

Department of Political Sciences - International Relations

**GLOBAL FOOD ACTIVISM: FOOD SECURITY AND
FOOD SOVEREIGNTY. THE CASE OF LA VIA
CAMPESINA**

SUPERVISOR

Prof. Marcello di Paola

CANDIDATE

Geovani Ciconte

Student Reg. No. 621562

CO-SUPERVISOR

Prof. Antonio Golini

Academic Year 2013/2014

INDEX

INTRODUCTION

CHAPTER I. The Globalization of Food System

- 1.1 Defining Food Security
- 1.2 The Role of International Organizations
- 1.3 The geopolitical scenario today: problems and challenges

CHAPTER II. A different approach. Food Sovereignty, Slow Food and global activism.

- 2.1 The mergence of a global and transnational activism: a bottom-up globalization
- 2.2 Global and Transnational food activism
- 2.3 Food Sovereignty and Slow Food
- 2.3 Food Sovereignty
- 2.4 Slow Food
- 2.5 Conclusions

CHAPTER III. La Vía Campesina. From Food Sovereignty to Peasant Rights

- 3.1 A brief historical chronology
- 3.2 Agriculture and globalization: the paradigm of modernization
- 3.3 The Rise of a Movement
- 3.4 First years of birth: setting up
- 3.5 Dialoguing with International Organizations: a place at the table
- 3.6 Mobilization and resistance
- 3.7 The internationalization of peasants. The significance of La Via Campesina

CONCLUSIONS

REFERENCES

INTRODUCTION

Strongly discussed and analyzed, the concept of food sovereignty has become in the last two decades an integral part of the discourse on food security and policies on food. Since its beginnings has inspired the birth of social movements, the discussion of political projects and the creation of an analytical framework radically different from the neoliberal one, which is instead entrenched to the concept of food security. The term has been subjected to various analyzes and, starting from its basic definition (the right that people have to democratically control or determine the organization of its alimentary system) has been interpreted in different ways by groups and individuals. Aim of this paper is to collect the greatest issues and concepts related to the creation of a global food network, in order to analyze them in the light of the onset of global and transnational related movements on food, to the extent that they are able or not to express a potential (in terms of social mobilization) to challenge current trends of globalization, with particular reference to the movement that perhaps has been the most successful, La Vía Campesina.

In the first chapter I will introduce the concept of food security, which emerging from the efforts of reconstruction and decolonization of the Third World, has led to the formation of a global food regime based on local, national and international relationships.

This was reinforced by the subsequent creation of international institutions in order to define and implement specific economic policies. Through trade liberalization, privatization, deregulation of the domestic industry and economic markets, the IMF, the WTO and the WB have helped to strengthen the food safety regime within a wider global network.

The idea behind these institutions will assume that economic growth, achieved through market mechanisms, constitutes the most effective solution for the reduction of poverty and the achievement of food security. However, criticism of this type of strategy put emphasis on this approach to be constantly looking for the most purely economic solution, because still closely linked to a neo-colonial conception of power, thus failing to create a just global food system.

It is possible to find a duality of visions also within international organizations. In fact, whereas the rhetoric and strategies of the WTO, WB and IMF reveal a sense of inevitability of social and economic globalization, IFAD and FAO are proving more reluctant to subscribe to the idea that neoliberal and developmental economic theory is the panacea for curbing global poverty and achieving food security.

I continue then by proposing the most important criticism of that model: a concrete alternative for global hunger and poverty is the raise of the food sovereignty concept. Then it has argued that because the core of such organizations is expressed through a neoliberal idea of growth, based on market mechanisms, the general failure lays upon the injustice found in the food system, entrenched in its neocolonial power structures. What is now challenged are not only the idea in itself of food security and all the concepts surrounding it, but especially the systems and methods of implementation of certain aid policies supporting agricultural areas in difficulty and in particular those of food aid that are responsible of a de facto dependency of local people on agricultural imports. The concept of food sovereignty paved the way for the insurgence of major awareness of food security related problems. In the second chapter I will deal with transnational and social movement in the form of reaction to the existent global food network, their work expressed by raising ethical issues in an effort to bring attention to how food sovereignty contributes to broader themes of hunger and global poverty. In continuously posing challenges, calling for legal, economic and political rights, food sovereignty has become a unique social movement in which community, political, and cultural rights are intertwined with the issue of food.

The most important food sovereignty organization is perhaps La Vía Campesina, whose struggles have succeeded in mobilizing a human rights discourse against capitalism and neoliberalism in agriculture. In the last chapter I will give a concrete example of how a global movement can contribute in broadening discourses on food security, and how La Vía Campesina has used human rights to frame its demands, not only claiming the enforcement of existent and codified rights, but also creating new human rights, such as the right of peoples to food sovereignty and the rights of

peasants. The main question then became whether a global mobilization on food security issues could be effective enough to radically modify certain dynamics of the international food regime, being able to concretely accomplish steps further towards greater social justice in terms of food equity, or simply working as an instrument, or better, a platform, giving voice to active minorities and / or raising awareness.

CHAPTER I. THE GLOBALIZATION OF FOOD SYSTEM

Defining Food Security.

Population growth, an equal distribution of wealth and primary food and services availability, sufficient to guarantee an acceptable lifestyle, represent issues that today are increasingly gaining importance and relevance. These three issues are related to certain models of natural resources management (either renewable or not), and in different areas of our planet have been limiting human development, to the point of constraining populations to a ferocious competition for the control of those resources or to migrate.

Everything fits in the so called *food and environmental studies*, sector analysis and interdisciplinary field of high complexity.

The approximately two hundred different definitions - which today are found in the literature - of the expression food security, witness to the large and complex nature of the problem of food production, access, and consumption. The concept of Food Security has been defined for the first time during the World Conference of 1974, and during the last twenty-five years has been subjected to three big revisions: 1) from the initial global and national to a more individual and based on family perspective; 2) from the vision for whom food is primary and absolute to that referring to a structured set of livelihood and 3) from a subjective to an objective perspective.

The first definition that addresses these issues clearly identifies the food security with the “availability at all times of adequate world reserves of staple foods[...]to support a rapid expansion of food consumption[...]and to stem the fluctuations in production and in food prices” (UN 1975).

Through the next logical step, wanted by the IMF, the analytical framework was further simplified and was considered all of the basic food grains valid throughout the world and, through the help of the *Compensatory Financing Facility*, i.e the undisputed measuring instrument or indicator of food security to use in case of aid interventions for countries that were found in feeding difficulties.

From the '80s it became more common to define the food security not only as food production (food supply) or the presence of food in the form of stocks, but a problem of access to food, to be considered both in the internal analysis of individual States, and in intervention programs and international aid. The concept then, with these new clothes, lies at the center of international debates proposed by the FAO in 1983, in the Bellagio and the Cairo Declaration of 1989, in the International Conference on Nutrition in 1992 (FAO / WHO, 1992). In all these meetings, access was not indicated as a character among others, but the main one that defines food security.

The more recent definitions of food security, although recognizing the complex links between individuals, families, communities, nations and international economy, are based on individual rights. Then, one of the most quoted definitions of food security, comes from a research carried on by the World Bank: “The food security is the access of all people at all time of their existence, to a sufficient quantity of food enough for an active and healthy life”. Not only food for survival but for an active participation to society. This definition reformulates in a very different way that proposed ten years before at the first World Food Conference.

The second modification of the concept of food security - the transition from a narrow perspective focused exclusively on the food as primary necessity, to an enlarged vision that includes the means of subsistence - clearly developed after 1985, after the famine in Africa during the years 1984 and 1985. Food was felt to be a primary need, exclusively, as formulated by Hopkins: "The food security is like a fundamental need, basic to all human needs and the organization of social life.

Access to the necessary nutrients is fundamental, not only for life itself, but also for establishing a lasting social order. "

In more recent times, during the XXX Congress, FAO has proposed the following definition: "The state of food security is achieved when all people, have physical, social and economic access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food that meets their nutritional needs and preferences, so as to enable him to lead a active and healthy life"(FAO 1996).

In 2001 FAO proposed a more complete definition of Food Security, focused on the idea of social access into Food, establishing the ultimate definition used today: "Food Security exists when all people, at all times, have physical, social and economic access to sufficient, sage and nutritious food that meets their dietary needs and food preperences for an active and healthy life"(FAO 2009:8)

The Role of International Organizations.

In order to be as complete as possible, the analysis should be expanded by referring to certain social, economic, political and cultural realities, unless it would be impossible to treat separately the role of food security and issues such as trade, agricultural reform and rural economic development and global poverty.

In this context a crucial role is played by various international organizations, because, either directly or indirectly, significantly influence the way in which food is considered (economic or cultural good?) and how its production and distribution should operate on an international scale. In particular, a crucial role was played by the UN and the World Bank to redefine a new development policy whose goal was to break down national barriers to promote greater economic integration: they sought to bring out of poverty the Third World countries, teaching them the classical economic theory. The World Bank should have in its early years collected information for its Member States, to provide assistance, loans and guidelines for international aid. They "believed that they had uncovered a basic truth—the fundamental unity of the global, capitalist economy—and that they

had an obligation to spread this truth to others, who would presumably recognize its value and embrace it.”(Stiglitz 2003)

Define food security in these terms is no easy task, because organizations such as FAO, IFAD conceive the policy for the achievement of food security in a different way from the World Bank, and because “financial governance and international trade arrangements often create additional obstacles to achieving food security” (Schanbacher 2010).

It is clear, therefore, that these organizations constantly redefine the concept of Food Security, especially if you want to take into account the actions that have been undertaken by the latter specifically to redefine development policies and global hunger.

The debate is not about whether growth is good or bad but whether certain policies — including policies that may lead to closer global integration — lead to growth; and whether those policies lead to the kind of growth that improves the welfare of poor people.” (Sachs 2005)

The rhetoric and strategies of the WTO, WB and IMF reveal a sense of inevitability of social and economic globalization, whereas IFAD and FAO are proving more reluctant to subscribe to the idea that neoliberal and developmental economic theory is the panacea for curbing global poverty and achieving food security” (Schanbacher 2010). Although food security is largely supported by certain neo-liberal paradigms of development expressed for instance in the Doha Rounds, this sense of inevitability is constantly questioned by activists, organizations and international NGO’s.

CHAPTER II. A DIFFERENT APPROACH. FOOD SOVEREIGNTY, SLOW FOOD AND GLOBAL ACTIVISM.

The emergence of global and transnational activism: a bottom-up globalization.

Through the mesh of globalization and economic restructuring, new opportunities are emerging to build alliances between marginalized sectors within the agricultural world and between this and other expressions of the labor and civil society (such as the organization of international solidarity). In many countries of the South organizations of peasants and landless movements have strengthened their links and generate structures capable of dialogue and negotiation with the local, national and international, in many cases receiving strong support from the organizations involved in the co-development of peoples.

The reasoning around which are compared popular movements starts from the need for policies based on the primacy of the common good: to name a few, the adoption of measures to stabilize the supply of food (especially in relation to food prices base) accompanied by a process of its democratization, the development of agricultural policies aimed at environmental and social sustainability, the promotion of a dialogue between the different regions of the world based on the principles of solidarity and sharing. It is clear that in order to achieve these goals, the role of organized expressions of civil society must be recognized and endorsed, ensuring adequate opportunities for participation so that they can advance policy proposals and play an active role in the implementation of programs to ensure the right to food, for instance.

A series of basic principles is the platform on which all the people's organizations and non-governmental are compared:

- Right to Food: go beyond the simple identification of food safety with the availability of products and arrive at an understanding of existing social relations between individuals and foods; To this end, it is necessary to introduce legal instruments also to ensure the recognition and satisfaction of this right food;
- Sustainability food; put equal emphasis on the practices as much on those who take part in the process of production, circulation and consumption of food. This means adopting policies to sustain the earth through proper management of natural resources and production; to a cure of the rural landscape and the territory in general; to support the farmer contemplating the variety of existing

solutions and objectives; to fairly distribute food by strengthening local markets and the production of quality that consumers bind more strongly to the territory and to sustainable consumption, ensuring healthy food and nutrition education through quality and consumer protection;

- Popular participation: to become aware that it is difficult to decrease the level of food insecurity without a confrontation and action manifested by the different sectors of civil society;

- Food sovereignty: decentralized control policies on the articulation of production and distribution. The exercise of this sovereignty requires political and economic autonomy to set policies that transpose the agricultural and environmental specificities of the territories and those social and cultural rights of the population.

The recent upsurge in protest around the world gather also around these main themes, due to the fact that people are becoming awareness that major changes need to be done in order to preserve our planet. In fact, “we are witnessing the emergence of new sphere of transnational activism whose practices, identities, and analyses are transformative, movement-centered, and autonomous from the inter-state order”(Smith, Duncan 2012).

The growth of global social movements is both cause and effect of globalization from below, as well as a testimony to the importance of this perspective in dealing with issues of a transnational nature. This globalization from below seeks emancipation and the conquest of spaces of self-organization of civil society, but at the same time look at the quality of global policy, so that they can effectively ensure, sustain and generalize that emancipation. In other words, it calls for a reconfiguration of the relationship between the spheres of politics, economy and society.

Converging across national borders, these global and transnational movements have brought together constructive ideas around a veritable organizational infrastructure of interpersonal connection. Their evolutionary process is ongoing, and increasingly tends to promote the ability of people to implement, by continuous comparison, these aspirations and shared core values (Smith 2005).

Transnational and global food activism.

The global agri-food system can be viewed in terms of two competing networks informed by different ideologies (Jarosz; 2000; Morgan et al. 2006). The first and dominant network is characterized as an industrial system of production and distribution whose main features are large-scale production, processing, and distribution of food at the national and global scales (Morgan et al. 2006). At the level of production, it seeks to maximize production yields through a model that consists of monocultures and the use of agrochemicals, hybrid seed, biotechnology, and mechanized labor. Dominated by large-scale companies, especially multi-national corporations, it consists of long supply and commodity chains that increase the geographical distance between producers and consumers as products flow through a myriad of hands before they arrive at their retail destination.

The industrial perspective is very compatible with the current hegemonic economic ideology that Steger (2002) calls “globalism”, or “the new market ideology”, which is grounded in the principles of classical liberal economics repackaged for the current era of increasing global integration facilitated by the process of globalization. At the core of this ideology is the belief in the primacy of the free market to create conditions that benefit everyone and facilitate the spread of democracy (Steger 2002). Its core principles of efficiency, competition, and profit maximization require market expansion, which is facilitated by the liberalization of trade and production as per trade agreements and other developmental “tools” (such as structural adjustment programs). The neoliberal development model, emerging from the principles of classical liberal economics, is predicated on export-led growth and the concept of comparative advantage. This has had profound consequences on the global agri-food system as it has facilitated the expansion of the industrial food system, which is evidenced by the growth in overseas food production and processing, the rise of large retail outlets (e.g supermarkets), and the spread of corporate food eateries (e.g fast food outlets).

The second agri-food network represents a critique of the industrial model. Referred as the alternative or sustainable agri-food network, its ideology express a deep commitment to more

environmentally sound agricultural production practices and the shortening of supply and commodity chains emphasizing small enterprise and local economies (Morgan et al 2006:2) the alternative food approach takes issue with the multidimensional consequences of the industrial agri-food approach, including cultural, political, social, environmental and economic ramifications. It rather advocates new approaches to organizing and structuring the food system to promote more equitable market access for small and medium-sized producers and retailers, to preserve the cultural traditions of local and regional communities that are often threatened by cultural homogenization, to allow for increased political participation of citizens in national and local food policies, and to prevent environmental degradation through the implementation of ecological approaches to production and distribution. The seek to “reembed” the market into local environmental and social relations (Raynolds 2000).The alternative agri-food approach insists that the ideology of globalism, transmitted through the process of globalization, has hindered equality and the spread of democracy as neoliberal globalization privileges those entities that can successfully compete in the market namely multinational corporations that have the resources to invest transnationally and seek out either more competitive venues for production or new markets to exploit. The approach further argues that the emphasis on minimizing regulations and barriers to trade alongside the promotion of fiscal austerity has led to the decreased protection of citizens and local and national markets, thus making them more vulnerable to the fluctuations of the global market. Furthermore, the privileging of the market has resulted in the subordination of human rights, environmental quality, and democratic rights. In this sense the alternative or sustainable approach advances a counter hegemonic claim, to use Evans’ (200) terminology, as it challenges the very underpinnings of globalism.

Activists, as one of the groups of actors that comprise the alternative agri-food network, play an important role in transmitting the ideology of the alternative agri-food approach, and the organization of these activists has become increasingly transnational. This is evidenced by the emergence of organizations and social movements, such as Food First, Slow Food, food

sovereignty, the international organic agriculture movement (footnote: The international organic agriculture movement is also a transnational movement though its emergence was not recent but rather in the 1970s, or arguably earlier) and fair trade that operate with and across borders. Transnational food activists (footnote: Tarrow (2006) defines transnational activists as “people or groups who are rooted in specific national contexts, but who engage in contentious political activities that involve them in transnational networks contacts and conflicts” p29), though understudied in the literature on alternative food approaches, represent an increasingly important spectrum of activism that advances the claims of the alternative agri-food paradigm.

The focus of this chapter is then on two such movements, the food sovereignty movement and the Slow Food movement, to demonstrate how this alternative agri-food ideology is articulated by transnational food activists and, in turn, is spread on account of their campaigns. The objective is to widen the discourse on these movement and open up avenues for expanding research on these transnational movements, as called for by such scholars as Evans (2000, 2005) who purport that the scholarly literature on counter-hegemonic movements “lags the growth of the movements” (Evans 2005:2). Drawing on the work of Reynolds (2000) in her study of the international organic literature and fair trade movements, the work of counter-hegemonic food movements is significant in terms of providing alternative approaches to addressing the failures of the industrial agri-food approach to correct inequitable market relations, environmental degradation, and cultural imperialism. It is equally important for the purposes of analyzing the capacity of these movements to successfully contest neoliberal globalization by “turning neoliberal globalization’s own ideological and organizational structures against itself” (Evans 2005:2). While acknowledging that in this work there is a lack of empirical evidence presented in Reynolds’ study, it aims to explore the different approaches of two transnational alternative agri-food movements and their congruency as well as discuss some of the broader, connected issues.

Food Sovereignty and Slow Food Movements.

The food sovereignty and slow food movements represent two distinct movements and are very intriguing to study together because, while they both reject the hegemonic discourse of globalism and the reflection of this discourse in the global agri-food system, they have very different approaches to articulating their contention. Both food sovereignty and Slow Food address a host of concerns that they view as consequences of the dominant agri-food system. However, their conceptualizations of how to address the weaknesses they perceive are considerably different. Both movements have distinct roots. The concept of food sovereignty was introduced by La via Campesina. Slow Food, on the other hand, was founded in Italy in the late 1980s by a group of Italian leftists who were concerned about the fate of tradition local cuisine. While food sovereignty implicitly forwarded contentious political objectives from the get-go that challenge the dominant global neoliberal economic framework, Slow Food started out as more of gastronomic organization interested in educating consumers about local products and cuisines (Miele and Murdoch 2003:33). Both movements have expanded significantly in scope since their inception, though food sovereignty remains a highly fragmented movement while Slow Food is extremely formalized. These differences have very much shaped their unique discourse.

CHAPTER III. LA VIA CAMPESINA. FROM FOOD SOVEREIGNTY TO PEASANTS' RIGHTS.

La Vía Campesina emerged in a particular economic, political and social context that was undermining the ability of the farmers of the world to maintain control over land and seeds.

It came at a time when a particular model of rural development was altering the rural landscape, threatening to turn local knowledge irrelevant and denigrating rural cultures. The key elements in this phenomenon were the intruder globalization of an industrial model of agriculture, on the one

hand, and the search for an alternative approach among those who have been most affected by the epidemic of dislocation created by their appearance, on the other.

In the world of agriculture, the globalization process has worked very intrusive, radically changing the concept of food and agriculture. Today, agriculture is the most exposed sector to economic restructuring - according to Robert (1992), the modernization of agriculture is a war on subsistence seeking to break subsistence farmers' autonomy - and more unprepared for the ethical and political changes, particularly in reality less integrated with the production nodes that generate them, like the outlying rural areas of the planet. But if it is true that these new arrangements pose a threat to the rural economy, it is clear that balances and broader collective interests are also threatened, if we consider correct the analysis formulated in the volume *Agriculture, un tournant nécessaire*, signed by the Groupe de Bruges : “globalization and the growing interdependence, the questioning of the traditional division of responsibilities between the public authorities and the market, the irruption of exclusion and the risk of social fragmentation, changes in the relationship between man and environment, the collapse of the postwar paradigm of modernization and the calling into question of the models built upon it, are evidence of a crisis which is not involving agriculture solely”.

La Vía Campesina born within this international context, in which the export of this said development model has been spread all over the world and blatantly presented as the definitive model for the resolution of hunger and poverty, looking for a different approach development by welcoming all those that had been damaged "by the epidemic of dislocation" (Desmarais 2007:44).

The rise of a movement.

La Via Campesina, as already mentioned, comes at an important time in which the nation-state has undergone a transformation, changing its role in relation to rural areas, posing new challenges. The comparison with the peasants, has allowed them to regroup and move on the international scene. In

addition to causing a restructuring of state-society relations, the claim of the neoliberal model has led to the emergence of new forms of social movements that are more autonomous, horizontal, and more based on collective identities rather than just social class (Alvarez et al. 1998).

The opening of markets, the conclusion of free trade agreements, GATT, WTO and NAFTA, as previously mentioned, during the '80s and '90s, have opened a serious problem that larger farmers' organizations have faced, such as the collapse of the crop and livestock prices. If your real enemy is beyond your national borders and is also the real enemy of your peers in other countries, then you must join forces with those peers to fight your common enemy (Desmarais 2002, 2003a, 2003b, 2003c, 2005, McMichael 2008). Identifying corporations and financial capital as the invisible forces behind international institutions, farmers' organizations are organized on a transnational basis, developing a counter-hegemonic political discourse, seeking common cause and common enemies from country to country.

First years of birth: setting up.

In some countries, farmers' organizations were struggling with their governments against liberalization and globalization. While the Uruguay Round progressed (it was started in 1986 in Punta del Este), the peasants, in some way represented by the International Federation of Agricultural Producers (IFAP), strove to influence the positions of national governments, but they were mostly unheeded .

“La Vía Campesina has provided a space, and allies who are our peers, to form a network and jointly analyze our issues and problems, and develop new concepts like food sovereignty”¹. La Vía Campesina has provided them with “a space where they gain international (and national) respect,

¹ (CLOC. (1997) II Congreso de la Coordinadora Latinoamericana de Organizaciones del Campo. Peres Editores , Brasilia). Asian peasant leader speech.

respect from other social movements, from institutions, and where they have greatly increased their self-esteem”².

Peasants have made their way forcefully through La Vía Campesina, participating and taking action through protests, mass mobilizations wherever key debates or international negotiations concerning rural communities would have taken place. With the message "we are here and we can speak for ourselves" they have completely removed the NGOs and taken their places at the table for their own account.

As we have seen, social movements try to build a globalization from below, and this also involves their leadership: in fact, unlike NGOs, organizations that are small, finite, composed of only a finite personal and a foundational council, whose membership is also not active in the sense that members are responsible upwards, they have a high capacity for mobilization, due to the fact that the staff is extremely small compared to the membership base. Seemingly La Via Campesina is composed of “peer” groups, avoiding internal tensions (typical in transnational networks where “old colonial patterns may be replicated in the relation between Northern-dominated nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) and local grassroots organizations in the South” (Stahler-Sholk et al.2008).

This first phase of the birth of the movement is thus marked by a clear political position, than can be summed up referring to its Second Conference held in Tlaxcala, Mexico, in April 1996. On that occasion, in fact, La Vía Campesina has laid the foundation not only of a simple coordination, but has established its own regional structure, and developed the ultimate design of food sovereignty.

Dialogue with International Organization: a place at the table. Mobilization and resistance.

In a second successive phase, La Vía Campesina, following the Third Conference held in Bangalore, India between September and October of 2000, has developed a strategy of alliances

² (CLOC. (1994) Ier Congreso de la Coordinadora Latinoamericana de Organizaciones del Campo. ALAI , Quito. La Vía Campesina staff member speech.

with other actors in order to put pressure on international organizations such as the World Bank, the WTO, but especially the FAO. The strength of the movement, and this become clearer from here on, lies in the fact that continuously tried to become a reference point for other movements and associations of rural farmers. La Vía Campesina has become the strongest actor of civil society than all others, undertaking a leading position. The example of this is the lead role played by La Via Campesina in the civil society forums, lobbying, and protest that helped lead to the collapse of the WTO Ministerial in Cancun, Mexico, in September 2003 (Rosset 2006).

The tactics set by La Via Campesina does not seek for a technical comparison, but quickly moves the debate towards a moral dimension of “right-wrong”. It is a political strategy that, through transnational coordination with its allies, seeking to occupy and defend a political space. “This has proven to be an effective strategy for shifting the terms of the debate on many of the issues that La Via Campesina addresses” (Rosset and Martinez 2010).

Its fierce struggle is oriented to a greater extent towards a constant opposition to the WTO, which is considered a key instrument within the process of globalization. Its uniqueness as a transnational social movement and strongest actor of the civil society, lies in the “sui generis” approach in addressing the debate on food security.

Its position is radically different than that of the IFAP (International Federation of Agricultural Producers, which actively participates to WTO works and reunions: regular meetings between its Secretariat and staff of the WTO in Geneva have been made with the final purpose of trying to influence international decisions so that they are somehow bound into account the interests of farmers (Desmarais 2007). The goal is to strengthen farmers' organizations within the international decisions in the field of agriculture, offering a model of gradual liberalization of the market, so that the countries of the South can slowly recover the gap (IFAP 1998b, 2000). The acceptance of liberalization should, in this view, be conditioned to a stronger participation of the farmers in international organizations.

Radically different is the position of La Vía Campesina. “Food is the first and foremost a source of nutrition and only secondarily an item of trade”. The need for agricultural trade is not excluded entirely, but placed in a subordinate position: the new perspective formulated regards the involvement of human rights. The production of food must be directed first to the satisfaction of those needs regarding food security issues, within the framework of food sovereignty: “Food is a basic human right. This right can only be realized in a system where food sovereignty is guaranteed” (Vía Campesina 1996:1-2).

Dealing with a greater degree of medium and small producers, the Vía Campesina uses the means of mobilization together with mass demonstrations and direct actions also. “Only in certain contexts that offer adequate space for negotiation will the Vía Campesina co-operate and collaborate to work for favorable policy changes” (Desmarais 2007:112) La Via Campesina also underline the fact that negotiations must always be followed or accompanied by mobilization (Vía Campesina 2000b).

Yet from its birth the leaders of the movement begin to put pressure on the WTO in Geneva, vigorously supporting the democratization of trade negotiations, catalyzing the frustration of farmers through public manifestations. What is asked to the governments was “to negotiate a fair international trade order which plays fair prices, does not destroy family farming and leaves each region with the possibility of securing its own food supply” (Via Campesina 1993).

Thus while on the one hand international organizations seek to consult with actors of the civil society on crucial issues, such as farmers in this case, trying to give space to pursue and support their political world trade, on the other hand this active participation is often conditioned to the extent that requires considerable human and financial resources. Therefore for organizations such as La Via Campesina, this is impossible to achieve. Within the WTO there is no room for the Via Campesina to access the final decisions influencing and controlling them, because its strategy and position seriously calls into question the neoliberal orthodoxy.

As a direct consequence, therefore, on the one hand, the FIPA sits alongside IGOs and NGOs claiming to represent all the farmers of the planet, while Via Campesina finds space on the street,

demonstrating and influencing world public opinion. And, judging from the WTO's increasingly fragile legitimacy and declining credibility both in certain government circles and the general public (Desmarais 2007), Via Campesina tactics would seem to be succeeding.

The Internationalization of Peasants. The significance of La Via Campesina.

“We have accomplished this through a bottom-up, not a top down process. The local struggles Already Existed (Thousands of them), what La Via Campesina has done is give them a body of common analysis, and linked them with each other. What all this adds up to is the Strengthening of universal demands and struggle - European Peasants leader. "(Desmarais 2003)

This statement by a European leader during the Second International Conference of Via Campesina witness the fact that the Movement has been built from the bottom up, is independent from governments, political parties, donors and NGOs, and does not represent special interests of certain categories of farmers. Today La Via Campesina is an international reference point for social movement in raising and discussing rural issues and problems, in the construction of proposals, mediated by the legitimacy and trust forged through its years of struggle. It is a new space of 'citizenship' (Borras and Franco 2009).

According to Walden Bello (2003) the success of a transnational movement lies in its ability to effectively analyze the global context of the moment, developing accurate tactics and strategies. Not only that, the mode of operation of Via Campesina has built, to use the words of Eschle (2001), spaces and structures, processes and mechanisms to ensure inclusive democratic decision-making and participation.

The Vía Campesina has shown that those words of philosophers and political analysts, so called “Masters of globalization” (Desmarais 2007), predicting the demise of the peasantry at the beginning of the century were wrong; has jealously preserved its fundamental characteristic, that is,

to be led by peasants; has resisted attempts to co-opt and intrusion, as well as pressures from reformist organizations and international institutions that have often tempted the Movement with the promise of funds under the condition to change its agenda. Has resisted in order to consistently articulate and advance proposals on the international arena, defending the needs of those who produce food. Its greatest contribution was precisely to ensure that “international agriculture and food deliberations on issues such as agrarian reform, GMOs and the control and ownership of seed, sustainable agricultural practices, human rights and gender equality in the countryside, and the role of international trade in ensuring food sovereignty” would have been placed at the center of the political agenda (Desmarais 2007).

CONCLUSIONS

The purpose of this work was to critically analyze the global food activism in recent years, in order to identify what has been recognized as the birth of new trends in the globalization process and discuss, through a focus box on La Via Campesina, an example of how a transnational movement can articulate its objectives and political strategy on a international stage.

In conclusion, it was tried here to show how transnational social movements, bringing the example of food activism, have altered the interstate system, to the extent that they are able to activate latent conflicts, highlighting contradictions between the geoculture's normative and legitimating elements, undermining the legitimacy of the dominant order (Smith, Duncan 2012). The role of the activists is to reinforce an idea of change that is significantly different from the capitalist market logic. The resonance of the new rules and idea brought into the debate by these movements, through discourses of food sovereignty in this case, is part of a global alternative project, in which social movements are creating and legitimating alternative practices that both define and can help the creation of an alternative system of world politics.

Specifically, the formation and consolidation of Via Campesina shows how peasants have not been amenable to this process of economic restructuring, but instead have actively resisted to the imposition of this top-down model. The cultural politics of this movement, in its proposals for a resetting of a new international agenda, has increased the awareness on how food today is conceived, i.e as a political act, linked to business, and thus damaging not only farmers, but also it introduces new mechanisms that escape democratic control.

These transnational identities have contributed in some way to make more explicit and blatant those contradictions that exist between practices and norms of the world-system today. In particular, with La Via Campesina, it has been improved the potential that these anti-system movements have, in a time when global capitalism is suffering a deep crisis.

REFERENCES

- Allena D. and Lueck D. 1998. *The Nature of the Farm*. Journal of Law and Economics XLI (October): 343-86.
- Alvarez, Sonia E., Dagnino E. and Escobar, A. (eds.) 1998. *Culture of Politics: Politics of Culture: Revisioning Latin American Social Movements*. Boulder, CO: Westview Press.
- Andrews, G. (2008) *The Slow Food Story: Politics and Pleasure*. Montreal & Kingston: McGill- Queen's University Press.
- Barracough, Solon, Krishna Ghimire, and Hans Meliczeck. 1997. *Rural Development and the Environment: Towards Ecologically and Socially Sustainable Development in Rural Areas*. Geneva: United Nation Research Institute for Social Development and United Nations Development Programme.
- Berthoud, G. 1992. Market In W.Sachs (ed.) *The Development Dictionary: A Guide to Knowledge as Power*. London and New Jersey: Zed Books.
- Borras Jr., S., Edelman, M., and Kay, C. (2008) "Transnational Agrarian Movements: Origins and Politics, Campaigns and Impacts," *Journal of Agrarian Change* 8(2/3): 169-204.
- Borras Jr., S. and Franco, J. C. (2009) *IDS Working Paper no. 323 Institute of Development Studies (IDS)*, University of Sussex Brighton
- Bové, J. 1998. *Report from French Farmers. Synthesis/rRegeneration 16* (Summer) Available at <http://www.wtowatch.org/library/admin/uploaded-files/Repor_from_French-Farmers_2.htm>
- Brown, L. R., 2012. *Full Planets, Empty Plates, The New Geopolitics of Food Scarcity*. New York and London: WW Norton & Company New York London.
- CLOC. (1997) *II Congreso de la Coordinadora Latinoamericana de Organizaciones del Campo*. Memonra de la Asamblea, 3-7 November. Peres Editores , Brasilia
- CLOC. (1994) *Ier Congreso de la Coordinadora Latinoamericana de Organizaciones del Campo*. Memoria del Congreso, 3-7 November. ALAI , Quito. Secretaría Operativa de la CLOC.

Declaration of the Forum for Food Sovereignty, Nyéléni (2007) Sélingué, Mali, 27 February 2007. Available online at http://www.foodsovereignty.org/public/new_attached/49_Declaration_of_Nyeleni.pdf. [Accessed 15 May 2009]

De Janvry, A. 1981. *The Agrarian Question and Reformism in Latin America*. Johns Hopkins University Press.

Desmarais, A. A. (2002) *The Via Campesina: consolidating an international peasant and farm movement*. *Journal of Peasant Studies* 29:2 , pp. 91-124.

Desmarais, A. A. (2003). *The WTO... will meet somewhere, sometime. And we will be there*. Part of a series of papers prepared for the project Vocies: The Rise of Nongovernmental Voices in Multilateral Organizations. Ottawa, ON: The North-South Institute. Also available at <http://www.nsi-ins.ca/english/pdf/Voices_WTP_DESMARAIS.pdf>

Desmarais, A. A. (2003a) *The Via Campesina: peasant women on the frontiers of food sovereignty*. *Canadian Woman Studies/les cahiers de la femme* 23:1 , pp. 140-145.

Desmarais, A. A. (2003b) *The Via Campesina: peasants resisting globalization*. PhD Thesis, Department of Geography University of Calgary

Desmarais, A. A. (2003c) *The WTO ... will meet somewhere, sometime. And we will be there*. The North-South Institute Ottawa, Canada — Available from: http://www.nsi-ins.ca/ensi/publications/policy_briefs.html#voices

Desmarais, A. A. (2005) *United in La Via Campesina. Food First Backgrounder 11:4* , pp. 1-4.

Desmarais, A. A. (2007) *La Via Campesina: globalization and the power of peasants* Fernwood Publishers , Halifax

Desmarais, A. A. and Hernandez Navarro, L. (2009) *Voices from Maputo: La Via Campesina's Fifth International Conference*. *Report on the Americas* 42:3 , pp. 24-31.

Economist, The. 1999. *After Seattle: A Global disaster*. December 11:17-18.

Eschle, C. 2001. *Global Democracy Social Movements, and Feminism*. Boulder, CO: Westview Press.

Evans, P. (2000) “*Fighting Marginalization with Transnational Networks: Counter-Hegemonic Globalization*,”. *Contemporary Sociology*, 29(1): 230–41.

FAO, 1995. *Women: the key to food security*.

FAO, 2000. *World food summit follow-up: the Fao special programme for food security*.

FAO, 2006 . *The state of food insecurity in the world*.

FAO, 2006. *The state of food and agriculture: food aid for food security* p. 183.

FAO, 2008. *Crop prospect and food situation*.

FAO, 2008. *Soaring food prices: facts, perspectives, impacts and actions required*.

FAO and FIVIMS, 2003. *Focus on food insecurity and vulnerability*.

FAO, W.F.S., 1996. *Rome Declaration on World Food Security 1996*.

FAO, 2006. *The State of Food Insecurity in the World 2006*

FAO, 2007. “*FAO Food Outlook: November 2007*”.

FAO, 2008 “*Nutrition and Consumer Protection*”.

FAO, 2013 *The State of Food Insecurity in the World: Economic Crises - Impact and Lessons Learned*.

FAO, 2003. *Trade Reforms and Food Security: Conceptualizing the Linkages*. Rome FAO.

Fox, J. (1994) *The difficult transition from clientelism to citizenship: lessons from Mexico*. *World Politics* 46:2 , pp. 151-184.

(2005) “*Transnational Social Movements in the Contemporary Global Political Economy*,” in *Handbook of Political Sociology*, T. Janoski, A. M. Hicks & M. Schwartz, Eds, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Glazer, Sarah. (2007) “*Slow Food Movement: Can it change eating habits?*” *CQ Researcher*, 17(4): 73-96.

- Goodman, David and Michael J. Watts (eds). 1997. *Globalising Food: Agrarian Questions and Global Restructuring*. London and New York: Routledge.
- Goodman, D. and Redclift, M, *Refashioning Nature: Food, Econology and Culture*. London and New York: Rtledge, 1991
- Harriet Friedmann, “*The International Political Economy of Food: A Global Crisis*,” in *Food in the USA: A Reader*, ed. Carele Counihan, 326 (New York: Routledge, 2002)
- Harriet Friedmann, “*Remaking ‘Traditions’: How We Eat, What We Eat and the Changing Political Economy of Food*,” in *Women Working the NAFTA Food Chain: Women, Food and Globalization*, ed. by Deborah Barndt, 35–60 (Toronto: Sumach Press, 1999)
- Hobsbawm, E. J. (1994) *The age of the extremes: the short twentieth century 1914-1991* Abacus , London.
- Hopkins 1986. *Food security, policy options and the evolution of state responsibility*, Abacus, London.
- IFAP. n.d *International Federation of Agricultural Producers*. IFAP promotional brochure, Paris: IFAP.
- 1998a. *Agricultural Trade: Concerns and COnsensus among Farmers’ Organizations*. June, Paris: IFAP
- 1998b. *Rural Poverty and Sustainable Development: A Policy Statement by World Farmers*. Available at <www.ifap.org/about/wfcpoverty.html>
- 2000a. *Some Key Issues for Farmers Concerning a New Round of Multilateral Trade Negotiations. A Policy Statement by Farmers’ Worldwide*. Result of the 34th World Farmers Congress, Hannover, germany, May 31.
- Jarosz, L. (2000) “*Understanding agri-food networks as social relations*,” *Agriculture and Human Values*, 17: 279–83.
- Joseph E. Stiglitz, *Globalization and its Discontents* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2003)
- Karides, Marina. 2012. “*Local Utopia as Unobtrusive Resistance: The Greek Village Micro-Economy*.” *Journal of World Systems Research* 18:151-156. At: <http://www.jwsr.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/08/vol18n2_SymposiumKarides.pdf>
- Kautsky, K. (1899) *On the agrarian question*. Zwan Publications , Winchester, MA — [1988 reprint, English edition.]
- Kearney, Michael (1996) *Reconceptualizing the peasantry: anthropology in global perspective*. Westview Press , Boulder, CO
- Keck, M. E. and Sikkink, K. (1998) *Activists Beyond Borders: Advocacy Networks in International Politics*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press.
- Klaren, P. F. Klaren, P. F. and Bossert, T. J. (eds) (1986) *Lost promise: explaining Latin American underdevelopment. Promise of development: theories of change in Latin America*. Westview Press , Boulder, CO
- Marglin, S.(1996). *Farmers, Seedsmen, and Scientists: Systems of Agriculture and Systems of Knowledge IN F. Apffel-Marglin and S. Marglin (eds.), Decolonizing Knowledge: From Development to Dialogue*. New York and Oxford: Clarendon Press and Oxford University Press.
- Martinez-Torres M.E. and Rosset, P. 2010. *La Vía Campesina: The Evolution of a Transnational Movement*. *Journal of Peasant Studies*.
- Massiah, Gustave. 2012. “*Reflections on the Global Situation and the Renewal of the Alterglobalisation Movement* ” in *AIC Alternative News*. Online: Alternative Information Center At: <http://www.alternativenews.org/english/index.php/news/opinion/4904-reflections-on-the-global-situation-and-renewal-of-the-alterglobalisation-movement-.html> Accessed August 29, 2012.
- Maxwell D, Webb P, Coates J, Wirth J. 2008. *Rethinking Food Security in Humanitarian Response*.
- McMichael, P. (2000). *Development and Social Change: A Global Perspective 2nd ed.* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Pine Forge Press)

- McMichael, P. (2004) *Global development and the corporate food regime*. Paper prepared for Symposium on New Directions in the Sociology of Global Development, XI World Congress of Rural Sociology Trondheim, Norway
- McMichael, P. (2008) *Peasants make their own history, but not just as they please....* Journal of Agrarian Change 8:2&3 , pp. 205-228.
- Moore, 2014. J.W. *Cheap Food and Bad Climate. From Surplus Value to Negative-Value in the Capitalist World-Ecology*. Binghamton University.
- Miele, M. and Murdoch, J. (2003) "Fast Food/Slow Food: Standardizing and Differentiating Cultures of Food," in *Globalization, Localization and Sustainable Livelihoods*, R. Almås and G. Lawrence, Eds, Aldershot, England: Ashgate.
- Morgan, K., Marsden, T., and Murdoch, J. (2006) *Worlds of Food: Place, Power, and Provenance in the Food Chain*, Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- NFU (National Farmers Union). 2002. *NFU supports S.O.D.* NFU Newsletter, September.
- Osava, M. 2000. *Farmers Protest Transgenic Grain Shipment*. Inter Press Service, July 25.
- Oshaug, A., 1994. *Household Food Security: Summary of a theoretical concept*
- Petras, J. and Veltmeyer, H. (2002) *The peasantry and the state in Latin America: a troubled past, an uncertain future*. Journal of Peasant Studies 29:3/4 , pp. 41-82.
- Petrini, C. (2001) *Slow Food: The Case for Taste*, New York: Columbia University Press
- (2007) *Slow Food Nation: Why Our Food Should Be Good, Clean, and Fair*, New York: Rizzoli International Publications.
- Pimbert, M. (2008) *Towards food sovereignty: reclaiming autonomous food systems*, London: International Institute for Environment and Development.
- Piven, F. F. and Cloward, R. (1978) *Poor people's movements: why they succeed, how they fail*. Vintage Books , New York
- Raskin, Paul. 2012. "Scenes from the Great Transition." in *Solutions*, vol. 3, At: <http://www.thesolutionsjournal.com/node/1140>. Accessed August 16, 2012.
- Raynolds, L.T. (2000) "Re-embedding global agriculture: The international organic and fair trade movements," *Agriculture and Human Values*, 17: 297–309.
- Rist, G. 1997. *The History of Development: From Western Origins to Global Faith*. London and New York: Zed Books.
- Ritzer, G. (1993) *The McDonaldization of Society*, Thousand Oaks, CA: Pine Forge Press.
- (1998) *The McDonaldization Thesis: explorations and extensions*, London: Sage Publications Lmt.
- Robert, J. 1992. Production. In W.Sachs (ed.) *The Development Dictionary: A Guide to Knowledge as Power*. London and New Jersey: Zed Books.
- Rosset, P. (2006) "Moving Forward: Agrarian Reform as Part of Food Sovereignty," in *Promised Land: Competing Visions Agrarian Reform*, Peter Rosset, Raj Patel, and Michael Courville (eds), Oakland, CA: Food First Books.
- (2008) "Food Sovereignty and the Contemporary Food Crisis," *Development*, 51(4): 460-63.
- Seligson, M. A. (1996) *Agrarian inequality and the theory of peasant rebellion*. *Latin American Research Review* 31:2 , pp. 140-157.
- Slow Food (1987) *Slow Food Manifesto*. Available online at <http://www.slowfood.com/about_us/eng/manifesto.lasso>.
- Smith, Jackie. 2005. "Transnational Social Movement Organizations." Pp. 226-248 in *Social Movements and Organizational Theory*, edited by G. Davis, D. McAdam, W. R. Scott, and M. Zald. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Smith, Jackie. 2005. "Building Bridges or Building Walls? Explaining Regionalization among Transnational Social Movement Organizations." *Mobilization* 10:251-270.
- Rosset and P., M. (2006a) *Food is different: why we must get the WTO out of agriculture*. Zed Books , London

- Sachs, Jeffrey. *The End of Poverty: Economic Possibilities for Our Time*. New York: Penguin Books, 2005.
- Salleh, Ariel. 2012. "Green Economy or Green Utopia? Recognizing the Reproductive Labor Class post-Rio+20." *Journal of World Systems Research* 18:141-145. At: http://www.jwsr.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/08/vol18n2_SymposiumSalleh.pdf.
- Schanbacher W.D, *The Politics of Food. The Global Conflict between Food Security and Food Sovereignty*, Praeger Security International, 2010
- Smith, J., Duncan, B. (2012). *Transnational Activism and Global Transformation: Post-National Politics and Activism for Climate Justice and Food Sovereignty*. Presented at the American Sociological Association Annual Meetings, August 20, 2012, Denver Colorado
- Stahler-Sholk, R., Vanden, H. E. and Kuecker, G. Stahler-Sholk, R., Vanden, H. E. and Kuecker, G. (eds) (2008) *Introduction. Latin American social movements in the twenty-first century: resistance, power, and democracy*, Rowman & Littlefield, Lanham, MD
- Steger, M. (2002) *Globalism: The New Market Ideology*, Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers.
- Stevens, C., Romilly G., Jane K. and Devereux S. 2000. *The WTO Arrangement on Agriculture and Food Security*. Economic Series No. 42 London: Commonwealth Secretariat.
- Tarrow, S. (2006) *The New Transnational Activism*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- UN (United Nations), *Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, 2013 Report*
- USDA (United States Department of Agriculture). 1998. *A Time to Act. A Report of the USDA National Commission on Small Farms*. January, Miscellaneous Publications °MP-1545, Washington, DC. Available at <[www.csrees.usda.gov/nea/ag_systems/pdfs/time to act 1998.pdf](http://www.csrees.usda.gov/nea/ag_systems/pdfs/time_to_act_1998.pdf)>.
- Vía Campesina. n.d. *Pamphlet on the Vía Campesina. Office of the Operational Secretariat*, Tegucigalpa.
- 1993. *Rural Organisations of Vía Campesina Demand Democratization of World Trade Talks*. Press Release, 4 December, Brussels: CPE.
- 1996. *The Right To Produce and Access to Land*. Position of the Vía Campesina Presented at the World Food Summit, 13-17 November, Rome, Italy.
- 2000a. *Bangalore Declaration of the Vía Campesina*. Declaration at the Third International Conference of the Vía Campesina, 3-6 October, Bangalore, India.
- 2000b. *Vía Campesina Gender Position Paper*. Position paper approved at the Third International Conference of the Vía Campesina, 3-6 October, Bangalore, India.
- 2000c. *Draft Vía Campesina Position Paper: International Relations and Strategic Alliances*. Position discussed at the Third International Conference of the Vía Campesina, 3-6 October, Bangalore, India.
- 2003a. *Draft Discussion Paper on Vía Campesina Strategies and Action Plan*. 7 February, Tegucigalpa, Honduras.
- 2003b. *We won in Cancún! The WTO was derailed!*. Press release, 23 September, Tegucigalpa, Honduras.
- Wallerstein, Immanuel. 2004. *World-Systems Analysis: An Introduction*. Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press.
- Wright, Erik Olin. 2010. *Envisioning Real Utopias*. New York: Verso.
- Whatmore, S, 1995. *From Farming to Agribusiness. The Global Agro-food System*. In R.J. Johnson, P. Taylor, and Michael Watts (eds.), *Geographies of Global Change: Remapping the World in the Late Twentieth Century*. Oxford: Blackwell Publishers.
- Windfuhr, M. and Jonsén, J. (2005) *Food Sovereignty: Towards democracy in localized food systems*, Warwickshire, UK: ITDG Publishing
- WTO News. 1998. *Asian and US Farmers Oppose WTO Ag Reforms*. WTO News 1(3) (March 3).
- Yapa, L. 1996. *Improved seed and constructed scarcity*. In R. Peet and M. Watts (eds.), *Liberalization Economies: Environment, Development and Social Movements*. London and New York: Routledge.