49(2), 54

⁵ "Getting Free" is a popular term in black liberation work

⁶ Fridell, G. (2013) *Alternative trade*. Halifax, NS: Fernwood Publishing

Vincyfresh, as well as the criticism and concerns that surrounding Vincyfresh and its programmes.

I argue that the state supported agriculture corporation Vincyfresh acts as a vehicle for comparative advantage and can challenge the dominant system of conventional trade that economically, socially and politically have built the wealth and power of western colonial and neocolonial nations and continue to undermine the global south in their ability to be successful in the global market and self-determine their development. This paper will then outline a brief history of SVG in relation to the topic, the structure of Vincyfresh and its parent organization, Winfresh. This paper will explore how SVG interacts with other states and organizations in the global economy and what challenges the small island state faces and how Vincyfresh may be beneficial in improving SVGs ability to self-determine within the current global economic system. I will dig deeper into discussing the strengths and weaknesses of Vincyfresh and how it, as a state institution, can affect change in line with their mandate of sustainable development while still being bound by an inequitable global economy driven by the principles of neoliberalism and western imperialism. As mentioned, Vincyfresh is part of Winfresh Limited. Winfresh is a collaborative statutory corporation with representatives from Windward Island states to support the agricultural development and growth of an agri-processing sector in the region. Winfresh is a state-supported company, meaning that the governments from the Windward Islands support the company through financial, logistical, technical and political support. Winfresh operates subsidiaries in St. Lucia (Sunfresh), Grenada (Grenfresh) and St. Vincent and the Grenadines (Vincyfresh). Vincyfresh began developing its operations in SVG in 2007. This case study of Vincyfresh will look at its strengths and challenges as a state institution

in pursuit of sustainable development of the agri-processing sector, securing a place for Vincyfresh products in the regional and international market, as well as social, educational and technical support programmes for farmers and employees. In the forthcoming paper, I will examine the ways in which former colonial powers, current dominant global powers and the neoliberal free trade negatively impact the social and economic development of SVG, along with the ways that state can support the success of agricultural programs and trade, through alternative models, specifically Vincyfresh.

I will discuss the relationship between associations of the past and the current operations of Vincyfresh as operating in margins of public and private, balancing business interests with social development. I argue that Vincyfresh is an effective model but can only go so far in its success. Vincyfresh can achieve its mandate of supporting farmers and rural Vincentians, choosing fair trade producers and encouraging the building of reciprocal relationships, educational support and financial guidance, however, as effective as Vincyfresh can be, I argue that it is not enough to challenge the inequalities present in the global market. Western hegemony will continue to dominate unless more actively challenged. Alternative methods of trade and development are essential steps in challenging western domination of more vulnerable states in the global south, however more radical measures may be needed to fully realize the goals of self-determination, sustainable development and liberation.

Section 1.3: Theories and Field Research

In order to effectively analyze the theoretical framework of Gramscian hegemony and alternative models of development drawing on the works of Cecilia Green, Ha-Joon Chang and

Clive Y. Thomas, Juan Ignacio Staricco and Gavin Fridell will be presented in order to further analyze this topic. Literature and reports from international and regional organizations such as the United Nations and the Organizations of Eastern Caribbean States, along with online news sources and national archives are used for further analysis and understanding of state-supported agriculture in the Eastern Caribbean and the many historical and contemporary factors that shape the region.

I spent three weeks on St. Vincent engaging observational research and conducting semi-structured interviews with participants, which in combination with the sources mentioned above built the foundation and body of this paper. Methods and sources will be discussed further in the Data and Methodology section.

Section 1.4: Historical Background

St. Vincent & the Grenadines (SVG) is an archipelago located in the Windward Islands in the eastern Caribbean. A former British colony, SVG was the last of the Windward Islands to gain independence in 1979. British and French colonizers fought for control of different islands in the region until the end of the 18th century when the Treaty of Paris was signed, giving British control of all of SVG in 1783. Similar to other Caribbean islands, colonial powers brought slaves over through the Middle Passage⁷ and started sugar plantations that were incredibly lucrative, while contributing to the subjugation, enslavement, rape and death of thousands of African and Afro-Caribbean people. The sugar plantations were headed by white, British citizens and enslaved peoples worked the land, grew crops and prepared crops for export. Slaves were also

⁷ National 5 History - The triangular trade - Revision 8. (2018). Retrieved from <https://www.bbc.com/bitesize/guides/zqv7hyc/revision/8>

forced to build structures to enhance the production of sugar, including the Black Point Tunnel⁸, located 31 km from the capital of Kingstown. Black Point is a 110 metre-long tunnel drilled by slaves to transport sugar from the Grand Sable Estate to waiting ships at the Wharf in Bureau. The sugar that was produced in the Caribbean at this time provided revenue for the expanding British Empire. ⁹The history of exploitation of black labour and export of food commodities is important to understand when discussing the current context of SVG because it reveals the origins of a dependent plantation economy rooted in slavery and domination of black bodies and labour. Green illustrates how the transition from a plantation system to smallholder farms was beneficial to black labourers in the Windward Islands, and how the transitions to smallholder farms owned independently by former plantations workers contributed to the growth of a black middle class which had not before existed in the Windward Islands¹⁰. White, Europeans profited from the labour and blood of Afro-Caribbeans through slavery and exploitation beyond abolition that allowed western nations to build wealth and shape the global economy in ways that continue to benefit the west, oftentimes at the expense of southern states like SVG.

Slavery in the British colonies was formally abolished in 1834, nonetheless there was still mass exploitation of labourers, most often of black and brown workers. Indentured servitude and peasant labour from former slaves continued to be the mode of labour on plantations in the Windward Islands. The sugar industry in SVG began to decline in the mid-20th century and the colonial government was confronted with protests by both Afro-Caribbeans and Caribs, as their

⁸ The author visited Black Point in July 2018

⁹ Godoy, M. (2015, April 07). Tea Tuesdays: How Tea Sugar Reshaped The British Empire. Retrieved from <https://www.npr.org/sections/thesalt/2015/04/07/396664685/tea-tuesdays-how-tea-sugar-reshaped-the-british-empire>

¹⁰ Green, C. A. (2007). Between the devil and the deep blue sea: Mercantilism and free trade. *Race & Class*,49(2), 51-52

livelihoods as plantation workers were being threatened as exports declined and production slowed with the downturn of the Caribbean sugar industry. In the global context, the British Empire was dealing with resistance from many of their colonies as well as two World Wars and the aftermath in during the first half of the 20th century. The World Wars affected how food products were produced, distributed and accessed. This had an immense effect on the Caribbean as their economies were dependent on the sugar and fruit plantation system¹¹. The British empire was producing sugar in cheaper and less labour intensive methods.¹² Resistance from Caribs and enslaved and then free Afro-Caribbeans has a long history in SVG since the arrival of colonist beginning with their invasions of the the islands in the 16th century. The Caribs, the indigenous people whose land British and French colonial forces invaded, resisted invasion and the collaborated with slaves to resist colonial rule of the islands. A significant point of resistance the Brigand's War, also known as the Second Carib War and during this time colonialists continued correspondence with colonial administrators in the UK. The National Archives in the United Kingdom has many examples of correspondence from colonial authorities in the Caribbean to those at home. In this example, an unnamed colonial administrator writes to an also unnamed Lord in the UK about the 1777 resistance in SVG by the native Caribs and enslaved Africans against British colonizers. He writes:

“I must now in Duty not to Omit to inform Your Lordship that the Runaway Negroes in this Island become a very formidable Object, and an Evil that is increasing in spite of all the Efforts to prevent it hitherto taken, their Numbers I dare take upon me to Assure Your Lordship are at least eleven Hundred, their fast holds at least eight I positively know of, and in about Four

¹¹ Green, C. A. (2007). Between the devil and the deep blue sea: Mercantilism and free trade. *Race & Class*,49(2), 50

¹² “Caribbean Sugar Is Close to a Sticky End.” *The Economist*, The Economist Newspaper, 14 Dec. 2017, www.economist.com/the-americas/2017/12/14/caribbean-sugar-is-close-to-a-sticky-end and History of Windward Bananas. (n.d.). Retrieved October 03, 2018, from <https://www.winfresh.net/our-business/history-windward-bananas/>

of these are full nine hundred and of these Two so Uncommonly strongly Situated, and nearly inaccessible by the Nature of the Ground, that One fifth part of the Numbers within those strongholds, could not be forced by trebles the force of the Colony were these Unhappy desperate Wretches, as well acquainted with all, or made full use of the Advantages of their Situation as they seem to be judicious in choosing them - I must again repeat the far greater part of them are completely armed by the Assistance of the Caribs...”¹³

This passage contains two points of interest. The first being the dehumanizing and ignorant way the author describes Afro-Caribbeans as “Unhappy desperate Wretches...” and that their resistance is an “Evil that is increasing...”, the first description illustrates the authors erroneous view that Afro-Caribbeans were challenging colonial domination due to personal unhappiness and puts no burden or responsibility on the colonialists for their violence against Afro-Caribbeans and the Caribs. Describing the resistance as an “Evil” positions colonialists on a moral high ground, the British ruling class was the “good” in opposition to the “evil” rebellion. This dichotomy was not only false but allowed for the colonialists to excuse their repulsive treatment of black and brown peoples in SVG. Furthermore, this is an example of the way institutional and cultural forms of hegemony influence the ways in which the dominant group discusses and controls the oppressed class. The second point of interest is the solidarity between the Caribs and the enslaved Africans to challenge colonial oppression. Grassroots organizing of marginalized communities to challenge and fight back against hegemony has been present in the Caribbean since the beginning of colonial rule and the Atlantic Slave Trade.

The banana industry in SVG emerged as a colonial project¹⁴. The creation of the banana industry provided fresh fruit to satisfy the growing demands of British consumers while creating

¹³ National Archives, Reports from colonial authorities on subject of Caribs and enslaved Africans working together against slavery. St Vincent, 1777. Retrieved from http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/caribbeanhistory/popups/caribbean-identities/co260_4-transcript.htm

¹⁴ Green, C. A. (2007). Between the devil and the deep blue sea: Mercantilism and free trade. *Race & Class*, 49(2), 53

a cash-crop peasantry that was predominately made up of afro-Caribbean men in SVG¹⁵. This was beneficial for the ideological and economic desires of the British Imperial State¹⁶. The effects of imperial self-interest are still visible in contemporary Caribbean states. This is evident in the free trade paradigms that disproportionately benefit northern countries and are rooted in British “industrial supremacy”¹⁷. These present day effects are the result of a long history of colonialism and efforts of resistance from Caribbean states and grassroots organizing from the civilian class to self-advocate for the improvement and/or protection of their livelihood.

An fitting example of benevolent colonialism¹⁸ is brought forth by anthropologist Lawrence Grossman who argues that aid packages and tariffs offered by the UK were not altruistic but in fact a “function of self-interest”¹⁹ that allowed the UK to have a steady supply of fruit and reduce the amount of budgetary support that Britain provided to the administrations of the Windward Islands. Green’s argument that the legacy of colonialism has underdeveloped the region is an interesting point of connection here: the UK was heavily involved in the establishment of the banana industry but the structures that created the need for preferential trade agreements were rooted in western imperialism and Britain's colonial legacy.

The banana regime originated in the post-war era between colonial powers and their current and some of the former colonies, referred to as the African Caribbean and Pacific Group

¹⁵ Green, C. A. (2007). Between the devil and the deep blue sea: Mercantilism and free trade. *Race & Class*, 49(2), 51-52

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Green, C. A. (2007). Between the devil and the deep blue sea: Mercantilism and free trade. *Race & Class*, 49(2), 49

¹⁸ Heron, B. (2007). *Desire for development: Whiteness, Gender, and the Helping Imperative*. Waterloo: Wilfrid Laurier University Press.

¹⁹ Striffler, S., & Grossman, L. (2005). *Banana wars: Power, production, and history in the Americas*. Durham, NC: Duke Univ. Press.

“The St. Vincent Banana Growers' Association, contract farming, and the peasantry”, 291

of States (ACP)²⁰. In this case, Caribbean nations are the focus. Bananas had been a staple crop of black smallholder farmers and the British colonial administration saw an opportunity to capitalize on bananas as the Caribbean sugar industry was declining. The agreement was made between Britain and SVG and was managed by the Anglo-Dutch company, Geest. Geest bought and distributed bananas from producers in SVG for the British markets. Green describes how Geest was able to be so immensely successful as most of their costs were externalized because the peasant household absorbed a significant portion of the cost of production. The peasant class helped build wealth for a foreign company and did not reap the financial or developmental benefits. Green writes,

“Geest was able to exploit the huge gap between the early peasantry subsistence and self-provisioning lifestyle in a semi-capitalist setting and the consumer price index in a fully commoditised advanced-capitalist setting.”²¹

As Green communicates above, the peasantry in SVG operated in a semi-capitalist setting and absorbed production costs, allowing Geest to retain more of their profits when selling in a fully realized capitalist setting.

Similarly, those who benefitted from land ownership was highly concentrated in SVG. Prior to the 1970s, 50% of the arable land in SVG was owned by 1% of the population²². The following years saw extensive land reform undertaken by different governments. The governments primarily divided plantation estates used for sugar and banana productions in SVG into 2-hectare plots that were distributed to former plantation workers who then began producing

²⁰ Fridell, G. (2010). The Case against Cheap Bananas: Lessons from the EU-Caribbean Banana Agreement. *Critical Sociology*, 37(3), 287

²¹ Green, C. A. (2007). Between the devil and the deep blue sea: Mercantilism and free trade. *Race & Class*, 49(2), 53

²² History of Windward Bananas. (n.d.). Retrieved October 03, 2018, from <https://www.winfresh.net/our-business/history-windward-bananas/>

the bulk of bananas in the Windward Islands. This was a dual approach: from the perspective of the ruling class, this allowed for production to continue and to placate the peasant class' concern for their future livelihood. Many peasant labourers were pleased to own land and to possess that autonomy of being in control of one's own work and land cultivation, however, many plantation workers were concerned. Working on the plantations gave them a low, but guaranteed wage, independently farming is more precarious as a bad crop yield, disease or natural disaster can cause the loss of an entire year's profit²³. By 1992, the banana industry accounted for 50% of export earnings for SVG and one-third of jobs in the archipelago,²⁴ however the next 15 years would bring dramatic losses for the industry and those that relied on bananas for their livelihood.

Due to the importance of bananas for the economy of SVG and other banana producing islands in the region, including Dominica, Grenada, Martinique, and Saint Lucia, the governments of these islands collectively established the banana board in 1955 to represent their interests in the international market. The St. Vincent Banana Growers Association (SVBGA) was a corporation of the Vincentian government but operated with autonomy. A government holds a responsibility to support social services, environmental protection and sustainable development especially if they claim to support a mandate of sustainable development of industry, social and culture support and human development. These values and visions are in line with the mandates of governments in the Windward Islands and influenced the creation of the banana board to support the development and protection of livelihoods in the region. It is within a sovereign governments interests to maintain their power by making decisions and policies to protect and

²³ Moberg, M. (2013). *Slipping away*. New York: Berghahn Books., Anonymous interview with the author, July 2018

²⁴ Fridell, G. (2011). The Case against Cheap Bananas: Lessons from the EU-Caribbean Banana Agreement. *Critical Sociology*, 37(3), 285-307. doi:10.1177/0896920510379447

improve the lives of the people they govern, and to resist foreign powers seeking to chip away at a nations autonomy or exploit their resources for financial or political gain. Grossman aptly points out, the government in SVG “has not used the [banana] industry as a major vehicle for state accumulation based on the exploitation of the peasantry.”²⁵ In contrast with banana production on plantations in Central America, often referred to as the Dollar Area.²⁶ So-called dollar bananas are cheaply produced by low-wage labourers working on large plantations, most notably owned by US-based agricultural giant, Chiquita. Banana production in small states, in this case SVG, cannot compete price-wise as labourers are either self-employed or paid higher wages on small farms. The small areas of production in SVG offer comparatively safer conditions than the plantations in Central America. Production in SVG differs from production in Central America beyond small plot size. SVG bananas are produced with low-chemical inputs and are not grown in monoculture plots as farmers will often grow other produce in between banana plants. Wages are comparatively higher and as stated, many growers own their plots or work for neighbours and family members rather than as wage labourers for a corporation or wealthy owner who is not involved in growing and production.

Additionally, whether supported by the SVBGA or now by Vincifyfresh, there is a mandate based on social, economic and human development rather than just accumulation of capital, although economic success is still vital for the success of agriculture in SVG. Disparate from a transnational corporation, SVBGA provided technical advice, extension services,

²⁵ Striffler, S., & Grossman, L. (2005). *Banana wars: Power, production, and history in the Americas*. Durham, NC: Duke Univ. Press.

“The St. Vincent Banana Growers' Association, contract farming, and the peasantry”

²⁶ “Banana Link.” *Latin America | Banana Link*, www.bananalink.org.uk/latin-america.

interest-free credit and subsidized inputs²⁷. The farmers participated and consulted with the Board, acting as local delegates and board members. Some of the basic tasks of the board were to represent the interests of farmers by hearing their concerns and finding solutions and advocating for positive change. The SVBGA was, in its time, an effective challenge to systems of domination over the peasant class by hegemonic powers. The SVBGA was able to liaise with the British governments and markets and argue for the continued protectionist policies first between Britain and SVG and then SVG and the EU when the UK transitioned to the Single Economic Market and the policies and agreements were then made between SVG and the EU. As the SVBGA dissolved during the decline of the EU-Caribbean Banana Agreement, the governments of the Windward Islands did not simply sit back, but regrouped and formed Winfresh in an effort to represent their interests in the agricultural industry, diversify production and produce value-added products. The SVBGA was more narrow in scope than Winfresh/Vincyfresh are. Rather than just supported farmers at the production and packaging level, Winfresh and then Vincyfresh attempt to go further in the production chain, producing and distributing value added products like sauces, juice and jellies made from a range of produce. SVBGA was meant to promote the interests of banana growers in SVG and help secure a domestic and international market. The SVBGA met its end through the dismantling of the EU-Caribbean Banana Agreement which began in 1993²⁸ and coincided with the signing of the Single European Act (SEA) which allowed the system of ‘volume quotas’ to be replaced with ‘tariff quotas’. The introduction of the new system of quotas allowed non-ACP countries to

²⁷ Fridell, G. (2011). The Case against Cheap Bananas: Lessons from the EU-Caribbean Banana Agreement. *Critical Sociology*, 37(3), 285-307.

²⁸ Fridell, G. (2011). The Case against Cheap Bananas: Lessons from the EU-Caribbean Banana Agreement. *Critical Sociology*, 37(3), 285-307.

export beyond their allowed amount of bananas to be exported to the EU in exchange for paying a tariff on their products²⁹. The transition from the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) to the World Trade Organization (WTO) coincided with the increased opposition from Latin American banana growers to the preferential trade deals that were made during the Lome Convention negotiations in which ACP countries advocated for guaranteed access to EU markets and a reduction in tariffs on bananas that the ACP nations were importing to the EU markets. Opposition from non-ACP states in Latin America was based in what producers and companies in the region saw as unfair access to EU markets for ACP banana producers and felt that they were unfairly locked out of the market based on pre-existing agreements between the EU and ACP countries. The most significant opposition came from Ecuador and US-based transnational Chiquita, who saw the preferential trade deal as discriminatory against their operations in Latin America. Trade was becoming more liberalized through the 1990s and the WTO possessed more power to shift the mechanisms of trade than previously existed under the GATT. Ecuador and the US seized upon this opportunity and the banana agreement was dealt another blow in 1997 when the WTO ruled against the crux of the agreement, which was the Caribbean's preferential access to EU markets, stating that the quota system was in opposition to the principles of free trade.³⁰ Two years later, the WTO allowed the US to apply sanctions to the EU resulting in a total of \$191m of sanctions per year. The EU began to buckle under pressure, first increasing the volume of quotas for non-ACP bananas and then finally eliminating the quota system in favour of a tariff-only regime.

²⁹ Myers, G. (2004). *Banana wars the price of free trade, a Caribbean perspective*. London: Zed Books.

³⁰ Fridell, G. (2011). The Case against Cheap Bananas: Lessons from the EU-Caribbean Banana Agreement. *Critical Sociology*, 37(3), 285-307. doi:10.1177/0896920510379447

SVGs small size and economy of scale in contrast to the large plantation system in Latin America made for fierce competition enhanced by global powers like the US who had interests in Latin American fruit production³¹ The United States imported fruit through Chiquita and had interests in more open markets for Latin American bananas. The US, through the United States Trade Representative (USTR) began lobbying the WTO for a panel on the banana regime, the European Commission was concerned rightly concerned about the US-led arguments against the banana regime and mounted a counter-argument³². The interplay between northern and southern governments and large transnational fruit companies like Chiquita offer an interesting avenue to analyze, particularly when one looks at the US role in the WTO ruling as a hegemonic power asserting its dominance over small, southern states. It is important to note that the EU was also a hegemonic power, which illustrates that tension exists between dominant powers as well - often at a detriment to weaker states. The eventual outcome was a sharp decline of banana exports from SVG. Banana exports have declined from approximately 79,863 in 1992 to 17,514 tonnes in 2007. SVG still sells bananas domestically, but no bananas are exported from SVG to the EU market as of 2018. Higher costs of production, small growing areas and the small and/or uneven size and appearance of Windward bananas made it near impossible to find a market without a preferential trade agreement. Other factors have precipitated the decline including disease, such as Black Sigatoka Disease, considered to be the most deadly of diseases affecting banana plants³³, and natural disasters such as hurricanes. Yet the dismantling of the EU-Caribbean Banana Agreement appears to be the major factor in the decline of exports.

³¹ “Banana Link.” *Latin America | Banana Link*, www.bananalink.org.uk/latin-america.

³² *European Commission, Press Release - EC Fact Sheet on Caribbean Bananas and the WTO*, European Commission, 18 Mar. 1997, europa.eu/rapid/press-release_MEMO-97-28_en.htm?locale=en.

³³ Harewood, L. (2018). *FAO supporting battle against dreaded banana disease*. Retrieved from <http://www.fao.org/americas/noticias/ver/en/c/230146/>

Section 2: Literature Review

The arguments in this paper are grounded in the theoretical concept of hegemony developed by Italian philosopher Antonio Gramsci. Hegemony is used to describe how the ruling class maintains power over the subaltern through cultural, ideological and institutional means. Hegemony in a Gramscian sense is often maintained through cultural, institutional and ideological coercion over physical force and coercion. The state and capitalist ruling class - in this case, western states and neoliberal institutions - use methods of hegemony to maintain their place of power over weaker states. Gramsci's hegemony is understood to not be static, but exists in tension between the hegemonic class and the subaltern³⁴. Hegemonic powers in this instance are considered to be the former colonial powers in Europe, the modern-day European Union and Western nations such as Canada and the United States. Hegemony is also understood to be present through the international market of liberalized trade and proponents of free trade such as the World Trade Organization. Civilians and non-governmental organizations often challenge hegemony by applying pressure to governments through social movements and grassroots organizing. Governments and civilians may have different goals or ideas on how to achieve said goals, which can cause tensions but can be useful in achieving broader goals of liberation and self-determination. Activist and scholar Dr. Angela Davis asserted, "...the people and the government are not the same...³⁵", one can understand this to mean that although a

³⁴ Gramsci, A., & Hoare, Q. (1973). *Selections from the prison notebooks of Antonio Gramsci*. New York: International Publ. and Staricco, Juan Ignacio. "Class Dynamics and Ideological Construction in the Struggle over Fairness: a Neo-Gramscian Examination of the Fairtrade Initiative." *The Journal of Peasant Studies*, 2017, pp. 1-19., doi:10.1080/03066150.2017.1337003.

³⁵ Davis, Angela., "Belong Forum", *Dalhousie University*, Halifax, Canada, 16 October 2018

democratically elected government is meant to represent the people, the reality is that the government in power and the subaltern may disagree on the methods resistance to global systems that may oppress or harm the subaltern state. This tension is not a harmful aspect of the relationship between people and government as it often serves to propel change.

Gramsci introduced the concept of hegemony, that is the ideological leadership of the ruling class over society, to explain how the ruling class maintains their dominance. Gramsci outlined two ways in which the ruling class maintains their power over society. The first is coercion, in which the ruling power uses force to maintain power. Examples of Gramsci's understanding of coercion would be military forces, police, prisons and the state court system, deployed to force non-ruling classes to accept their subordination to the dominant class. The second is manufactured consent, which is the use of ideas, values and social norms to persuade the subordinate class that the rule of the dominant class is legitimate.³⁶ Gramsci's conceptualization of hegemony as manufactured consent by the ruling class will be used as a theoretical lens to analyze historical and contemporary relationships between states. A neo Gramscian framework is helpful in understanding the heterogeneity of subaltern groups as illustrated by Juan Ignacio Staricco who uses a neo-Gramscian conceptual framework to dissect the fair trade system, particularly Fairtrade International³⁷ (FLO). Staricco's Gramscian conceptual framework is useful for this paper as it interrogates the regulatory systems that govern fair trade and the ways in which the global economic system shaped by dominant and subservient power relationships between different states and regions. Green's work on

³⁶ Gramsci, Antonio, and Quintin Hoare. *Selections from the Prison Notebooks of Antonio Gramsci*. International Publ., 1973.

³⁷ Staricco, Juan Ignacio. "Class Dynamics and Ideological Construction in the Struggle over Fairness: a Neo-Gramscian Examination of the Fairtrade Initiative." *The Journal of Peasant Studies*, 2017, pp. 1–19., doi:10.1080/03066150.2017.1337003.

underdevelopment and colonial history in the Caribbean as well as Clive Y. Thomas' understanding of power and social capital are within the Gramscian tradition and form a framework for this paper.

Division between those who own and control the means of production and those who perform the productive tasks is the most simple class division, and although the subaltern encompasses many groups that many have different concerns and goals, they are ultimately under the control of the ruling class. The ruling capitalist class is defined by opposition from the to the subaltern class, which is explained through neo-Gramscian understanding that hegemony cannot exist without counter-hegemony³⁸. Understanding this conceptual and material tension as it manifests in SVG will be explore in the following sections. Straccio applies a neo-Gramscian framework to the notion of comprehensive concepts of control to understand the limitations of fair trade³⁹. While Straccio looks at the broad system of fair trade, the concepts can be applied to the ways in which both the government and non-governmental organizations have integrated fair trade into the agricultural industry.

In the mid-20th century, the British government was conscious of the United Fruit Company's (UFCO) dominance in Latin America and aimed to award the export contracts for Windward Bananas to a company outside of UFCO's reach; this company the previously mentioned Anglo-Dutch company Geest. The involvement of Geest resulted in significant reduction of UFCO's preeminence in the British market. Geest was not interested in interacting with individual farmers and therefore accessed produce through farmer's associations, which represented the farmers and helped organize sales between the farmers and Geest for export.

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ Staricco, Juan Ignacio. "Class Dynamics and Ideological Construction in the Struggle over Fairness: a Neo-Gramscian Examination of the Fairtrade Initiative." *The Journal of Peasant Studies*, 2017

Gordon Myers, author of *Banana Wars*⁴⁰ concurred about the significance of British imperial self-interest and how the UK positioned itself as benevolent as they looked to secure their market from competition from the UFCO and increase the supply of fresh fruits to meet the tastes and demands of consumers in the UK. Export and distribution of distribution of Windward Islands had long been in the hands of foreign companies and governments. The SVGBA was an important state entity for SVG gaining more power in the industry and the governments of the Windward Islands continued to build partnerships to achieve greater autonomy around the production and distribution of food commodities.

The Lome Convention, signed in 1974 and implemented in 1975, was a significant point in the development of the banana regime. The Convention was based on earlier agreements between imperial states and their former colonies. Some ACP countries along with the UK lobbied for the abandonment the reciprocal tariffs upon the signing on the Convention. The chief objective of the Convention was to “create [a] model for relations between developed and developing states⁴¹.” The main characteristics of the Convention were:

- the non-reciprocal preferences for most exports from ACP countries to EEC;
- equality between partners, respect for sovereignty, mutual interests and interdependence;
- the right of each state to determine its own policies;
- security of relations based on the achievements of the cooperation system.⁴²

⁴⁰ Myers, G. (2004). *Banana Wars: the Price of Free Trade, a Caribbean perspective*. London: Zed Books. 11-17

⁴¹ Myers, G. (2004). *Banana Wars: the Price of Free Trade, a Caribbean perspective*. London: Zed Books. 11-17

⁴² Gomes, P. I. (2011). The Lomé Convention. Retrieved from <http://www.acp.int/content/lome-convention>

The Convention helped define the trade relationship between European states and ACP countries and was meant to offer a measure of protection for ACP countries. The Convention also included agreements on quotas for how many tonnes of bananas could be imported from Latin America in comparison to the quotas for ACP bananas allowed for a guaranteed market for banana farmers in the Windward Islands, despite their small economy of scale which could not produce the amount of bananas per hectare Latin American plantations were able to. Protocols that created a guaranteed market were beneficial to small producers on the islands who had to compete with plantations in Latin America who could produce higher yields at lower prices.

Myers succinctly takes the reader through Uruguay Round, which was a set of negotiations which began in 1986 and affected the EU-Caribbean Banana Agreement and trade between the Windward Islands and northern states more broadly. The Final Round in 1994, which was the year of creation for the WTO, included the Banana Framework Agreement (BFA), which significantly reduced protections for ACP countries while further complicating the operations of the banana regime.⁴³ This included an increase in tariff quota and a reduction of the in-quota tariff. The export amounts and which countries were included in those reductions were based on the numbers from 1989-91 as it was the most recent available data. The provisions within the BFA were highly controversial, particularly to Ecuador who had recently increased their export production in 1991-92, who saw the BFA as constraining to their rapidly growing industry. ACP countries were also not consulted prior to the signing of the BFA even though the provisions of the Lome Convention called for their consultation⁴⁴. The architects of the BFA imagined that it would soothe tensions, however the opposite was true: Ecuador and Chiquita,

⁴³ Myers, G. (2004). *Banana Wars: The Price of Free Trade: A Caribbean Perspective*. London: Zed. 71-72

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 73-74

represented through the US were unhappy with the agreement and began their push to dismantle the existing banana regime.⁴⁵

Before the dismantling of the EU-Caribbean Banana Agreement, the WTO made decisions that would affect the Agreement. The WTO came into formation for a variety of reasons, including a massive fourteen-fold increase in trade from 1948-1994 which can be seen as a ... reflection of the neoliberal paradigm driving the world economy.”⁴⁶ The WTO works to remove what they deem as obstacles to trade and advance the neoliberal free trade regime. WTO, and before it, the GATT, has made many rulings and participated in the creation of a variety of agreements some of which have negatively impacted the agricultural industry in the Windward Islands. The most significant being the rulings around the EU-Caribbean Banana Agreement that led to the eventual dismantling of preferential trade. This links to the framework of Gramscian hegemony as the EU, US and WTO are part of the dominant class (albeit in tension) and the ways in which powerful actors operate within global hegemony affects the ability for subaltern states to develop.

Although Caribbean states are WTO members and are supposed to have equal status to wealthier and more powerful states based on the organizations one-state-one-vote system, this is not always a reality. Small states in the global south may feel their concerns are of less importance than those states that hold more power in the global political system and international markets⁴⁷. Caribbean states were not considered to be parties to the banana dispute and were not

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ Wiley, James. *The Banana: Empires, Trade Wars, and Globalization*. University of Nebraska Press, 2010. (p. 163)

⁴⁷ Fridell, G. (2011). The Case against Cheap Bananas: Lessons from the EU-Caribbean Banana Agreement. *Critical Sociology*, 37(3), 285-307., Green, C. A. (2007). Between the devil and the deep blue sea: Mercantilism and free trade. *Race & Class*, 49(2), 41-56., and Staricco, Juan Ignacio. “Class Dynamics and Ideological Construction in the

allowed to participate in the first proceedings. The Agreement on Agriculture (AoA), for example, was brought about at the Uruguay Round, which was the 8th round of Multilateral Trade Negotiations (MTN) within the structure of the GATT. Agriculture is a fundamental component of North-South trade relations and for countries like SVG, agricultural products are the main export and source of revenue for the country.

International organizations and foreign states have influenced the agricultural industry in SVG, however Vincentians have been proactive in self-advocacy. The SVBGA and other banana producer advocacy organizations have played an important role throughout the development of the industry. Grossman discusses the role of the SVBGA, which he describes as having a “dual mission managing a business and functioning as a state institution concerned with development⁴⁸”, this is similar to the role that Vincyfresh plays in its role of developing both a viable business and supporting development through employment, education, training and technical assistance to farmers. Grower associations and farmer advocacy organizations are beneficial as they can represent the interests of farmers, advocate for or provide a guaranteed market, offer extension services and secure a determined price for produce⁴⁹. The EU-Caribbean Banana Agreement was supported by grower associations and farmer support organizations⁵⁰ and while it was beneficial for offering a secure, guaranteed market and work in growing and packaging of bananas for many Vincentians, the EU-Caribbean banana agreement had its

Struggle over Fairness: a Neo-Gramscian Examination of the Fairtrade Initiative.” *The Journal of Peasant Studies*, 2017, pp. 1–19.

⁴⁸ Striffler, S., & Grossman, L. (2005). *Banana wars: Power, production, and history in the Americas*. Durham, NC: Duke Univ. Press.

“The St. Vincent Banana Growers' Association, contract farming, and the peasantry”

⁴⁹ Fridell, G. (2011). The Case against Cheap Bananas: Lessons from the EU-Caribbean Banana Agreement. *Critical Sociology*, 37(3), 288

⁵⁰ Ibid., 285

shortcomings. It is apparent that three decades of free trade policies have resulted in a decline in social and economic indicators⁵¹ such as employment, food security and health⁵². Free trade policies and the loss of the EU-Caribbean Banana Agreement, which gave banana producers in the eastern Caribbean preferential access to EU markets, has negatively impacted the economic and social development of SVG. In his article Dr. Gavin Fridell captures a key blind spot that contributes to the propagation of the myth of free trade: “In the era of ‘free trade’ hegemony, the failings of international commodity agreements have been widely exaggerated while their successes all but ignored”⁵³. In what follows, I will connect the myth of free trade to Gramsci’s concept of hegemony as manufactured consent. In conjunction, this paper will outline the highly unequal manner in which the banana regime was developed⁵⁴ and explore Vincyfresh as a core case study within the historical context of colonialism and unequal development of small island states in the global south.

The challenges that SVG has faced in economic and industry development has been structured by colonialism and neocolonialism. Green delves into the work of radical dependency theories Thomas in her article “Between the devil and the deep blue sea: mercantilism and free trade” in order to question if underdevelopment in the Caribbean is the result of its small size or history of colonization⁵⁵. Green calls on Du Boisian ‘double consciousness’ to explain the position in which small developing nations operate in. Green writes, “On one hand, they must be alert to the hegemonic reality that not only are they on the peripheral to world trade negotiations,

⁵¹ Ibid., 286

⁵² Keynes, J. M. (2013). *Human Development Report 2013: The Rise of the South: Human Progress in a Diverse World*

⁵³ Ibid., 295

⁵⁴ Ibid., 293

⁵⁵ Green, C. A. (2007). Between the devil and the deep blue sea: Mercantilism and free trade. *Race & Class*, 49(2), 41-56. doi:10.1177/0306396807082857

but they are also among the acted-upon objects of these negotiations.”⁵⁶ Small Caribbean states like SVG occupy this space as in post-colonial relationships with the EU - they are involved in trade negotiations as a sovereign state but often feel the negative effects of dominant countries preference for liberalized markets, exemplified in the loss of preferential trade deals with the EU.

A Gramscian analysis paired with Thomas’ and Green’s critiques of former colonial powers influence on the development - and underdevelopment - of the region will be used to critique western hegemony and it affects small island states. It takes into account history of wealth amassed through slavery and the unequal distribution of wealth and power between the global north and south and how those have contributed to the challenges faced by SVG. That is to say, colonialism and neocolonialism are the cause of the current state of development in SVG, and underdeveloped cannot be blamed on its small size⁵⁷. It is important to critique the aid provided by northern states and look more closely at the diversification of the industry that is both Caribbean-led and conscious of the pitfalls of free trade.

Gramscian hegemony and an analysis of SVG as a proactive development state will be employed to discuss the contemporary context of international trade and agri-processing in SVG throughout the paper. Along with the above theoretical analysis, this paper will scrutinize the effects of trade liberalization through free trade along with the effects of fair trade programs and partnerships in SVG.

Section 3: Data & Methodology:

This research project utilized a methodology of semi-structured interviews with stakeholders connected to agriculture, trade and development, combined with observational

⁵⁶ Ibid., 45

⁵⁷ Green, C. A. (2007). Between the devil and the deep blue sea: Mercantilism and free trade. *Race & Class*, 49(2), 41-56. doi:10.1177/0306396807082857

research of the agri-processing facility at Vincyfresh in Diamond, St. Vincent, visits to historical sites in Kingstown and Black Point as well as a informal tour with a participant of their growing area at their home. A total of six interview with five participants were completed as part of three weeks of field work in St. Vincent. The combination of interviews and observational research were beneficial in beginning to understand the social, economic and environmental context in St. Vincent. This was combined with a review of secondary, grey and institutional literature was valuable in the process of the research. This involved involved key academic work along with grey literature in the form of reports, policy briefs and readily available sources on the internet including company websites, the websites of the World Bank, World Trade Organization, United Nations and various news outlets provide context, data and other information for this paper.

Unfortunately, a proper analysis of gender equality within the scope of this topic was not possible at this time. A small amount of information on gender disparities in land title, income and access to education was available through through the Gender Equality Index in the HDI report and briefs from UN Women and the UNDP provided some information. Participants were helpful in gaining insight into barriers and cultural norms that affect women in agriculture, however, I believe there is still much research to be accessed or undertaken in relation to Caribbean women in agriculture, industry and trade.

Reports from government bodies provided information on various policies and agreements related to the topic. The European Commission recently published an updated fact sheet on the CARIFORUM-EU Economic Protection Agreement. This was beneficial in not only analyzing the agreement from the perspective of the EU, but to understand in more detail the relationship between the two regional bodies. Annual reports from Winfresh contributed much of the information on Winfresh and its subsidiary Vincyfresh for this paper, the reports were useful in confirming information shared by participants. News articles from major news outlets such as The Guardian and local Caribbean news sources were also utilized. Literature from NGOs and advocacy organizations such as BananaLink and Fairtrade International are also employed in this project.

I began reaching out to potential participants in SVG that I was able to connect with through Dr. Fridell and then used the snowball collection technique to reach other potential participants. I prepared ten (10) questions on agriculture, agri-processing, international trade and the changing economy in St. Vincent, however, four interviews were done in collaboration with Dr. Fridell, therefore much of these questions were not asked. In other interviews, there was not time to ask all questions or the participant chose to speak about other areas of relevance rather than answer the questions specifically. General themes around state involvement in the agricultural industry, trade and organizational or inter-state partnerships were explored

The interviews were semi-structured and this allowed participants to share their experiences and thoughts in a conducive and comfortable manner. I interviews, were conducted independently. Four (4) participants are male and one (1) participant is female. I spoke to five (5) participants for a total of six (6) interviews, as one participant was interviewed twice. Three

interviews were conducted jointly with Dr. Fridell and three, including a second interview with a participant from the joint participant was female. It proved challenging to interview women in the industry, this could be due to my short time in SVG and that there are mostly male executives and managers at Winfresh and Vincyfresh.

Food security and food sovereignty are points of interest and conscious effort was made in both observational research and qualitative interviews to collect data relating to food security and food sovereignty in SVG. The Windward Islands rely heavily on imported goods, from regional suppliers in Trinidad and Jamaica⁵⁸ to the United Kingdom, US and China. Two participants interviewed spoke of the use of Amazon and similar distribution companies in making products - including foodstuffs - more accessible in SVG. A reliance on imported goods was found to be a major concern related to food security among participants interviewed. Processed goods, such as cookies, boxed cereals, crackers, soda pop and juice, along with meats such as chicken are generally important. Participants expressed concern of products with low-nutritional value that are high in salt and sugar being more readily available than the fresh produce, flours, fish and meat grown and produced in SVG. Diabetes, cancers and other environmentally-correlated diseases are common in the Caribbean and three of the six participants expressed concerns over access to safe, accessible, nutritious and culturally appropriate food as a method in which to prevent illness and disease. Some participants also pointed to the use of chemicals which contribute to cancers and other illness and disease.

Participants expressed the importance of autonomy and “dignity” for producers and farmers⁵⁹. Concepts of dignity and self-determination were found to be directly related to not engaging in wage labour or working in subordination to others. Collaboration and community engagement were brought up and supported by participants and were not thought to be in opposition to autonomy of work or livelihood. Through both observation and interviews, I discovered the importance of concepts such as sovereignty, independence and resistance and how these concepts play out in contemporary SVG. These topics were raised by interview participants in relation to the history of SVG, the challenges and benefits of regional trade partnerships and the relationships many small farmers have to their land. This will be discussed further in the in the discussion and analysis portion of the paper. The islands’ colonial and post-colonial relationship with the United Kingdom continues to play an important role in trade as the EU is one of the islands largest trading partners. Historically, exports from the Windward Islands, most prominently sugar and bananas - were exported to the UK, although the sugar industry is all but over in the Caribbean⁶⁰ and bananas are no longer exported to the UK, trade ties remain. Winfresh has an office in the UK and Winfresh products are exported to the UK,

⁵⁸ St. Vincent and the Grenadines Trade Indicators. (n.d.). Retrieved from <https://wits.worldbank.org/CountryProfile/en/Country/VCT/Year/2015>

⁵⁹ Anonymous interview with the author, July 2018

⁶⁰ “Caribbean Sugar Is Close to a Sticky End.” *The Economist*, The Economist Newspaper, 14 Dec. 2017, www.economist.com/the-americas/2017/12/14/caribbean-sugar-is-close-to-a-sticky-end.

with plans to export a larger variety of products, including those produced in SVG⁶¹. According to the World Bank, the UK, the US and China are the largest non-regional trading partners for SVG⁶².

The history of enslavement and colonialism has influence the attitudes of Vincentians on the importance of land ownership, dignity and autonomy⁶³. The small island state also has significant trade relationships with Canada, the United States, China and Latin American nations such Venezuela, although how that relationship will develop remains to be seen as Venezuela is in both a financial and social crisis⁶⁴. SVG also trades regionally with Trinidad & Tobago, Barbados, Jamaica and the other Windward Islands⁶⁵. SVG is has particularly close diplomatic relationship with Taiwan, Cuba, Venezuela, Participants were asked to discuss their thoughts on international trade, free trade and fair trade during the interviews. Participants in joint interviews with Dr. Fridell were asked to share their thoughts on free trade, this was a particularly illuminating question. While many stated that they were in support of free trade at the start of their answer, however, as they spoke, their views seemed to learn towards supporting a Proactive Development State and most favoured the policies and agreements that protected the market, over conventional neoliberal free trade paradigms. In individual interviews, participants were asked if they saw the future of trade in SVG being more or less liberalized and have more or less state involvement. There were some challenges in accessing data through the chosen methodology. I had hoped to investigate the experience of women in the banana industry and now in agri-processing more extensively, however, it was difficult to find information on women in agriculture and to speak to women in the industry directly. Participants of all genders shared that women are still a marginalized group in SVG, due to both cultural norms and types of legislation such as the fact that males often hold land title despite women and men doing equal amounts of work on said land.. Women's participation in the industry has increased for a number of reasons including men leaving rural areas to work in other industries and young men having less interest in farming⁶⁶. there are many challenges to creating gender parity in line with the SDGs, even though there are strides being made that deserve recognition.

The above data and findings will be discussed in a comprehensive manner in the following section in relation to the broader questions of how dynamic comparative advantage, free trade, alternative trade and a proactive development state plays out in SVG using a Gramscian understanding of hegemony.

⁶¹ *Winfresh Limited: 2015 Annual Report*. Winfresh Limited, 2015

⁶² "St. Vincent and the Grenadines Trade at a Glance : Most Recent Values." *St. Vincent and the Grenadines | Trade At a Glance | Most Recent Value | WITS | Data*, World Bank, wits.worldbank.org/CountrySnapshot/en/VCT.

⁶³ Anonymous interviews with author, July 2018

⁶⁴ Watts, Jonathan. "Venezuela on the Brink: a Journey through a Country in Crisis." *The Guardian*, Guardian News and Media, 11 Oct. 2016, www.theguardian.com/world/2016/oct/11/venezuela-on-the-brink-a-journey-through-a-country-in-crisis.

⁶⁵ "St. Vincent and the Grenadines Trade at a Glance : Most Recent Values." *St. Vincent and the Grenadines | Trade At a Glance | Most Recent Value | WITS | Data*, World Bank, wits.worldbank.org/CountrySnapshot/en/VCT.

⁶⁶ Anonymous interview with the author, July 2018

Section 4: Discussion & Analysis

A Gramscian framework is used to examine theoretical and material modes of exploring alternative development in SVG throughout this paper. The state is understood to be a proactive development state that is committed to diversification and development of its key sectors with a sustainable and human-centred mandate leading their initiatives. The 2013 UNDP *Human Development Report* places SVG as #84 overall for Human Development Indicators (HDI). This is significant when one understands underdevelopment in SVG as due to a complex history of domination through colonialism and the struggles to participate in the global economy without the wealth or power that western nations possess.

The SVG government operates as a hidden but active development state, often through programs and services in which the government's role is less evident, this is exemplified by Vincyfresh. The current government in power is the Unity Labour Party (ULP), headed by Prime Minister Ralph Gonsalves. The ULP is a social democratic party and has been in power for 18 years. The opposition party is the New Democratic Party (NDP) which takes a more conservative approach, nonetheless, both parties pledge their support for the growth and development of the agricultural sector, albeit through different methods. The ULP government through related departments is focused on developing the agriculture sector through diversification and value added agri-processing. The government supports Vincyfresh through funding, logistical and technical support although they take a hands off approach to the management and day-to-day operations of Vincyfresh⁶⁷ through supporting agri-processing, public-private partnerships and

⁶⁷ Anonymous interview with the author & Dr. Fridell, July 2018

the development of the agricultural industry in general through strategic goals. The government developed a economic and social development plan that encompasses implementation from 2013-2025⁶⁸ and includes strategic goals and programmes to further the development of the agricultural and agri-processing industry. The goals outlined by the SVG government and their relations to the operations and mandate of Vincyfresh are explored in detail below.

Section 4.1: Alternative Pathways to Development: Regional Partnerships

States and organizations act in tension and collaboration at all stages of the value chain as they work to achieve their disparate and collective goals. Caribbean states are exploring alternative trade schemes that move beyond dependency and current trade regimes that are to the detriment of the Caribbean economy. Proactive states must ensure that their growth doesn't reproduce social, cultural and historical inequities that have been harmful to the Caribbean in the international market and political sphere. A kind of safety net to ensure reciprocity, collaboration, justice and sustainability are achieved can be found in regional organizations such as the Organization of Eastern Caribbean States (OECS). The OECS is working towards developing resiliency and partnership in the eastern Caribbean. The OECS supports the adoption of the Caribbean Single Market and Economy (CSME) which would allow for more effective regional trade including more opportunities to produce and sell goods and services and build greater economies of scale⁶⁹. Streaming of trade and the CSME are two defining aspects of the OECS, however the organization works to achieve more social and community based partnership

⁶⁸ St. Vincent & the Grenadines. (2013). *2 Re-engineering Economic Growth: Improving the Quality of Life for all Vincentians*. Kingstown, SVG.

⁶⁹ CARICOM Single Market and Economy (CSME): Overview. (2016). Retrieved from <https://caricom.org/work-areas/overview/caricom-single-marke-and-economy>

and collaboration between these member states to achieve development that is more holistic and sustainable.

The OECS is comprised of the Leeward Islands: Antigua and Barbuda, St. Kitts and Nevis, Montserrat, Anguilla and the British Virgin Islands; and the Windward Islands: Dominica, St. Lucia, St. Vincent and the Grenadines and Grenada and Martinique. The OECS was formed on 18 June, 1981 and the Treaty of Basseterre was signed. In 2010, OECS member states signed the Revised Treaty of Basseterre, which established a single economic space and allowed for the free movement of goods, people and capital. The OECS' goals for the treaty are to create a path for member states to establish a common approach to trade, health, education and the environment and highlights the importance of agriculture within the Treaty's aims. The OECS states that "...the Treaty paves the way for the introduction of legislative competence at the regional level, so that Member States of the Organisation act in concert to develop and enact legislation in certain areas specified in the Treaty."⁷⁰ The Treaty aims not only for economic integration but a commitment to equal social, health and education policies across the ten (10) member states. The OECS sees itself as the "engine of regional integration" and has five (5) Strategic Objectives which are:

1. Regional Integration: Advance, support and accelerate regional trade, economic and social integration
2. Resilience: Mainstream climate, economic, environmental and social resilience
3. Social Equity: Promote and support equity and social inclusion; and leverage the cultural and linguistic diversity of the OECS
4. Foreign Policy: Support alignment of foreign policy of Member States with the development needs of the OECS
5. High Performing Education: Align and strengthen the institutional systems of the Commission to effectively deliver its mandate

⁷⁰ About the Organisation of the Eastern Caribbean States. (n.d.). Retrieved from <https://www.oecs.org/homepage/about-us>

These goals are reinforced by the UN Sustainable Development Goals, which SVG is a signatory of. As outline above, regional integration is the top goal of the OECS and seems have support from industry stakeholders. The OECS shares a single-economic market which streamlines trade and the ability for citizens to move and work freely among the ten states. It would be beneficial for all CARICOM states to have more regional integration, however their economies are of different scales and this would need to be taken into account. Barbados is major regional trading partner with SVG⁷¹ and they possess a stronger economy due to their successful tourism industry. The small island shares environmental and sustainability concerns with SVG and the two islands could benefit from a closer regional partnership. Two participants interviewed spoke in support of regionalism, citing the need to more communication between states and the reduction of barriers to trade and movement of goods between islands, especially close neighbours such as Barbados⁷².

Regional partnerships provide relationships beyond trade that would allow for more political and social solidarity among the islands⁷³ and have the possibility to act as an antidote to the underdevelopment and economic instability that has affected the region and is supported by CARICOM⁷⁴. The small size of the nations has been understood as the cause of underdevelopment, however, as Green outlines, colonialism and neocolonialism are more likely to be the root cause of underdevelopment in the Caribbean. This is not the only effect of colonialism and neocolonialism that affects the regions production and trade. Thomas formulated

⁷¹ St. Vincent and the Grenadines Trade Indicators. (n.d.). Retrieved from <https://wits.worldbank.org/CountryProfile/en/Country/VCT/Year/2015>

⁷² Anonymous interviews with the author, July 2018

⁷³ Anonymous interview with the author, 2018 and

⁷⁴ 'We must make CARICOM work' – Chair of COTED. (2018, November 16). Retrieved from <https://today.caricom.org/2018/11/16/we-must-make-caricom-work-chair-of-coted/>

the concept of ‘neocolonial production’.⁷⁵ Thomas understood underdevelopment as structured by colonialism and neocolonialism⁷⁶ and described the divergences he was analyzing as “producing what is not consumed at home and consuming what is not produced at home”.⁷⁷ This can be applied to food insecurity and lack of food sovereignty in SVG. Due to the small size of SVG and lack of access to resources for industrialized production, for example oil, the island would not be able to produce everything Vincentians need, however as Green states, some aspects of ‘small size’ are caused by colonialism. Sugar plantations and the banana regime were based on export to wealthy, western nations. Caribbean slaves, workers and then small farmers produced food commodities for export the EU and while which has been the main focus of the agricultural industry on the island, however a greater concentration on regional partnerships could be beneficial for both a greater sense of community among the islands as well as a method to improve food security across among the islands as regional partners could engage in trade of products they are unable to produce at home without relying on international trade. This sentiment was shared by a participant who is involved in the private sector in SVG and sees the strengthening of regional partnerships as mutually beneficial for the private sector and to deal with concerns such as food insecurity.⁷⁸

⁷⁵ Green, C. A. (2007). Between the devil and the deep blue sea: Mercantilism and free trade. *Race & Class*,49(2), 49

⁷⁶ Clive Y. Thomas in Green, C. A. (2007). Between the devil and the deep blue sea: Mercantilism and free trade. *Race & Class*,49(2)

⁷⁷ Clive Y. Thomas, *Dependence and Transformation the economics of the transition to socialism* (New York, Monthly Review Press, 1974).

⁷⁸ Anonymous interview with the author, July 2018

Section 4.2: Agricultural Diversification: From Bananas to Agri-processing

This section will examine the development and diversification of the agriculture industry in SVG through a Gramscian lens through an analysis of power relations between dominant western states and subordinate states in the global south, specifically SVG. The relationship between SVG and postcolonial Britain and the United States, as well as neoliberal institutions such as the WTO are imbued with hegemonic tensions. Analyzing hegemonic power relations from the global to national level in this case allows one to more effectively understand the social, political and historical conditions that created the challenges and innovative responses that form contemporary SVG.

Post-independence SVG is still grappling with neo-colonial inequities in its global relationships with the EU and with other dominant western states. Free trade is an “ideological fantasy⁷⁹” but is widely accepted as being neutral and without historical or political influence. The myth of free trade is rooted in historical, social, and cultural forces that have shaped our current global economic system of free trade and neoliberal capitalism. The Economic Partnership Agreement (EPA) put in place through the dismantling of preferential trade was meant to be based on reciprocity, however, when one considers the imbalance of power and wealth divide between the EU and SVG, reciprocity in trade may not be a possibility. Green’s analysis of underdevelopment in the Caribbean as not due to the small size of the islands but more so based on the remnants of colonialism and a highly unequal global economic system, leads one to question if it is best for states like SVG to attempt to build reciprocity with wealthy western nations or if there are alternative pathways towards building a secure and sustainable

⁷⁹ Chang, H. (2009). *Bad samaritans: The Myth of Free Trade and the Secret History of Capitalism*. New York, NY: Bloomsbury Press.

economy. Regional partnerships and cooperation between southern nations that move beyond the scope of previous preferential trade agreements and the dependency built into receiving international aid and relying on the exporting of commodities to the international market for revenue.

Section 4.3: Bananas & Colonialism

Staricco and Green both identify tensions present between subaltern and dominant states.

⁸⁰ Green applies this understanding of power differentials to the colonial and post-colonial relationships between small states, like SVG, and the world's powers in the West. Green's analysis is also a useful tool to understand the tensions that exist between western powers and affect former colonies like SVG during negotiations and rulings of the WTO, which will be discussed in relation to this paper's topic.

An imbalance of power between the Windward Islands and UK is inevitable considering the 300 years of slavery, domination and political and economic rule that the UK held over their colonies. Post-independence SVG maintained a connection to Britain through the Preferential Trade Deal. In response to protests and grassroots mobilization by farmers, the UK offered a market for their former colonies for their bananas, while maintaining their status as the dominant power, maintaining political and economic control over SVG, with dominant western power providing a market to a poorer southern state. This is not to suggest that the people or governments of the Windward islands are passive participants in the global system of trade or

⁸⁰ Staricco, Juan Ignacio. "Class Dynamics and Ideological Construction in the Struggle over Fairness: a Neo-Gramscian Examination of the Fairtrade Initiative." *The Journal of Peasant Studies*, 2017, pp. 1–19., and Green, C. A. (2007). Between the devil and the deep blue sea: Mercantilism and free trade. *Race & Class*, 49(2), 41-56.

within the colonial relationship with Britain. Vincentians applied pressure to the colonial administration in the 1930s to create solutions as the plantation sugar economy declined. Similar resistance was taking place in St. Lucia at the same time⁸¹. Rural workers organized and fought to redefine their livelihoods by pushing for the transition from a plantation economy to a small producer economy⁸². The rural workers, the subaltern class in Gramscian language, engaged in counter hegemony through shaping the economy. Although colonial Britain, the dominant group, still continued to benefit from the small producer economy, the resistance and protest from rural workers was significant. Resistance by the subaltern is significant as it illustrates the history of resistance and the fight for autonomy and self-determination that can be traced up to the present context.

In response to pressure from the subaltern and the declining sugar industry, the governing administration decided to divide up plantation estates and redistribute land, leading to the class of small farmers that are still present today, although at a much lower rate. Similarly to the sharp decline in banana exports referenced above, the amount of active farmers in SVG significantly declined, with 7855 active farmers in 1992 to 1151 in 2007⁸³. The reduction in those working as small farmers in SVG can be connected to the dismantling of the EU-Caribbean banana agreement.

⁸¹ Moberg, M. (2013). *Slipping away*. New York: Berghahn Books., Anonymous interview with the author, July 2018

⁸² Ibid.

⁸³ Fridell, G. (2011). The Case against Cheap Bananas: Lessons from the EU-Caribbean Banana Agreement. *Critical Sociology*, 37(3), 285-307. doi:10.1177/0896920510379447

In replacement of the preferential trade deal between the EU and the Windward Islands⁸⁴, the WTO called for and signing of an Economic Partnership Agreements (EPA) between the EU and the Caribbean, under the presumption that it would serve to shift the relationship between the EU and their former colonies to one of ‘reciprocity.’⁸⁵ Antigua and Barbuda, The Bahamas, Barbados, Belize, Dominica, Grenada, Guyana, Jamaica, Saint Lucia, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Suriname, Trinidad and Tobago, and the Dominican Republic signed the CARIFORUM-EU Economic Partnership with the EU in October 2008.⁸⁶ The European Commission echoes the WTOs claims of reciprocity and pushed for integration of the EPA through financial and technical support from Caribbean governments to implement the agreement. The European Commission was eager to move on from preferential trade agreements that they previously held with Caribbean states. In divergence to the understanding that preferential trade evens the playing field, the European Commission stated, “Caribbean enjoyed preferential access to the EU. The Caribbean didn’t have to open its market in any way to the EU.”⁸⁷ This short sentence in the 2018 report grossly misrepresents the historical and contemporary relationship between the EU and Caribbean states. The Commission’s report does not fully take into account the EUs dominant position nor the critique and resistance that Caribbean leaders engaged in in order to secure preferential trade agreements. The relationship between the EU and ACP countries, in this instance, the UK and SVG cannot be one of

⁸⁴ The European Commission. (2018). *How the EU is putting the EPA into practice*(Rep.). Brussels, Belgium: The European Commission. European Commission Directorate-General for Trade. (n.d.). <http://ec.europa.eu/trade/policy/countries-and-regions/regions/caribbean/>

⁸⁵ Fridell, G. (2010). The Case against Cheap Bananas: Lessons from the EU-Caribbean Banana Agreement. *Critical Sociology*, 37(3), 290

⁸⁶ European Commission Directorate-General for Trade. (n.d.). Retrieved November 03, 2018, from <http://ec.europa.eu/trade/policy/countries-and-regions/regions/caribbean/>

⁸⁷ The European Commission. (2018). *How the EU is putting the EPA into practice*(Rep.). Brussels, Belgium: The European Commission.

reciprocity as reciprocity must be developed from a relationship that is equitable. The imbalance of power between the EU and former colonies like SVG is contemporaneous and is a significant reason that reciprocity is not possible in trade. The legacy of colonialism is still present in these relationships. The WTO operates as a dominant power in its relationship to Caribbean states, in part due to the amount of economic and political power held by the EU and the US. The WTO promotes neoliberal free trade and open markets that tend to benefit states that hold hegemonic power. Caribbean states were required to adopt “WTO-Plus commitments”, which included “provisions in services, intellectual property, competition, public procurement and investment” that exceed what has been agreed upon in multilateral forums and is thrust upon poor countries that are engaged in unequal negotiations with more powerful partners⁸⁸.

Section 4.4: A Proactive State & Alternative Models of Capital

A proactive development state can be effective in building sustainable and human centred economic development. Clive Y. Thomas theories on a social capital as “...functionally related to development, as distinct from growth.”⁸⁹ Thomas provides a comprehensive analysis of how social capital affects growth and development, well beyond a neoclassical model which puts more weight on economic growth. Thomas’ argument about the role of the state in the Caribbean is pertinent to this paper. He points to the mainstream understanding that state intervention is imperative during market failure and uses this as an argument for justification for earlier state intervention to prevent - or mitigate - market failures. The prevention of market failure may be

⁸⁸ Fridell, G. (2011). The Case against Cheap Bananas: Lessons from the EU-Caribbean Banana Agreement. *Critical Sociology*, 37(3), 285-307. doi:10.1177/0896920510379447

⁸⁹ Thomas, C. Y. (1996). Capital Markets, Financial Markets and Social Capital (An Essay on Economic Theory and Economic Ideas). *Social and Economic Studies*, 45(2/3), 1-23.

outside of the domain of the SVG government as the island's economy is tied to exports which can be affected by an often volatile global market. However, the government can take on a proactive role and take steps to prevent harms from global market failure. Thomas' theory of social capital could be a fitting solution. Many states in the Caribbean began to liberalize trade and adopt neoliberal practices of an open market and less public investment in social services⁹⁰ during the era of independence and decolonization, oftentimes at the insistence of colonial or neo colonial states⁹¹. Thomas argues that social resources do not deplete when utilized but actually grow as they are used by the community. Social capital is defined as “voluntary means” and mechanisms that benefit the development of the collective. The voluntary aspect can be challenged as we consider how social relations play out and collective identities are formed with community. Individuals may form a collective community in order to maintain dominance or as a form of counter-hegemony. A proactive development state that aims to strengthen social capital could use civil society in Gramscian manner to shift the cultural ideology to one that is centred on social capital and the people engaged in the process. Conversely, the subaltern could engage in protest or other means to lobby their government to create policies and services that support and develop social capital.

Thomas may disagree with my theoretical imaginings. The table below states that a defining feature of social capital is that it is non-coercive. I challenge this, as in civil and political society there is always tension between the dominant group and subaltern. The methods to form a collective civil society must have an element of coercion whether it be

⁹⁰ Thomas, C. Y. (1996). Capital Markets, Financial Markets and Social Capital (An Essay on Economic Theory and Economic Ideas). *Social and Economic Studies*, 45(2/3), 1-23.

⁹¹ Chang, H. (2009). *Bad samaritans: The Myth of Free Trade and the Secret History of Capitalism*. New York, NY: Bloomsbury Press.

counter-hegemonic tactics employed by the subaltern or an exercise of hegemonic power from the dominant group. If social capital is driven from below, as Thomas asserts, then it would be counter-hegemonic, and engage in some level of coercion. I argue that a proactive development state can engage in shifting cultural ideology and institutions to back social capital as a effective development solution.

Table 1:⁹²

Characteristics:

1. Diminishing returns do not apply
2. Appreciates with you
3. Collectively produced within civic society
4. Produces outcome desired for their own sake
5. Outcomes are not subject to market valuation (other indicators necessary)
6. Its "calculus" is not utilitarian in the traditional market sense. It does, however, emphasise giving and rewards.
7. It is not a new discovery

Other features:

1. It is non-coercive. (Internal violation rather than external rewards/punishment drives it.)
2. It is humane. (It elevates social concerns over individual gains/losses.)
3. It is sustainable. (It's time-horizon is oriented to future generations.)
4. It is empowering. (It is not based on exploitation or zero-sum games.)
5. It is synergistic. (It affects and is affected by all areas of social life.)
6. It is catalytic. (It can generate outcomes far outside its initial purview.)
7. It is mobilising. (It helps to develop the energies of the society.)
8. It is accountable and responsible. (It emphasizes sharing and trust.)
9. It is concerned with both development and the distribution of the benefits of development.
10. It's accumulation is driven from below (because of its social character.)

Social capital compliments a proactive development state that is focused on supporting the development of sectors like agriculture and more vulnerable groups such as rural people.

Reports from the SVG government outline key points that support a social capital economy

⁹² Thomas, C. Y. (1996). Capital Markets, Financial Markets and Social Capital (An Essay on Economic Theory and Economic Ideas). *Social and Economic Studies*, 45(2/3), 1-23.

operated by a proactive development state. In Part Two of the the *National Economic and Social Development Plan: 2013-2025*, “Strategic Goals and Plans”, the SVG government under the leadership of the ULP, outlines five goals, the first being “Re-engineering Economic Growth.” Although, the majority of governments have strategic plans for economic growth, SVGs takes on a proactive development role, which the government relates to the number of challenges that SVG faces - from natural disasters related to climate change to financial challenges related to the global market and loss of preferential trade agreements. The table below outlines the subsections of Winfresh’s first goal in the 2015 Annual Report which is “Re-engineering Economic Growth”. This chart provides provides a background for analysis of this plan as an action of a proactive development state.

Table 2: Vincifresh “Re-engineering Economic Growth”⁹³

1.1: to maintain strong macroeconomic fundamentals
1.2: to revitalise the agricultural and fisheries sector
1.3: to stimulate growth in the tourism sector
1.4: to develop the financial sector
1.5: to enhance the role of the private sector and manufacturing in economic and social development in conjunction with the State and cooperative sectors
1.6: to attain a strong and sustainable external trade position
1.7: to develop the information and telecommunication service sector
1.8: to enhance productivity and competitiveness
1.9: to maximize benefits through integration into the OECS Economic Union, CSME, and global economy
1.10: to boost economic activity in the construction sector
1.11: to optimise the economic contribution made by ocean resources

⁹³ Winfresh Limited: 2015 Annual Report, *Winfresh Limited*, 2015

Three points of interests among the sub-goals 1.2, 1.5 and 1.9. As introduced earlier, the agriculture industry has been undergoing a process of revitalization and diversification of crops and processing. 1.5 is particularly interesting when one takes Vincyfresh's structure into account. Vincyfresh aims to support the private sector and operate as a profitable corporation⁹⁴ while being supported by the state. Vincyfres operates in the margin of public-private and this may be one of its more prominent strengths as it is able to be in cooperative relationships with both government and the private sector. 1.9 states Winfresh's goal of more integration with OECS, the CMSE, as well as their participation, speaks to not only the structure of Winfresh but also their connection and desire to engage in a more beneficial way with international trading partners.

SVG maintains a trade relationship with the UK, which is one of their biggest trading partners. SVG gained independence from Britain, a mere thirty-nine years ago, and the majority of its population are descended from enslaved peoples. It is just over a decade since the dismantling of the EU-Caribbean Banana Agreement gave way to the new EPA between CARICOM and the EU. Caribbean nations have made every effort to participate in the international market as an equal players however, this may be impossible under the current global economic system as European nations have built their wealth through the colonization and exploitation of the Caribbean and many other nations⁹⁵. The post-colonial relationship between the UK and SVG is still rife with tensions stemming for the horrific actions colonization. The effects of the oppression and subjugation of the Caribbean and its people manifests in

⁹⁴ Anonymous interview with the author, 2018

⁹⁵ Jones, S. (2013, August 27). Follow the money: Investigators trace forgotten story of Britain's slave trade. Retrieved from <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2013/aug/27/britain-slave-trade>

contemporary challenges. The lasting effects colonialism and the unequal distribution of global wealth was brought up by two participants who see barriers to SVG moving forward in the face of more powerful nations who have amassed wealth through colonialism. Colonialism has tangible effects that are notable in contemporary in SVG. Three participants mentioned the historical legacy of colonialism, as well as inequality in the global economy. During their interview, Participant #1 discussed the ways in which western hegemonic powers are wealthier and hold more economic and political power over countries in the global south, stating that the UK benefited from “300 years of free labour”.⁹⁶ This is in reference to the wealth that was amassed through the slavery and the subjugation of African peoples and followed by the indentured servitude of both afro- and indo-caribbean peoples. Colonial Britain first exercised power through force - kidnapping, murdering, raping and enslaving Africans and then through manufactured consent. The colonial governments manufactured consent among white Britons through propaganda that dehumanized Black and Brown people, therefore allowing white Europeans to excuse themselves of guilt about the horrors that their governments were enacting around the world. In the Caribbean, the colonial administrations worked to strip slaves of their dignity and humanity, beyond the use of physical violence and domination. Social and institutional practices of exercising hegemony were employed including the banning of African spiritual practices, forced conversion to Christianity, the loss of traditional language through the traumatic experience of enslavement and colonization, lack of access to education, forcing slaves to produce and grow food for white slave owners. Despite it being their land and their labour they were not given access to these foods or arable land to grow their own.⁹⁷ It is crucial to

⁹⁶ Anonymous interview #1 & #2, with author and Dr. Fridell, 2018

⁹⁷ Diet and food production for enslaved Africans. (n.d.). Retrieved October 03, 2018, from <http://www.liverpoolmuseums.org.uk/ism/slavery/archaeology/caribbean/caribbean2.aspx>

understand the ongoing effects of colonialism and the ways in which the enslavement and domination of Afro-Caribbeans, and the violence against and displacement of the Carib peoples, have contributed to the development - or lack thereof - of SVG.

Decades before independence, Vincentians were advocating for the betterment of the agricultural industry and to secure their livelihoods, therefore, a proactive development state is not new in SVG. The Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry, Fisheries, Rural Transformation, Industry and Labour defined eleven “Strategic Goals” for 2017 and are as follows:

Strategic Priorities 2017⁹⁸

1. Stimulate private sector investment in the agricultural sector and encourage public-private partnership.
2. Modernize, increase productivity, efficiency and competitiveness in the agricultural sector.
3. Increase export market access for diversified agricultural produce.
4. Improve the legislative and institutional framework to foster commercialization of the agricultural sector.
5. Encourage the facilitation of agricultural credit.
6. Create an effective policy formation mechanism and improve the policy framework for agricultural development.
7. Promote the sustainable use of land, forestry and marine resources.
8. Further develop the fisheries sector.
9. Facilitate the commercialization of the livestock sector.
10. Expand agro-processing.
11. Increase youth involvement in agriculture, especially through agricultural training and access to land.

Goals 1, 2, 3, 5 and 10 are most applicable to the case study of Vincyfresh. The stated goals of the Ministry mirror the activities, operations and programmes of Vincyfresh. Continued state support is important for the success of Vincyfresh as it develops its operations. Goal 5 is also of significance to Vincyfresh as the organization aims to provide agricultural credit and encourage

⁹⁸Bailey, J. (2017). About the Ministry. Retrieved from <http://agriculture.gov.vc/agriculture/index.php/about-ministry>

farmers to build their credit and savings through formal banking.⁹⁹ Vincyfresh is structured in a manner that is focused on financial sustainability and acting in ways that are socially responsible to their communities. In the *2015 Annual Report* from Winfresh, the group describes their mission as,

“To serve our customers with a range of high quality products and services at just prices, to pay fair prices to our suppliers and to return fair value to our shareholders. We aim to do so by working in partnership with our suppliers in a manner that is socially and morally responsible and commands respect for our integrity and the positive contributions we make to the societies we serve.”¹⁰⁰

Vincyfresh, as division of Winfresh, shares this mandate and is building their operations in order to manufacture products that produced in a manner that focuses on quality and fairness along the production chain. During an interview with an employee at Vincyfresh, participant #1 spoke about the structure and mandate of Vincyfresh, at first describing it as operating as any private corporation, then upon further discussion, stated that Vincyfresh differed from private corporations saying, “We [Vincyfresh] have a soul.”¹⁰¹ Vincyfresh, and Winfresh, have a mandate to be fiscally sustainable and transparent with their stakeholders and partners, yet because they are a statutory government corporation and have a mission to support the communities they serve, the interests of Vincyfresh differ from a conventional private cooperation. Vincyfresh offers assistance in the form of loans, seeds and farm supplies, as well as guidance on setting up bank accounts in order to receive payments along with education, extension services on the farm and other programmes to support the farmers that they partner

⁹⁹ Anonymous interview with the author, July 2018

¹⁰⁰ *Winfresh Limited: 2015 Annual Report*. Winfresh Limited, 2015

¹⁰¹ Anonymous interview with the author, July 2018

with. These programmes are more in line with government social services over the activities of a conventional private corporation.

Over the course of field research, I was fortunate to be able to take a tour of the Vincyfresh production facility in Diamond, St. Vincent. During my visit, I interacted with some employees on the production floor during a tour and spoke with some others involved at Vincyfresh to gather insight about the current operations and background of Vincyfresh. Over the course of our interview, participant #1 stated that the SVG government was not involved in Vincyfresh¹⁰², however, if one is to look more closely at the relationship between the state and Vincyfresh and the structure of Winfresh as a whole, we find that the government takes a much more proactive role than the participant initially described.

The concept of a hidden development state is applicable in the case of Vincyfresh. The Strategic Goals as outline by the Ministry of Agriculture do not name Vincyfresh, however, goal #10 which is to expand agri-processing is directly related to Vincyfresh as the facility in diamond and their partnerships with farmers and producers are focused on agri-processing. The first goal to “Stimulate private sector investment in the agricultural sector and encourage public-private partnership” is again related to the development and goals of Vincyfresh. Vincyfresh aims to build relationships with producers on one end of the production chain and to secure distributors and marketplaces for their products with private businesses on the other side of the production chain.

The SVG government takes a hidden, but active role in the development of agri-processing, supporting the development of public-private cooperation and diversifying the

¹⁰² Anonymous interview #13 with author and Dr. Fridell, 2018

agricultural industry. Vincyfresh, backed by a hidden development state, can use its position to achieve goals of autonomy and justice in the domestic and global markets. Fridel citing Fred Block, argues “the hidden developmental state, once revealed, can be used to demonstrate the potential benefits of active industrial policy while supporting transformative politics by providing progressive sectors.”¹⁰³ Applying this to the goals of the SVG government and the case of Vincyfresh, shared goals between Vincyfresh and the Ministry of Agriculture and the government's overall strategic plan emerge. Vincyfresh does not actively name the state and the state does not cite Vincyfresh as a vehicle for implementing their goals, however they are partnership and working towards shared goals. State-supported agri-processing challenges the ideological fantasy¹⁰⁴ of free trade that presumes the market will run itself, however critics have identified that even in a free trade state, state programs, policies and laws are still required to protect private property, businesses and the economy as a whole.

It seems unusual that a small island state like SVG should have a burgeoning state-of-the-art agri-processing facility, considering the country's economic losses from the dismantlement of the Banana Agreement. The answer lies in the hidden role of the state. The government of SVG has taken a proactive role in the development of the economy, particularly within the agriculture. A proactive development state acts to support development and social programs through state-run corporations and organizations. SVG has representation on the board of Winfresh and supports Vincyfresh financially and Vincyfresh also benefits from diplomatic ties to Taiwan, where they are ordering machinery for the Diamond facility from¹⁰⁵ Vincyfresh.

¹⁰³ Gavin Fridell, 2015. “Ethical Trade and Public Enterprise: Controlling Consumption in Ontario's Liquor Market,” *Human Geography* 8 (2), p. 33

¹⁰⁴ Chang, H. (2009). *Bad samaritans: The Myth of Free Trade and the Secret History of Capitalism*. New York, NY: Bloomsbury Press.

¹⁰⁵ Tour at the Vincyfresh Facility, July 2018

These are just some examples of ways in which the government of SVG operates as a proactive development state. Other development programs, including technological advances like accessible wireless internet which have been supported by diplomatic partners and development banks. SVG recently received a grant from India to develop the production and processing of arrowroot and contribute to the diversification of agricultural products. A significant portion of funding for Vincyfresh came from a loan that was negotiated with the Bolivarian Alliance for the Peoples of Our America (ALBA). After 10 years of negotiations and lobbying, championed by Dr. Gerald Thompson, SVG secured a loan with upwards of \$40 million available¹⁰⁶ from ALBA. A portion of this loan served to develop the agri-processing industry and modernize technology and industry in SVG. ALBA as a development bank serves to disrupt the notion that development funding is provided by the north for the benefit of the south. ALBA has served as a key agency in south-south cooperation and has served to strengthen regional ties. Diplomatic and trade relationships with other OECS member states and CARICOM nations as well as Latin American countries help build a network of solidarity among nations that have been historically marginalized through colonization, and for the small economies of scale in lower-middle income OECS states, this has meant that the states have been unable to compete with larger, more powerful northern states.

Counter-hegemony comes in many forms, one being a proactive development state taking initiative in an industry that is traditionally reliant on the dominant group. In this case, the governments of the Windward Islands forming Winfresh to protect, develop and diversify the agricultural and agri-processing industry, which have been historically linked to colonial powers

¹⁰⁶ US\$40 million available to St. Vincent from ALBA Bank – PM. (2013, May 23). Retrieved October 17, 2018, from <https://www.iwnsvg.com/2013/05/28/us40-million-available-to-st-vincent-from-alba-bank-pm/>

and reliant on the ability to export to the international market. Another area in which Winfresh challenges global economic hegemony is the group's commitment to fair trade. Winfresh chose an alternative model of fair trade and cooperative relationships supported by the state over conventional narratives of neoliberal free trade. Neoliberal free trade paradigms are an ideological fantasy¹⁰⁷ whose supporters claimed would allow nations in the global south to catch up to the economic and developmental level of northern states. Neoliberalism has continued to fail, yet because the fantasy runs so deep, the global market system continues to attempt to develop through it.¹⁰⁸ Alternative methods of trade are needed to challenge the myth of free trade as the only viable economic system.

Section 4.5: Vincyfresh & Fair Trade: Challenges & Critiques

Vincyfresh and Winfresh are committed to the principles of fair trade in their purchasing of produce at a fair price and providing social supports through programmes and educational development. However, this does not mean that all promoters of fair trade produce on the island share the same views of agricultural development that Vincyfresh does. Nonetheless, Winfresh remains critical of some structures of fair trade particularly FLO's lack of action of price changes in the face of increasing global prices. Despite critiques, Winfresh is committed to operating their companies under the principles of fair trade as is mentioned in their mission statement. Winfresh's mission statement includes their commitment to operate in a socially and morally responsible manner; a manner that makes positive contributions to their communities. This is a

¹⁰⁷ Chang, H. (2009). *Bad samaritans: The Myth of Free Trade and the Secret History of Capitalism*. New York, NY: Bloomsbury Press.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid.

challenge to the global system that puts individuals and profit before supporting producers and building sustainable community partnerships.

Winfresh is not the first or only group whose principle concern is to be socially conscious. The Windward Island Farmers Association (WINFA), whose mandate it is to represent small farmers in SVG, are critical of aspects of Vincyfresh's operational mandate. WINFA spearheaded the introduction of fair trade certification in SVG as a way to mitigate the harm done by the end of the preferential trade deal and to access a niche market for fair trade Windward Island bananas. The rationale behind introducing fair trade was to help farmers access a guaranteed market, receive fair prices for their products, and to fill the chasm left by end preferential trade. However, due in part to rising living expenses and the high cost of farm inputs, fair trade cannot compete with the former protected market. Although, fair trade is meant to benefit farmers and allow consumers to make ethical choices, often the financial and material burden of meeting fair trade standards falls on farmers¹⁰⁹ Fair trade certainly has many benefits, including a price paid above market price, social premiums and more direct trade between southern producers and northern buyers. However, fair trade has some limitations due to its structure and the small portion of the market it occupies. Staricco provides an excellent summary of the limitations and possible ways fair trade may reproduce conventional socioeconomic relations in its attempt to transform them¹¹⁰

WINFA is committed to making the production of bananas in SVG a viable option for farmers and hope that by promoting fair trade and supporting farmers in the production of

¹⁰⁹Fridell, G. (2011). The Case against Cheap Bananas: Lessons from the EU-Caribbean Banana Agreement. *Critical Sociology*, 37(3), 292

¹¹⁰ Staricco, Juan Ignacio. "Class Dynamics and Ideological Construction in the Struggle over Fairness: a Neo-Gramscian Examination of the Fairtrade Initiative." *The Journal of Peasant Studies*, 2017, pp. 1–19.

bananas, the industry will be able to thrive beyond local cultivation. A anonymous participant involved in the agriculture industry expressed concern about the ways in which Vincyfresh deals with the most vulnerable farmers. Vincyfresh sends extension officers to visit small farms who will may become partners with Vincyfresh as producers to ensure the viability of the farm. An extension officer will decided if the farm is productive enough and is of the right size to meet the requirements set by Vincyfresh, the farmer's will be encouraged to shift to wage work on other farms or at the facility in Diamond, depending on their skills, interests and available jobs.¹¹¹ Two of the interviewed participants expressed that working for oneself is important to Vincentian farmers and the transition to wage work for an older farmer could be very difficult. Building upon his concerns about who is benefiting from farmer support programs run by the government and by Vincyfresh, participant #6 who is a Vincentian farmer expressed concern that the most vulnerable would be left behind while those who already have some access to capital and resources would end up as a dominant group that would benefit, and that divide between those that can access these programs and those that cannot would create division between farmers.¹¹² Community relationships are important in SVG and through observational research, I was able to witness meaningful community ties and the way in which Vincentians work together and build community. This sense of community and pride in one's work was especially present in my visit to the Leeward side of the island where I met with participant #6 and was able to spend some time in a village there.

Green's analysis of the historical, cultural and social effects of colonialism and neocolonialism on Caribbean states paired with Staricco's conceptualization of Gramscian

¹¹¹ Anonymous interview with the author, 2018

¹¹² Ibid.

hegemony provides an solid theoretical backdrop for examining the context in which Vincyfresh has been established and continues to develop in. Colonialism and neocolonialism has influenced the context in which Vincyfresh operates in. Vincyfresh's mission to be socially responsible and support their communities through alternative trade and development paradigms that display a move away from free trade paradigms that uphold neo colonial imbalances of power.

Section 4.6: Tackling Food Insecurity

Vincyfresh's programs are beneficial in supporting farmers with a guaranteed buyer and technical advice could increase production, which would allow the farmers to sell more of their produce to Vincyfresh, while still being able to sell to the local market and grow for their own consumption¹¹³. There is a potential positive impact of improved yields and the ability to build credit through Vincyfresh's regular wages and encouragement for farmer's to set up bank accounts, which is more stable or higher food security on the island. Food security is an issue in SVG and the current government has defined as an important issue to tackle and appear to be committed to the reducing food insecurity and the broader goals of poverty reduction as defined through the UN Sustainable Development Goals. Food security, and insecurity, is influenced by multiple factors. A non-exhaustive list includes: climate related disasters (such as storms damaging crops), low-wages, inaccessibility of food products in rural areas and high prices of food, particularly imported goods. Food security is not only important for the health of the individual but the health and development of a whole community and having a sustainable plan to ensure food security for a population is imperative for development. That is to say, planning for economic success without taking into account the broader needs of a community cannot lead

¹¹³ Anonymous interviews with the author, July 2018

to sustainable development. The benefits Thomas sees within a system of social capital can be applied here. If the collective makes decisions to improve the lives of all rather than focusing on their individual needs, food security could be achieved in a community rather than among individual households. The programs and support that Vincyfresh provides through technical assistance, loans and employment, if executed in a manner that contributes to the whole community, fits well into Thomas' theory of social capital. A community - in this case a country - that develops a social capital economy could utilize the collective sense of responsibility and desire for collective welfare to further partnerships with nearby communities of producers and farmers, to ensure more food security and less reliance on outside sources that may not have the collective's wellbeing in mind. Access to fresh, affordable, healthy and culturally appropriate food can be a challenge in SVG. Small and backyard farmers grow crops for their own consumption and to sell at local markets. Staple crops include "provisions" which are sweet potatoes, tannia, cassava and other root vegetables as well as "greens" which include cucumbers, tomatoes, callaloo, etc¹¹⁴. Fruit trees such as mango, papaya, sweetsop, soursop and breadfruit grow bountiful in SVG with its excellent climate and rich soil. Vincentian farmers have the ability to grow different types of produce the majority of the year and a variety of vegetables and fruits, however, much of the food available in stores and supermarkets are imported, including many staple items such as legumes, grains and meat. SVG's reliance on imported food does not have to be detrimental to the food security of its people. If the island state continues to diversify agriculture and committed to growing their agro-processing industry, this could build a structure that is more capable of supporting food sovereignty. Due to the small size and economies of

¹¹⁴ Anonymous interviews with the author, July 2018

scale, SVG - like the other members of the OECS - could tap into regional partnerships that do exist but often have barriers that make trade between the nations more difficult.

Section 5: Conclusion: Towards Collective Futures of Liberation

The Caribbean is in a process of change - one that has ebbed and flowed since the islands were first colonized and our ancestors were first brought to these islands. It remains to be seen what the programs, policies and regional and international partnerships will bring, as more in-depth research needs to be done and some projects such as Vincyfresh are still developing their operations.

A proactive development state can be effective, regardless of size, when it supports and creates policies and entities that recognize the unique challenges and strengths that small Caribbean states possess. The state will benefit from engaging in dynamic alternatives to conventional trade and development paradigms, which are exemplified in SVG's regional partnerships through the OECS, CARICOM are in-line with their goals of enhancing and diversifying the agricultural industry.

Solidarity among states through regional partnerships can challenge the global hegemony that favours a disparate relationship between northern and southern states. There are many possibilities for favourable outcomes if Caribbean nations continue to strengthen regional partnerships, streamline trade between OECS countries and enhance the CMSE to a more effective standard, especially for the more vulnerable, low-middle income states. Vincyfresh,

born out of a proactive development state, is a significant actor in the challenging conventional notions of development and trade being hindered by a proactive state.

Vincyfresh has had a slow, but promising start. The Gramscian and neo-Gramscian theoretical frameworks employed in this research has valuable in the analysis of contemporary SVG and specifically the transition from preferential trade for one crop to diversified crop production and development of agri-processing. This model of diversification and exploration of alternative methods of agricultural development and trade could prove to quite beneficial to the region as there is potential with agri-processing to create more skilled jobs and trade value-added products over raw produce. It remains to be seen if these new models will be able to match or exceed the benefits of preferential trade.

The tension that exists between the subaltern and the dominant class will not cease to exist in the presence of alternative trade and development paradigms as there is not hegemony without counter-hegemony. It would require a radical shift in the global political economy that may be impossible considering the historical legacy of colonialism and current neo colonial regimes that entrench inequalities in the international market and global political system. Challenging hegemony is necessary for the subaltern to survive. A proactive development state can achieve this through strategic planning and building solidarity with other groups, or states, within the subaltern to challenge global systems of hegemony and achieve their collective goals. It will be much harder for powerful western states to oppress Caribbean nations as they have in the past if they are in partnership.¹¹⁵

¹¹⁵ Chang, H., Gabel, I., & Wade, R. H. (2014). *Reclaiming development: An alternative economic policy manual*. London: Zed Books.

Strengthening regional partnerships and continuing to engage in alternative trade structures as Vincyfresh and Winfresh do in their commitment to fair trade are solid steps to recover from the negative effects of colonialism and western imperialism. St. Vincent & the Grenadines along with the other OECS countries can strategically and dynamically engage alternative models of trade and development as counter-hegemony in order to participate in the international market in more advantageous manner. Alternative trade paradigms and challenges to global hegemony will be met with resistance, however not being proactive and creating new methods of market engagement will not allow the island nations to survive.

Due to constraints of space and time of this project, the outcomes of these projects cannot be explored in this project. It will be interesting to see how Vincyfresh's operations are running in the next one to five years as the facility already has many state-of-the-art technologies and equipment and staff that is excited and knowledgeable about the operations. With continued state support and a socially conscious operation of programs to support small farmers, Vincyfresh can thrive and the development of agri-processing in SVG will hopefully have lasting positive impacts on the development of the island nation.

St. Vincent & the Grenadines have a history of resistance and a deep connection to their land and livelihoods rooted in this land. The islands continue to display resiliency in the face of many challenges. CARICOM and OECS often uses the language of resiliency to describe its goals and programmes around development, which displays common goals and is a positive step in regional collaboration. The region has faced many challenges and some significant success, all of which must be taken into account, as the island states move forward to achieve their individual and collective goals.

In order to fully and effectively challenge the oppressive nature of western imperialism and neocolonialism, we must engage in education, collaboration and commit to continuously challenge global economic and political hegemony. We must commit to revolutionary change and to engage in meaningful partnerships with all oppressed peoples and states. It is impossible to achieve liberation individually, however, through partnerships, a proactive state, and a collectively organized subaltern, we can liberate one another to build the futures we imagine. With the history of slavery, resistance, and hard-won freedoms that have in part shaped the context and topics discussed in this paper, I close not with my own words, but those of Assata Shakur, revolutionary and writer, whose words capture the essence of collective resistance to hegemony and our duty to create better future: “It is our duty to fight for our freedom. It is our duty to win. We must love each other and support each other. We have nothing to lose but our chains.”¹¹⁶

¹¹⁶Shakur, A. (2006, February 4). To My People. Retrieved from <http://assata-shakur.blogspot.com/2006/02/assata-shakur-to-my-people.html>

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