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## Capitalist Philanthropy and the New Green Revolution for Food Security

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**Abstract.** The aggressive promotion of a neo-liberal form of economic globalization has created super-rich capitalists in the South as well as the North, many of whom choose to invest some of their accumulated wealth in philanthropic ventures targeted at helping to reduce social problems, such as poverty, disease and food insecurity. The rich who have been actively involved in giving to charities and setting up philanthropic foundations – and who have developed a global reputation around this activity – are referred to here as capitalist philanthropists. While capitalist philanthropists' often-stated rationale for this activity is to help others benefit from their 'wealth creation', this form of philanthropy is both politically and ideologically committed to a market approach. In the case of agriculture, this means the modernization of agriculture through market-led forces of production and support for a strategy to restructure agriculture with implementation of new technologies, innovation and management techniques. What has become known as the New Green Revolution is delivered through partnerships between public, private and local institutions and small farmers with a particular focus on sub-Saharan Africa. The article critically examines why capitalist philanthropists give away significant portions of their wealth to projects and programmes that support agrarian change and food security. It considers the motivations for partnerships with private corporations through which they engage in this agenda. What are the political and ideological motivations of capitalist philanthropy? Is this kind of giving altruistic, for the good of society? Or do the origins of capitalist philanthropy determine 'giving' as market-led development and expansion of the market as the solution to food security?

### Introduction

Theoretically, this article draws broadly on Gramsci's and Bourdieu's work and their conception of philanthropy. Gramsci vehemently believed that philanthropy was an instrument of hegemony by which the capitalist class maintained its control of the market, workers and peasants, and one that served to avert attention away from the malevolence of the rich and the concentration of wealth in the hands of the few. As in wider society, hegemony is realized within the field of civil society. In other words, philanthropic donations support the domination of politics by the power-

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ful and this is effectively reinforced through consensus rather than force (Gramsci, 1971). For Bourdieu (2001, p. 15) the 'gratuitous gift does not exist'. To all intents and purposes, the act of giving assumes either some form of reciprocal response or it is motivated by the status that it can generate. In this conception, philanthropic activities are consciously driven with specific identified goals and strategies, shaped by personal character and qualities, in the social field and its external relations with other fields, such as business, politics, religion and its grounding in the class system (Kidd, 1996). In Bourdieu's theoretical framework, capitalist philanthropists embody not only economic capital – that is, individual capitalists who are dominant actors in the economics field (such as Ford in the car industry, Rockefeller in the oil industry, and most recently Gates in computer technology), but also in the field of symbolic capital. The relationship is synergistic – philanthropists both use and gain symbolic capital through philanthropic activity: in other words, they convert economic capital into symbolic capital and symbolic capital functions to reproduce economic capital. The two fields of activities they are engaged in – capitalist activities for profit and philanthropy for not profit – are far from being separate and distinct but are related symbiotically one to another (Harvey et al., 2011).

What distinguishes symbolic capital from other types of capital is that it acts as a source of power to the field of participants through values, recognition, prestige and reputation. Symbolic capital provides the agent or philanthropist with influence, power, and hegemony within the relationship with the receiver. Their status, or symbolic capital, is often enhanced by the media and public relations agencies that they employ. In some instances the media presents philanthropists as having a form of celebrity status, thus generating free publicity for them. A good example is the media attention paid to Bill Gates and Warren Buffet when they announced their decisions to donate a large proportion of their wealth to charitable causes. Gates's philanthropic activities in health, such as the anti-malaria field, have gained him a global reputation for doing good for the well-being of humanity, further reinforcing his individual status and the status of associated corporate organizations. As a result, the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation has been able to establish a philanthropic network that involves other rich capitalists and large corporations in new ventures that support specific kinds of investment in agriculture, such as the new green revolution in sub-Saharan Africa (SSA).<sup>1</sup> The new green revolution in SSA is reshaping social relations and transforming rural production by encouraging small farmers and peasants to become involved in a commodified market-place.

### **Capitalist Philanthropy and Agrarian Restructuring**

Historically, the Rockefeller and Ford Foundations were among the first philanthropic institutions to support expansion of the market into rural areas of the global South by investing in agricultural research and development. Rockefeller established a research centre in Mexico in 1943 focused on wheat cultivation, followed by other international agriculture centres such as the Consultative Group on International Research Group (CGIAR), as vehicles for intensifying the 'Green Revolution' in Asian and Latin American countries. New seed varieties were produced by plant breeders working in these research institutions with funding and support from the philanthropic foundations. Increasing productivity through capital inputs, such as new seeds and fertilizers, was regarded as an alternative to land reform. The aim was to integrate peasants into the market as new consumers of capital inputs

that would improve their productivity in food crops (wheat, corn, rice) and support food security. From a political economy perspective the Green Revolution did not only exacerbate poverty and inequality in rural areas of the global South, but it also created environmental problems relating to losses in biodiversity, top-soil erosion, salinization, soil nutrient depletion, and reliance on pesticides. Peasants and small-holding farmers had limited access to credit to purchase capital inputs and technology, such as fertilizers, tractors, new seed varieties and irrigation systems. Many small-holding farmers became dependent on the sale of their labour off the farm to allow for food purchase. To be clear, the Green Revolution had never been regarded by those who managed it as 'primarily about helping peasants to produce more food but rather about creating a global food system in which peasant agriculture, widely regarded as backward and unproductive in the context of a modern market economy, was subordinated to a more commercial and capital-intensive mode of production' (Ross, 2003, p. 440). Large and small-holding farmers became increasingly reliant upon the agribusinesses that supplied inputs and controlled agriculture production and distribution.

The Green Revolution was a product of a carefully negotiated partnership between philanthropists and states and was designed to capitalize farming and expand the agribusiness market in an era of state-led development. Under neo-liberalism the notion of philanthropy is fundamentally different in that it is embedded in a concept of governance through partnerships that involve private sector interests and devolve power to non-state actors. The aim is to reduce the need for government intervention to eradicate food insecurity. That is, there is an assumption that involving non-state actors, such as private corporations, philanthropists and civil society organizations in food security can lead to more effective outcomes, through a 'sharing of responsibilities' (World Bank, 2008). The ideological motivation is to reduce the need for government intervention in food security by shifting aspects of governance to private sector interests.

While traditional philanthropists like Carnegie were motivated, in part, by their belief that giving would help protect capitalism from socialism, new capitalist philanthropists are more concerned with addressing the growing gap between the rich and the poor within the global marketplace. Buffet, for example, was 'amazed' to find out 'the degree of inequality that exists' (*Economist*, 2012). Engagement in philanthropic activity also serves to ease the conscience of capitalists who, to at least some degree, have built their wealth by trading on the gap between rich and poor. As such, the practice of helping others can also hinge on notions of self-transformation and status in the social corporate responsibility stakes – 'feed the poor, get a name' (Edward, 2010). In this context when the action of giving is not an act of 'duty' it lacks moral worth and value. This aligns with Polanyi's argument that what characterizes 'market society' (capitalism) is its social dis-embeddedness, in that morality and values tend to be excluded from consideration under a market economy: the aim is to produce what is profitable, not what is socially desirable.

Capitalist philanthropy also distinguishes itself from traditional philanthropy in its application of business principles and approaches to identify 'innovative' solutions to complex problems, such as food security. The new structures of capitalist philanthropy are considered unique in imbuing business principles into the non-profit sector to support social transformation, reflected in labels such as 'venture philanthropy' (Letts et al., 1997), 'entrepreneurial philanthropy' (Harvey et al., 2011), 'strategic philanthropy' (Sandfort, 2008), 'philanthrocapitalism' (Bishop, 2008), and

capitalist philanthropy. Some capitalist philanthropists (Bill Gates and Omidyar, for example) are directly involved in running their foundations and shaping how they fund projects within a market-based, knowledge-driven, and results-oriented, system. They aim to 'make profits and do good' at the same time. According to Bill Gates: 'to have a sustained and strategic impact, philanthropy must be conducted like business – with discipline, strategy and a strong focus on outcomes' (Wall Street Journal, 2011). Bill Gates believes strongly that he is 'working to give poor farmers business assistance through new tools and technology and access to market and capital. This approach has nothing to do with the old aid model of donors and recipients. This is about business and... investment' (Hultman, 2011).

Against this background, the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation is supporting the implementation of the new green revolution in sub-Saharan Africa with the overarching goal to 'reduce hunger and poverty for millions of poor farm families' (Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, 2011a).

### **Capitalist Philanthropy and the New Green Revolution**

The changing geography of philanthropic partnerships within the corporate food regime is driving the African new green revolution, with the intention of capitalizing agriculture through innovation, new technology and genetically modified crops. The aim is to increase the productivity of small famers and therefore to reduce poverty, improve rural incomes and address the global food security problem. This approach is endorsed by the World Bank in its 2008 World Development Report on Agriculture, in which it supports philanthropic activities that encourage the inclusion of small-holders and rural workers into the market, as well as fostering partnerships that are used to make biotechnology products available to small-holders in areas where the private sector currently has little commercial interest. The World Bank acknowledges the value of biotechnology partnerships that link global and local actors and are facilitated by philanthropic foundations and organizations such as the Alliance for a Green Revolution in Africa (AGRA), which operates 14 such partnerships. AGRA was established and funded by the Gates and Rockefeller Foundations in 2006 and is also supported by the Rockefeller Foundations Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research (CGIAR). Kofi Annan, the former secretary of the UN, was appointed as chairman and board members consist of representatives of the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation and the Rockefeller Foundations. The World Bank promotes these kinds of partnership arrangements that 'reflect the rise of new philanthropists, such as the Gates Foundation<sup>2</sup> and foundations (Syngenta Foundation) associated with private biotechnology companies, that provide both new sources of private funding and access to research tools and technologies' (World Bank, 2008, p. 170). In other words, the kind of giving we associate with the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation and other capitalist philanthropists is quite explicitly aimed at the expansion of the market economy in rural areas, based on an understanding that the development of capitalism or the market economy in SSA is 'incomplete' (Bernstein, 2010) and requires interventions that facilitate the commodification process.

The narrative used by AGRA, capitalist philanthropists, academics and private corporations that are involved in the new green revolution, identifies some of the key issues that afflict the rural poor and cause food insecurity in SSA. This includes a growing population, land issues relating to property rights, infertile land and lack

of capital to secure inputs resulting in a low yield per hectare compared with other regions of the world. Agriculture in SSA is dominated by 33 million small-holding farmers and peasants each cultivating less than two hectare of arable land. Some 66% of the population in SSA live on less than USD 1.25 a day. Land plots are getting smaller and increasingly fragmented because of population growth, and this situation could worsen as the population continues to grow (forecasts suggest the SSA population will grow from 790 million in 2005 to 1.8 billion by 2050). Many farmers do not have freehold rights to their land or other assets to use as collateral to access credit for the purchase of capital inputs such as fertilizers and new seeds. Several organizations, including AGRA and philanthropic foundations working in this area, claim that productivity has not kept pace with the growing population, resulting in worsening poverty, hunger and malnutrition. They see the solution as lying in increasing productivity through new technology, such as use of GM crops and new high-yield varieties, and modern farming management. This would represent a shift in the way farming is organized and practiced and would have major implications for rural social structure.

What distinguishes the new green revolution from its predecessor is the long-term intention to replace traditional seeds with new varieties, including genetically modified seeds, for which patent rights lie with the multinational corporation. One of AGRA's objectives is to ensure that poor farmers have access to high-yield seeds that can 'grow in drought, survive in a flood, saltwater and resist pests and disease' (Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, 2011b). Over 100 new crop varieties are being developed and are being made available through the Africa Seed System Programme, launched in 2006, in which the Gates Foundation has invested heavily. The Gates Foundation's commitment to integrating small-holding farmers into the global market is evidenced by the Foundation's investment of USD 1.7 billion in agricultural programmes, the bulk of which are associated with AGRA. The new green revolution in SSA has been endorsed by UN as its focus is to support achievement of the Millennium Development Goals that deal with hunger and food security. Additionally, the New Partnership for Africa's Development is promoting the Green Revolution through the African Agricultural Development Programme. There are concerns, however, fuelled lessons from the earlier Asian green revolution, that 'the Gates and Rockefeller Foundations' admission into Africa is akin to that of a "Trojan Horse" paving the way for entry by transnational agrochemical, fertilizer and agricultural biotechnology companies to peddle their wares' (Dano, 2007:1).

Bill Gates is explicit about his support for agrarian capitalism:

'helping poor farming families is... the best way to fight poverty and hunger and feed a growing population... Yield per hectare is lower in Sub-Saharan Africa than other regions because the farmers do not have access to tools and techniques. By offering small farming families in Africa the modern technology, the least productive farms can come closer to the most productive' (quoted in AGRA, 2011).

This provides the context for some of the Gates Foundation's interventionist activities, undertaken in partnership with private biotechnology company support. The Gates Foundation promotes biotechnology research for six reasons (see Box 1).

The objective is to develop new agrarian structure framed around small-holder farmers in Africa accessing new seeds through finance, markets and technology transfer networks that cut across national borders and ecologies, facilitated by agro-

**Box 1.** Why the Gates Foundation funds research in crop biotechnology.

- Transgenic approaches offer unique and promising solutions to farmers facing difficult growing conditions.
- These approaches could help improve the health of millions.
- New varieties will be affordable to small farmers in the developing world.
- Scientific research shows no confirmed cases of harm to human health or to the environment.
- These crops offer direct benefits to people and the environment.
- Local involvement and farmer choice are project corner-stones.

Source: Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, 2008, 2011a, 2011b.

dealers and micro-credit. To support delivery of this vision, AGRA has established 15000 agro-dealer businesses, which are considered to be an essential part of the structure needed to sustain a private sector-led, market-oriented agricultural sector (AGRA, 2012). Rather than producers, farmers are constructed as ‘discerning “customers” or “consumers”, able to engage actively in markets and with the right provision, adopt new seed varieties to improve their productivity’ (Scoones and Thompson, 2011). The idea is that setting farmers into the framework of agribusiness immerses them in the market and puts them on the route to higher incomes and sustainable livelihoods. Despite the current push to spread GM technology, only three countries in Africa have legal rights that allow the commercial planting of GM crops: South Africa, Burkina Faso and Egypt. However, since the first commercialization of GM crops in 1996, field-tests supported by companies involved in GM research and field-trial and development have been carried out in a number of African countries, including Tanzania, Kenya, Uganda, Malawi, Mali, Zimbabwe, Nigeria, Cameroon, Morocco, Senegal and Ghana, in readiness for a wider roll-out (Dano, 2007).

The injection of capital into agriculture is considered to be positive even if it is at the expense of traditional practices. Perhaps one of the most controversial practical examples of this are market-led land deals, often referred to as ‘land grabbing’. Land acquisitions – purchased through foreign direct investment for the purpose of large-scale agribusiness food production (rice, soya beans, maize), cultivation of bio-fuel crops, and other cash-crops for export from Africa to other countries – are seen as a key strategy for solving the agrarian question. Urgency for such land deals has been linked with food crises, food insecurity and the call for alternative energy sources. Ownership of large areas of fertile lands have been transferred to foreign investors, in some cases for up to 99 years (Zoomers, 2010). Governments, the World Bank, other global institutions and philanthropists, such as Bill Gates, support this neo-liberal model of commodification where land is an essential component of market liberalization. According to Bill Gates:

‘Many of those land deals are beneficial, and it would be too bad if some were held back because of Western groups’ ways of looking at things. Whenever somebody invests in Africa and actually builds infrastructure in Africa, they’re the ones who are at risk. You can’t take the infrastructure home! I’m not endorsing all these deals, but when capital is put into Africa, that’s a good sign. Africa has to look at these things, but it shouldn’t be viewed purely through Western eyes, because there’s a real opportunity as the rest of the world looks to Africa’ (quoted in Hultman, 2011).

Paradoxical as it may be, in SSA this form of transfer of property rights has a contrary effect on small-scale farmers and rural people, many of whom have been excluded

from land transactions and land acquisitions. McMichael (2012, p. 681) points out that land-grab 'sits uneasily with the "free market" rhetoric of neoliberal ideology', as it signals an interventionist approach to the restructuring of the current food regime. He argues that 'this "spatial fix" represents a short-term attempt to resolve the contradictions of rising agro-industrial costs on the one hand, and rising (food) costs of reproduction of labor on the other, but under conditions of agribusiness as usual that will only accelerate ecological and social contradictions' (McMichael, 2012, p. 684). Many land deals have been completed or are being negotiated with government or tribal leaders at the expense of local rural people and small-holding farmers, who have been forced to either undergo enclosure or move to more marginal lands. Effectively, this is a new form of privatization/enclosure. Despite the potential negative impacts on small-holders at risk of losing access to land and their main livelihoods, states have been keen to encourage foreign investment in land as part of rural development.

Many capitalist philanthropists are using the vehicle of partnerships with agribusinesses to implement agrarian programmes. In 2010 the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation invested US\$23 million in the multinational company Monsanto, one of the world largest producers of GM seeds, purchasing 500 000 shares. Gerald Steiner, Vice-president of Monsanto, values such partnerships for helping them to contribute to

'The Millennium Development Goal of halving the proportion of people suffering from hunger and poverty with urgency... I am encouraged by Feed the Future's endorsement of business-enabling policies, and by its support for public-private partnerships... Monsanto is engaged in a variety of public-private partnerships in markets around the world... One of our partnerships, Water Efficient Maize for Africa (WEMA)... is funded by the Bill and Melinda Gates and Howard G. Buffett Foundations. It is a groundbreaking effort for Monsanto, because it involves donating a gem of our technology pipeline – drought tolerance – along with our know-how in accelerated plant breeding. It represents a commitment to providing technology for the developing world at nearly the same time as in our major commercial markets. And we estimate it could result in new white maize varieties that yield between 20 percent and 35 percent more during moderate drought, enough to help many keep hunger at bay. This yield enhancement during moderate drought is projected to be enough to reduce risks so that farmers can invest in fertilizer. The combined use of improved seeds and fertilizer boost the harvest – and, therefore, farmers' incomes' (Steiner, 2010).

In addition, the Gates and Buffett Foundations have together given USD47 million of grants towards Monsanto's five-year project to develop water efficient maize varieties the small-scale farmers can afford. The Gates Foundation has also partnered with Cargill, an international producer and marketer of food, together with agricultural, financial and industrial products and services, on a venture to improve the incomes of cocoa farmers in West Africa. According to Cargill's web site, its partnership with the Gates Foundation equates to USD23 million in funding and this is supported by 'more than \$17 million cash and in-kind support is being provided by private sector companies' (Cargill, 2011). These kinds of partnerships may be considered essential by philanthropists to support the commodification and marketization



of small-holding farmers and peasants. They also serve to increase the hold on agriculture in SSA by corporate global agribusiness chains. This is evidenced by the kind of projects and programmes they support and the actors with whom they partner. Monsanto and Cargill, two of the world's most aggressive agri-giants found their partnerships on philanthropy-based business interest.

### Legitimizing through Hegemony

Capitalist philanthropists such as the Rockefeller and Gates Foundations have established a spatial operating sphere that has enabled them to harness the support of global governance institutions, research organisations and academics. Table 1 provides examples of the organizations and institutions that have received funding from the Gates Foundation, including universities, global governance institutions such as the World Bank, FAO, various international agriculture and food organizations, and research institutions linked to the World Food Programme, such as the International Institute of Tropical Agriculture. The Gates Foundation also sponsors advocacy projects in the media and other public forums to publicize and promote the policy relevance of new technology for small farmers. For example, grants have been given to the International Development Research Centre to provide an advisory platform, USD34.8 million was awarded to the One Campaign to promote agriculture, health and development in Africa, and USD2.5 million was given to Oxford University to work on the policy relevance of research and to target dissemination and sponsorship in the mass media to raise the profile of the debate, including the *New York Times* and the *Guardian's* International Development column (*Guardian*, 2012). In legitimizing capitalist philanthropy through their various activities, these organizations help to disseminate the priorities of the 'elite' capitalist philanthropists in public space and in so doing contribute to the building of the political agenda they support, which is, in other words, a neo-liberal consensus.

The Gates Foundation has funded numerous research projects that support an agrarian doctrine associated with the new green revolution and pro-poor GM crops. How ideas are constructed and disseminated by these institutions to popularize GM technology as a poverty reducing tool, in the Gramscian sense, demonstrates a perpetuation of cultural hegemony. For Gramsci, intellectuals played an important role in maintaining the fabric of capitalist society, through their pursuit of research and cultural practices that served the interests of the dominant group or class (Berman, 1983). Capitalist philanthropists like the Gates and Buffet have identified a hegemonic group of intellectuals who support their views of agrarian restructuring. One such is Robert Paarlberg, an Oxford professor who has undertaken research funded by the Rockefeller and Gates Foundations and who served on the Biotechnology Advisory Council of Monsanto. Paarlberg argues that the only option for overcoming the African food crisis is an African green revolution and the application of modern technology, such as new genetically engineered crop varieties to develop a 'modern, science-intensive, and highly capitalized agricultural system' similar to the one that has developed in the West (Paarlberg, 2010, p. 2). While he acknowledges the challenge of integrating GM crops into the small-farming system cannot be underestimated, he remains convinced that productivist farming (raising productivity levels above all else) is the key to progress. His book *Food Politics: What Everyone Needs to Know* (2010) has been criticized by a number of leading scholars,<sup>3</sup> who in a letter to the editor of Oxford University Press, provided detailed analysis and evidence

**Table 1.** Selected international grants awarded by the Gates Foundations to global institutions, universities and research institutions for work on food security since 2008.

Institution	Grants (USD)	Project
World Bank	19999748	Financial services for the poor to support small-holder access to finance
World Bank	30000000	To improve incomes and food security through public-private sector investments in agriculture and rural sector
World Bank	18955000	To add detailed agricultural modules to the World Bank's household survey panels in seven sub-Saharan African countries to provide a strong evidence base for policies, investments, and evaluation over time
FAO United Nations	6569304	To construct and apply a statistical framework and technology solutions for monitoring African agricultural production
Int. Institute of Tropical Agriculture	5053663	Promote scientific technologies for small-holding farmers in Kenya and Nigeria
Int. Centre for Tropical Agriculture	15240724	To provide accurate, information on soil resources and their management to support sound decision
Global Alliance for Improved Nutrition	120485736	To contribute to improved nutrition and access to food as part of Global Health Initiative
Int, Development Research Centre	40000000	Advocacy and public policy: to provide an advisory platform
One Campaign	34810364	Advocacy and public policy: to promote agriculture, health and development in Africa
Oxfam America	11712100	To strengthen African agricultural economics research and support nearly 300 African students pursuing master's degrees in a dozen African universities
Oxford University	1390190	To provide immediate relief to vulnerable communities affected by drought in Ethiopia
Oxford University	2511239	Advocacy and public policy: to promote policy relevant research and target media and communication
Oxford University	24129832	Nutrition programme
University of Pretoria	4475282	Agricultural development: to support policy research and to strengthen African agriculture
Oxford University	25000000	International Conference on Genomic Epidemiology of Malaria
Imperial College London	16529688	School-feeding programmes in Africa that promote local agriculture and benefit small-holding farmers
Harvard	1474392	To promote the benefit of science and technology for African agriculture by promoting discussion and dissemination in Africa
Inst. of Development Studies, UK	2676910	To support small-holder farmers in Africa and South Asia through impact planning and learning
Regional universities forum for capacity building in agriculture	12730748	To improve agricultural productivity and wealth creation for small-holding farmers in Eastern and Southern Africa by developing effective agricultural university: research and training
Cornell University	28750000	To develop new wheat varieties that are resistant to wheat rust, a disease that threatens up to 80% of African and Asian wheat varieties
University of Bristol	13105000	To research and develop a user-friendly low-cost water quality test
University of Greenwich	13345671	To support sustainable and equitable improvements to cassava value chains and markets in Ghana, Tanzania, Uganda, Nigeria and Malawi
Donald Danforth Plant Science Centre in St Louis,	4567500	To develop bio-cassava seeds for use in Uganda, Kenya and Tanzania

Source: Web site of Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation and relevant institutions, accessed in October 2011.

of the failure of the author to meet 'widely accepted standards of scholarship' and for pursuing a single perspective on production that 'greatly downplays some of the most vital debates in food politics today – including the role of entitlement programs, the loss of biodiversity and other non-renewable natural resources, excessive use of fossil energy, agriculture's contributions to climate change, the impact of financial speculation on food price swings, and more' (Small Planet Institute, 2011).

According to Cox, the global institutions that work with capitalist philanthropists 'embody the rules which facilitate the expansion of hegemonic world orders; they are themselves the product of the hegemonic world order; they ideologically legitimate the norms of the world order; they co-opt the elites... and they absorb counter hegemonic ideas' (Cox, 1996, p. 62). This is evidenced by the work of international organizations such as FAO, Nuffield Council on Bioethics, World Bank and the International Food Policy Research Institute, as well as academics, who view GM as the main way agricultural productivity will be increased on small-holder farm lands (McGloughlin, 1999; Paarlberg, 2006). While highly controversial, the use of GM is increasingly being accepted as part of an overall strategy to achieve food security in the global South.

### **An Alternative Vision: Rights Rather than Generosity**

Empirical evidence demonstrates that the success of GM technology is not as straightforward as often presented (Scoones, 2008). There is, in fact, strong resistance to GM crops in many countries in global South, including Europe, India, South Africa and Brazil by both national and transnational movements that opposed GM crops, including farmers groups, civil society and rights-based organizations. Scoones argues that, while GM technology has been applied in very different socio-economic and institutional settings or agrarian contexts, in all cases where it has had some success commodification was already relatively well established and rich peasants and capitalist farmers were integrated into the market. In some locations where GM seeds have been offered, the seeds were too expensive for small or peasant farmers. The cost of acquiring technology for both individuals, in particular, and the global South, in general, is determined by the powerful multinational corporations that developed them and retain intellectual property or patent rights. The market is therefore monopolized by the likes of Monsanto, and Cargill, granting them control over production and prices in the global market. The contentious issue that has not been addressed by global governance institutions, namely the WTO, is the application of the Trade Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPS) Agreement, which operates to give patent rights over genetic resources to multinational companies, and ignores the rights of poor farmers to access local resources, such as seeds (Morvaridi, 2008). By monopolizing the availability of seeds, companies are forcing farmers to rely on products that must be purchased in the marketplace. But this is a market-place that few can access.

The dependency of farmers on external seeds is one of the main concerns articulated in campaigns against GM. Scoones (2008) shows how campaigners in different countries have raised concerns in their opposition to GM, and in particular in relation to the *modus operandi* of Monsanto, while also drawing attention to more localized contentious issues. In so doing, opponents were challenging wider issues about multinational control of agricultural development. This constitutes a 'politicized movement of agrarians, including landless movements, seed savers... and

farmer/peasants threatened universally by declining public support, food support and land seizures for agro-industrial estates' (McMichael, 2010, p. 298). According to La Via Campesina,<sup>4</sup> the international peasants movement, the United Nations estimates that 75% of the world's plant genetic diversity has been lost as farmers have abandoned native seed for genetically-uniform varieties offered by corporations. La Via Campesina condemns this as a miss-appropriation of humanitarian aid for commercial ends and the privatization of food policies. In solidarity with the African peasants and farmers, La Via Campesina has criticized the Gates Foundation for its 'hegemonic influence on global agricultural development policy... The Foundation is helping to open new markets for Monsanto, which is already the largest seed company in the world' (Via Campesina, 2010).

Globalization challenges the assumption that civil society is confined merely to the national or local setting, by extending the spatial scale of the relationship between political struggle and contentious issues. Increasingly we find that when local issues are raised at the global level, farmers and peasants voice their concerns in global terms, demonstrating new alliances and new configurations of power. Many of these protest movements object to the intervention in rural development of external agencies, such as philanthropic foundations and multinational corporations. The actions of both states and non-state actors are increasingly subject to challenges from new alliances, such as transnational networks, operating outside the boundaries of the nation state (Morvaridi, 2008). In relation to food security, transnational protest networks are concerned that the work of capitalist philanthropists in agrarian reform is directly linked to multinational profit and advantage. Since 2010, the anti-GM movement in sub-Saharan Africa has been protesting against the Gates Foundation's investment, as a philanthropic organization, in multinational companies such as Monsanto and Cargill. Global protest movements and local protest movements are challenging the whole notion of whether new technology that is rarely grounded in local knowledge is in the interest of small-holding farmers and peasants and if it really can contribute to food security. In relation to seeds, small-holders promote the use of native seed varieties as the foundation of locally sustainable rural economies, that – through agro-biodiversity – can adapt to changing climates and environments. Food sovereignty movements have provided a forum for an alternative vision centred on the rights of peoples to define their own agricultural and food policy. The food sovereignty perspective provides an opportunity to refocus agriculture around questions of social and ecological sustainability (McMichael and Schneider, 2011, p. 120).

## **Conclusion**

The main argument in this article has been that an important motivation for partnerships between capitalist philanthropists and private corporations is an ideological belief that food security can be achieved through the commodification of small farmers and peasants. The agency of these partnerships helps to increase the hold on agriculture by corporate global agribusiness as the suppliers of biotechnology products to small-holder farmers. The backing of major global institutions such as the World Bank for strategies like the new green revolution in SSA reinforces partnerships founded on philanthropy-based business interests as the delivery agents of agrarian change.

This form of hegemony necessitates some level of consensus in the construction of partnerships and opens a new space for capitalist philanthropy to exercise power and influence over agrarian reform. Institutionalizing a market-based approach and business sector model in respect of food security and, within this strategy, the promotion of new technologies like GM crops under the new green revolution in Africa, becomes a key strategy to address small farmers and peasants' insecurity and poverty. However, this is being controlled by large multinational corporations and a wealthy few, who are *unregulated* and *unaccountable*. Unlike individual wage-earner donations to charities, which tend to be driven by judgements about moral worth and social justice, capitalist philanthropists are more likely to base decisions about giving on an analysis of the benefits both to others and themselves in terms of power and influence, including the political and economic control of outcomes. While this may fit within a neo-liberal market approach to social justice, it is not clear how non-state actors such as philanthropists and civil society organizations can fulfil and be accountable for the state's responsibility for social justice as enshrined in human rights treaties. Given the range of actors involved in food security, it is no longer clear who the agents of justice are and who, therefore, has effective responsibility to protect the rights of small-holding farmers.

## Notes

1. Thus far, 70 rich Americans have signed a 'Giving Pledge' through which they agreed to donate half of their wealth to philanthropic foundations either during their lifetime or through their wills. (The list and explanations why they give has been published online <<http://www.givingpledge.org>>.) Bill Gates and Warren Buffet between them have donated USD 62 billion of their wealth to help small farming and poverty reduction objectives. Other capitalist philanthropists include Peter Kellner (Czech Republic), Lee Kun Hee (Japan), Omidyar (USA), the founder of eBay, Richard Branson (UK), Azim Premji, an Indian software billionaire, the Hariri family (Lebanon), the Tata family (India), Carlos Slim Holu (Mexico), Miloud Chaabi (Morocco), just to name a few from both the global North as well as the global South.
2. The Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation was set up in 1994 with fortunes realized from Microsoft business and is now one of the biggest capitalist philanthropies.
3. Philip McMichael, Molly Anderson, John Gershman, Hans Herren, Frances Moore Lappé, Ivette Perfecto, Michel Pimbert responded in a joint letter to the editor of Oxford University Press raising concerns about Paalberg's scholarship.
4. Via Campesina is a global peasant movement representing small farmers, landless workers, fisher-folk, rural women, youth and indigenous peoples, with 150 member organizations from 70 countries on five continents.

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