

Propagating Global Sociotechnical Imaginaries

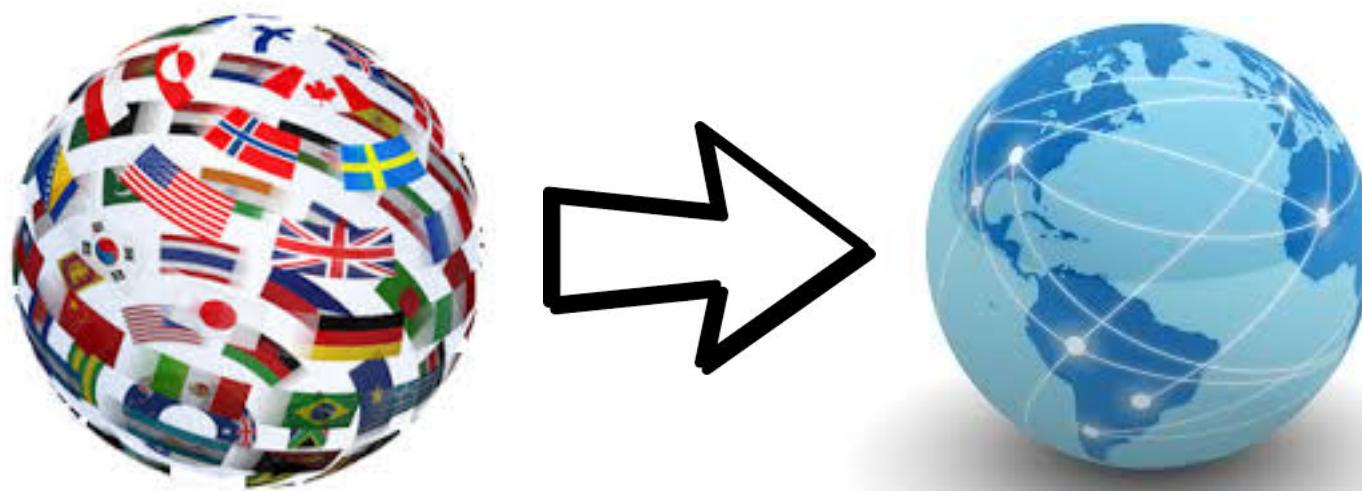
How Governments, Corporations, International Non-Profits and Global Citizens Imagine and Perform Feeding the Future

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Outcomes

Sociotechnical Imaginaries

- “Collectively held, institutionally stabilized, and publicly performed visions of desirable futures, animated by shared understandings of forms of social life and social order attainable through, and supportive of, advances of science and technology” (Jasanoff, forthcoming).
- “Imaginaries operate for us in the understudied regions between imagination and action, between discourse and decision, and between inchoate public opinion and instrumental state policy” (Jasanoff and Kim, 2009, 123).

Global Sociotechnical Imaginaries?



- International or global?
 - Elite or universal?



The Bioeconomy

- “The bioeconomy encompasses the **production of renewable biological resources and their conversion into food, feed, bio-based products and bioenergy** via innovative and efficient technologies provided by Industrial Biotechnology. It is already a reality and one that offers great opportunities and solutions to a growing number of major societal, environmental and economic challenges, including climate change mitigation, energy and food security and resource efficiency” (European Forum for Industrial Biotechnology).
- “The National Bioeconomy Blueprint outlines steps that agencies will take to drive the bioeconomy—**economic activity powered by research and innovation in the biosciences**—and details ongoing efforts across the Federal government to realize this goal” (US Office of Science and Technology Policy).

Research Question

- How do international organizations and national governments work to influence sociotechnical imaginaries around the world, attempting to render a globally shared sociotechnical imaginary on scale with the size and scope of action implied by those held by elite international organizations?
- Further, how are these efforts met by a diverse group of publics with existing imaginaries and social organizations that may be in conflict with this project?

Phase 1: Content, Performance, and Propagation

- What are the global sociotechnical imaginaries of the bioeconomy that are promulgated by the US state, the biotechnology industry, and the Gates Foundation, based on the Feed the Future Initiative?
- How do the US State, the biotechnology industry and the Gates Foundation try to export their imaginaries of the global bioeconomy both to US publics and to states and publics abroad?
- What questions go systematically unasked as a result of the dominant sociotechnical imaginaries identified here?
- What politics are assumed and which excluded by these sociotechnical imaginaries of the bioeconomy?
- What are the practices and performances of these imaginaries?

Phase 2: Coproduction of sociotechnical imaginaries with society, laws and practices-- displacement, uptake, negotiation and rejection

- How do the sociotechnical imaginaries conveyed by these powerful actors translate into actions, policies, democratic processes, and social organization?
- What are the human and social impacts of the concrete changes enacted as part of the efforts to realize global sociotechnical imaginaries of the bioeconomy?
- Do elite global sociotechnical imaginaries directly contradict or displace existing imaginaries of various other, less powerful groups?
- How are these global sociotechnical imaginaries taken up, contested, negotiated by diverse communities that are fundamental to the success of rendering these imaginaries truly *global*?

Analysis:

Phase 1 data collection & analysis will consist of:

- Diplomatic cables on the subject of biotechnology in foreign markets (available from WikiLeaks)
- News articles including reader comments sections, published in the US and target countries of the Feed the Future Initiative
- PR releases and other published materials by organizations involved with Feed the Future (US gov, biotech, Gates Foundation)
- Court cases and legislation surrounding biotechnology will provide additional material for analysis, as well as speeches or any other clear expressions of vision, action or impact by the US government, biotechnology industry actors, the Gates Foundation and government representatives of countries where this initiative is implemented

Phase 2 will consist of:

- Interviews
- Closer local media analysis
- Expansion of scope to provide more robust patterns

The Feed the Future Initiative

Major players under examination:

- The US government (USAID, State Dept.)
- The Gates Foundation
- Biotechnology Industry Actors

Countries:

- Guatemala, Haiti, Honduras, Senegal, Liberia, Mali, Ghana, Uganda, Rwanda, Zambia, Ethiopia, Kenya, Tanzania, Mozambique, Malawi, Cambodia, Bangladesh, Nepal, & Tajikistan

FTF Continued

Highlights from stated goals in the 2010 Feed the Future Guide:

- *“Increase access to affordable agricultural inputs and improved techniques and technology, including agricultural biotechnology, high quality seed, livestock feed, fertilizer, and best management practices. We will work with private sector partners to expand . . . and policy reforms that facilitate private sector investment.”*
- *“Create an enabling policy environment for agribusiness growth by improving the ability of partner governments to collect and analyze market information; training private sector trade associations in how to engage local and national governments; providing opportunities for the private sector to engage with governments and regional organizations; seeking reductions in government controls on commodity prices; protecting intellectual property; and supporting reform and implementation of policy and regulations that promote private sector entrepreneurship, innovation, and investment in competitive agribusinesses of all sizes.”*



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