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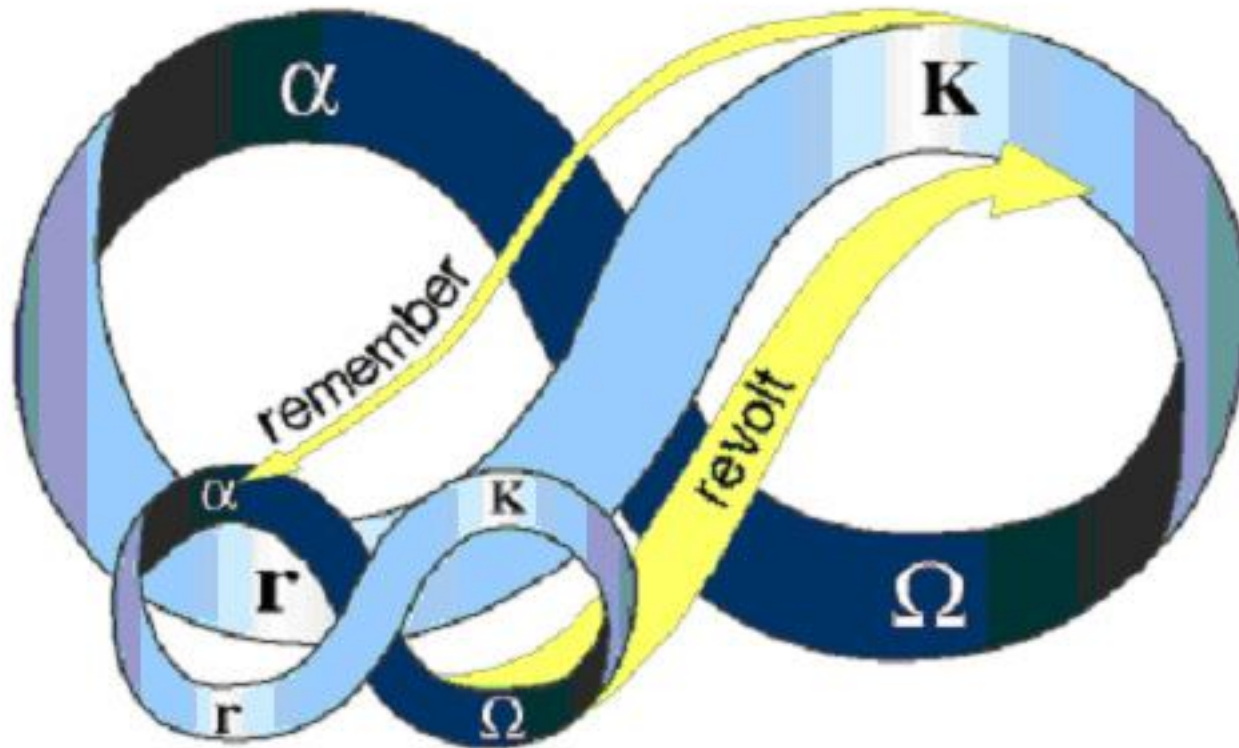
# The Food Regimes Approach: Resilience and Change in the Past and What We Can Learn about Present Possibilities

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# Panarchy = A nested hierarchy of adaptive cycles

<http://www.resalliance.org/index.php/panarchy>



# The Mercantile-Industrial Food Regime, 1947-73

Alpha: elements of crisis of old regime, 1914-47

1. "commercial" family farmers in export regions: not only US, Canada, Argentina, Australia, but also Danube Basin, Russia (Black Sea and Siberia), and India/Punjab Province
2. U.S. rise to Hegemony; domestic alliance includes labour, farm bloc
3. Cold War (Danube, Russia)
4. Decolonization (India and Pakistan 1947)
- 5. Wartime Allied Food/agriculture coordination and plans for World Food Board (empowered FAO)

# Momentum

World Food Board was plan to coordinate international trade within “bands” of imports and exports;

Momentum to create World Food Board:

1. Four Freedoms include freedom from want
2. Resistance to fascism includes national planning which required coordination of trade
3. Bretton Woods and WFB wartime proposals by victors, US and UK

# ...and Contradictions → WFB defeat by the very powers that proposed it at a meeting in Washington in 1947!

1. New Deal support for commercial farmers unique at the time:

by crop and by price ("loans") determined in Congress → accumulating government stocks, which required import controls = No WFB and no ITO and Article XI of GATT excluding agriculture from trade negotiations

2. Cold War → idealization of commercial family farmers as "backbone of democracy" (contrast collectivization)

3. Bretton Woods (as implemented) led to possibility for new institution of "food aid" as "concessional" sales for "soft currencies"

4. New states gaining independence from colonial empires welcomed food aid as support to state-building, industrialization (cheap wages), and urbanization

# Led to r = mercantile-industrial food regime

- resources readily available = key players converge in accepting a defining principle
- constellation emerges = regime organized through food aid, with axis of US and emerging “third world”
  - Chronic downward pressure on prices
  - Third world becomes dependent on imports of grains and food oils (and petrol) for industrialization projects
  - Cold War defined mutually exclusive trade blocs

# K = system maintenance

- resources locked up= stability,
- adaptability, but contradictions:
  - Soviet-US grain deals 1973= surpluses disappear and prices rise
  - Dollar and energy crises = third world debt
  - Aid/trade wars between EU and US in 1980s; frustration of “Cairns Group” that can’t compete in export subsidies → including agriculture in Uruguay Round of GATT
  - Rise of agribusiness
  - Eventually genetic technologies and restructuring into “Life Sector” (note history of discourse: pesticides→crop protection→crop life)
- maybe transformability but “rigidity trap” if K doesn’t move to omega:
  - US takes military option, starting with Vietnam
  - “green power” to increase exports in 1980s (eventually crisis of WTO)
  - Rise of new exporters, e.g., Argentina and Brazil, first to Japan, then to China
  - Debt never resolved but deepens into financial crises
  - Grain and oilseed markets never stabilized → recurrent “food crises”

# OMEGA?

Getting from Here to There:  
Poverty Trap and Rigidity Trap  
(Living Wholeness Institute)





# Arrighi on cycles and cumulative change

Each food regime transition was part of a transition of hegemonic state power, with rise of finance as mechanism for transferring wealth

2000s repeat enclosing tendency of 1900s: cyclical change

But cumulative change across cycles:

1. Biosphere degraded
2. Ethnosphere (Wade Davis) degraded as ecosystem knowledge becomes irrelevant to both enclosers and those displaced
3. Spatial concentration of Human Populations into Cities
4. Weakening of feedback loops

# Omega?

- Cascading financial crises
- Cascading ecological crises

EITHER:

POVERTY TRAP: OLD SYSTEM REFUSES TO DIE AND KEEPS RESOURCES TIED UP (with greater chaos and less complex system eventually emerging)

- large panarchy cycle “remembers” and absorbs “revolt” experiments
- These can be appropriated by “green” or “socially responsible” corporations, now the new power

OR:

Crises release resources which become available to new elements emerging as “revolts” (or “niches” in STT literature)

= experiments from below, such as permaculture or CSAs or food policy councils,

# Is there a better way?

- “...resilience thinking offers a basis for navigating a graceful passage through the release and reorganization phases that will follow...cascading regime shifts”

Brian Walker and David Salt, *Resilience Thinking: Sustaining People and Ecosystems in a Changing World* ([ebook-located in the ether somewhere]: Island Press, 2006), p. 137 (roughly)

# Poverty Trap?

Social Technical Transitions:

each niche experiment can

1. die

2. learn and change

## OR NEW ALPHA PHASE?

3. merge/converge via trans-local networks forming in the “interstices” of the dominant “regime” at every “scale” of panarchy, from farm and urban region, to Civil Society Mechanism and corporate “appropriations” and “learning” at larger scales of panarchy

# SIGNS OF THE NEW

Rifkin: Internet of Things = Social/sharing economy

Ostrom: institutions for managing “commons”

Resilience: modeling society and governance on ecosystem processes and knowledge:

1. adaptive governance
2. landscapes (and seeds) as joint creations of nature and society (“Nature’s Matrix” is farming!)
3. making porous “modernist” borders between “cultivated and wild” and between “city and countryside”

Of course, dangers too: a new regime, even Post-Capitalist, could be deeply repressive and exploitative

# Commons and Enclosures in Food Regime History

- 16-18c English Enclosures →
  - Settler enclosures of indigenous peoples in Americas and other “neo-Europes” (Crosby), humans and other animals and plants displaced/replaced in “new worlds”
  - Food (wheat and beef) shifted to privately traded commodities over long distances (first since Roman Empire)
- Colonial plantations →
  - Enclosures of lands for export crops
  - Forcible Movements of people from Africa, India, etc. to labour; enclosures of new food export zones, e.g., rice from Thailand to feed export enclaves in S.E. Asia



# Commons and Enclosures in Food Regime History, continued

- Hiatus: economic crisis, shift of inter-state power, two world wars, followed by food regime with minimal enclosures
  - Land and farmers in export zones continued to concentrate but
  - Land and farmers in “Third World” mostly left to fend for themselves under pressure of subsidized imports and modernizing focus on cities and industries
  - New commons created, e.g., parks (public), and mutual help (new customs)

# Commons and Enclosures in Food Regime History, continued some more

- Resumption of enclosures in 1990s/2000s
- “Food” (grains, animal products, but now also horticulture and aquaculture) newly reorganized “globally” under SAP
- Land, including farmland, valuable to new degree and subject to speculative investment → pressures to create individual titles as well as directly enclose
- Rural people become footloose, the counterpart to enclosures

500 year cycle?

Does cumulative degradation of biosphere and ethnosphere foretell deeper (bigger, longer) cycle, comparable to “transition from feudalism to capitalism”?

Does unprecedented concentration of humans into cities, with weak feedback loops about ecosystem (mal)functioning and displaced knowledge, make it difficult to recreate “commons”?

From national "territories" (16c word) to  
reintegrated landscapes: (re)inhabiting  
bioregions



# The Managerial Project: Management by whom?

Source: The Sustainable Scale Project.

<http://www.sustainable-scale.org/ConceptualFramework/UnderstandingScale/MeasuringScale/Panarchy.aspx>



# Or the commons project?

Commons as possibility (open approach to alpha experiments, so avoiding poverty trap)?

Resisting enclosures and opening spaces  
(reducing chaos of rigidity trap)

- **Increasing evidence of present failures of land governance →**

**Return of commons, now intentional:**

**Are food experiments/innovations creating new customs, and basis for new commons?**

# Intentional Commoning (Ostrom and Ostrom)

<http://www.onthecommons.org/magazine/five-lessons-about-commons>

## **8 Principles for Managing a Commons**

- 1. Define clear group boundaries.
- 2. Match rules governing use of common goods to local needs and conditions.
- 3. Ensure that those affected by the rules can participate in modifying the rules.
- 4. Make sure the rule-making rights of community members are respected by outside authorities.
- 5. Develop a system, carried out by community members, for monitoring members' behavior.
- 6. Use graduated sanctions for rule violators.
- 7. Provide accessible, low-cost means for dispute resolution.
- 8. Build responsibility for governing the common resource in nested tiers from the lowest level up to the entire interconnected system.