

## 2 Where are the local communities?

### Food sovereignty discourse on international agrobiodiversity conservation strategies

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#### **Introduction**

Food sovereignty is used as a discursive resource by various social movements for different purposes. Typically, the actors who mobilize the discourse regarding food sovereignty bring different constituencies together under the term *local communities*. To be determined is whether all the actors engaged in food sovereignty form a homogenous group. By asking “Where are the *local communities*,” I deconstruct this category to show the complex and often contradictory underlying interests. As a case study, I rely on the food sovereignty narratives employed by different movements in agrobiodiversity negotiations. I also question the apparent homogeneity of this notion and highlight significant differences within the narratives of food sovereignty to show how these heterogeneous discourses translate into different policy objectives.

The wide range of concerns involved in food sovereignty calls for a robust interdisciplinary perspective. I propose a three-pronged approach based on international political economy, sociological rural studies, and ecological and evolutionary economics. Incorporating these three disciplines in an analysis of food sovereignty narratives provides a framework for understanding the otherwise neglected differences that exist between disparate groups. This analysis also clarifies the specific practices that these groups defend or support. I use international negotiations regarding agrobiodiversity conservation to demonstrate two principal movements associated with the defense of *local communities* – the indigenous people and small-scale farmer movements. These two movements adopt different definitions of food sovereignty for their respective lobbying strategies.

This chapter begins with a critical review of approaches that collapse the two movements into a homogenous category apparently joined in common voice and cause. This review also defines food sovereignty as a rights-based notion. Then, building on current research, this chapter presents the three main dimensions associated with food sovereignty and investigates complementarities between these inquiries that each focus on a specific issue. The chapter concludes with a case study regarding the international negotiation of agrobiodiversity conservation.

## **Local communities and food sovereignty**

Hayden Lesbirel (2011) argues that community is a multi-disciplinary and variegated concept. In his view, finding a definition of community is less important than investigating how the boundaries of the community are determined. Asking who is included and excluded from a community provides a better understanding of the underlying boundaries assigned by researchers to the idea of community. From this standpoint, research should be reflexive and begin by inquiring whether the “community” under investigation reflects an “outside” or “inside” approach. This starting question helps us understand “community” as a heuristic device and is more interesting when associated with the top-down or bottom-up discussion in International Relations studies. Authors such as Bertrand Roussel (2005) or Johanna Siméant (2012) note how prevalent approaches in International Relations studies tend to look at civil society organizations with an outsider and a top-down point-of-view – proceeding from the international to the local. This approach thus creates reified blocs or groups that do not reflect the complexity of the actors involved in the negotiations.

This top-down approach considers *local communities* to be important stakeholders in negotiations, but little effort is made to distinguish which actors comprise this category. André Broome and Leonard Seabrooke (2012) address this issue by examining how international organizations construct the cognitive authority that allows them to indirectly influence policy orientations of member states. They argue that international organizations analyze problems through the study of *best practices*, which intend a “generic prescription for policy solutions” (Broome & Seabrooke, 2012, p. 7). Following this strategy, international organizations tend to create *one size fits all* solutions to international problems. These solutions are translated via strong and simple arguments indicating which policies individual states should adopt. International organizations also generate ideal target groups on which to enforce their policies, in this case, the *local communities*. In my opinion, this approach must be reversed to study from below the discourse of players involved in international negotiations regarding agrobiodiversity conservation. A bottom-up approach deconstructs the discourse of movements that are associated from above with *local communities*. Furthermore, agrobiodiversity conservation provides the opportunity to consider the notion of food sovereignty, which currently is central to many movements associated with *local communities*. Is this notion understood and employed similarly by these movements as a top-down approach would indicate? Or, on the contrary, could a bottom-up analysis of the discourse reveal interpretation differences?

Scholarship regarding food sovereignty is rapidly growing. Approaches and disciplines abound with sociological rural studies being central. Usually, the historical roots of food sovereignty are located in La Vía Campesina (LVC) (Holt-Giménez, 2006; Desmarais, 2007; Borras, 2004; Borras, Edelman & Kay, 2008). Recent studies, however, have also considered the evolution of the notion outside the LVC movement (Windfuhr & Jonsén, 2005; Perfecto, Vandermeer

& Wright, 2009; Schanbacher, 2010; Wittman, Desmarais & Wiebe, 2010). The volume edited by Wittman, Desmarais and Wiebe (2010) shows how food sovereignty evolved from a discourse directed specifically against international free trade policies to an alternative agricultural model, covering ecological, sociological and economic aspects. Central to this argument is the food regime theory by Harriet Friedmann and Philip McMichael (1989; McMichael, 2009). Food regime theory studies the hegemonic organization of the international production and distribution of food. Tracing the origins of this regime to the second half of the 19th century – the first food regime was established during the British Empire – food regime theory argues that a shift towards a new regime is possible in crisis situations, which arise from the inability of the hegemonic actor to maintain its leading position.

The current regime may be described as “corporate” because it places private interests at its center. The current regime is the evolution of the second post-colonial regime institutionalized under U.S. hegemony in the aftermath of World War II; it is based on Green Revolution<sup>1</sup> development policies. At the end of the 1970s, the neoliberal turn forced development towards rapid privatization of the agribusiness sector. The neoliberal turn involved the liberalization of agricultural policies and the expansion of biotechnologies and intellectual property rights regarding agricultural technologies.<sup>2</sup> As a result, the present-day regime faces a global ecological, social and economic crisis (McMichael, 2009, 2012), which according to food regime theorists, may lead to the establishment of a new regime. Authors such as Madeline Fairbairn (in Wittman, Desmarais & Wiebe, 2010) consider that food sovereignty, by contemplating these failures, should not be perceived merely as a resistance movement against the corporate regime but as laying the foundation of the next new food regime, which may radically redirect current agricultural practices.

Food regime theory provides a meaningful contribution to the scholarship regarding food sovereignty. The main weakness of food regime theory, however, is that it reduces the wide variety of alternative views regarding food sovereignty to a singular focus on dismantling the corporate food regime. In this chapter, I propose a different view by adopting a bottom-up approach based on the premise that food sovereignty refers to a plurality of discourses. Amy Trauger notes that food sovereignty “[...] acknowledges that food security on its own is a failure and that additional rights are required beyond the right to food” (Trauger, 2014, p. 8). Therefore, food sovereignty narratives assert “the right to have rights” (Patel, 2009) not only to resist but also to build alternatives to the current food regime with other rights, such as the right to be part of the decision-making process regarding food and agricultural policies, the right to protection against international trade dumping effects, the right to choose agriculture techniques freely, etc. The plurality of rights implies that different movements can adopt a food sovereignty narrative that emphasizes one or more of these rights and use it to advocate many different causes. This method can be defined as an oriented approach to food sovereignty that proposes the consolidation of a specific right more than a change of the food regime. This

approach is inspired by a study conducted by Ayresa and Bosia (2011) that emphasizes that two peasant movements may have distinctive interpretations of food sovereignty with contrasting outcomes. The study shows that although both of the movements were part of LVC and relied on food sovereignty to lobby against industrial agriculture practices, the history and social environment of each movement deeply influenced their interpretation of food sovereignty and the strategies that they concomitantly adopted.

Therefore, I adopt a local perspective regarding international negotiations – concerning agrobiodiversity conservation – by analyzing the discourse produced from a grassroots perspective. The main movements of local communities that are stakeholders in agrobiodiversity conservation negotiation and that appeal to food sovereignty narratives are small-scale farmers’ and indigenous peoples’ movements. Therefore, it is necessary to identify some dimensions to compare their food sovereignty discourses. I have identified three dimensions that link agrobiodiversity negotiations with food sovereignty narratives. As Figure 2.1 shows, each of these dimensions focuses on a specific disciplinary approach concerning food sovereignty: genetic resource appropriation, production orientation, and the innovation process. Considering “the right to have rights” definition of food sovereignty, the first dimension concerns discourses regarding rights to possess and dispose of biodiversity and the associated knowledge. The second dimension, production orientation, connects agricultural production practices with the right over technological choices and different agricultural trade models. Finally, the third dimension concerns the importance of conservation to stimulate agricultural innovation and involves the right to control the agricultural innovation process.

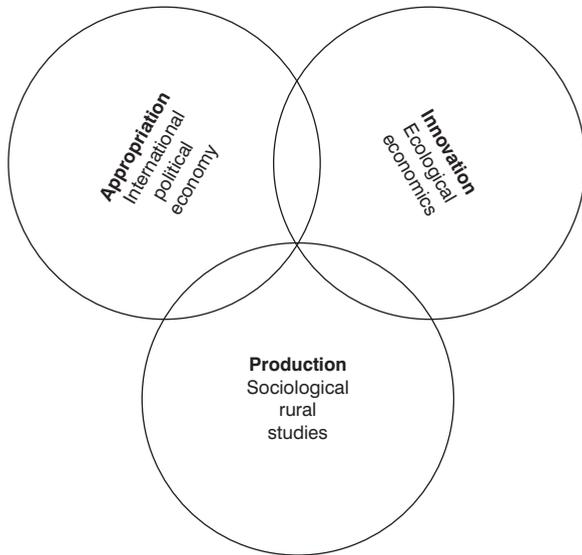


Figure 2.1 Interdisciplinary analysis framework to compare food sovereignty discourses

## The appropriation dimension

This dimension relates to how different biodiversity appropriation discourses are framed and used by actors negotiating in the international arena. Yohan Ariffin (2009, 2012) deconstructs the discourse of actors significantly involved in conservation negotiations, exposing four rival representations concerning how ownership over biodiversity has been claimed. Ariffin uses the term *juris possessio* to illustrate the rights to possess biodiversity resources and their knowledge.

According to Ariffin (2009, 2012), historically, access to and the use of biodiversity was first considered a common heritage right of mankind. By granting ownership of biodiversity to all humanity, resources were freely available for use by all. Sovereignism represents a second form of *juris possessio*. Sovereignism places biodiversity resources directly under the sovereign jurisdiction of the states where they are situated. Access to and the use of genetic resources is subject to the prior informed consent of states. Entrepreneurial claims to ownership over biodiversity resources constitute a third form of *juris possessio*. Within this framework, biodiversity resources are considered economic goods like any other. Placed under a private property regime – intellectual and material – biodiversity resources may be exchanged through free market mechanisms. Institutions governing intellectual property rights play an important role by allowing the exclusive appropriation of biotechnology knowledge and information. A fourth type of *juris possessio* is formed by a variety of ownership structures of collective or communal rights. These structures coincide by endowing a group of individuals with rights over the genetic resources that they use and/or the knowledge associated with such use. Collective rights allow for group involvement in consenting to the utilization and knowledge of genetic resources.

Ariffin (2012) shows that these four types of *juris possessio* may be found in international treaties regarding biodiversity. Studying the underlying views of *juris possessio* in these treaties highlights how ownership over biodiversity is perceived differently by actors involved in international negotiations. These views fall within a continuum ranging from the common heritage of humankind – excluding any claim to possess biodiversity – to the entrepreneurial level – allowing the expansion of intellectual property claims concerning biodiversity. In between, closer to the *heritage* pole, there is sovereignism that places genetic resources situated within states under their *juris possessio*. Closer to the *entrepreneurial* pole, various *communal* forms of *juris possessio*, which consider certain elements of biodiversity selected through a cultural heritage validation process, are placed under the *juris possessio* of a group of persons, resulting in communal ownership by members of the group.

## The production dimension

Eric Holt-Giménez and Annie Shattuck (2011) associate food regime theory with Karl Polanyi's double movement theory (1944). First, they contemplate

food regime theory to identify two antithetical production trends in current food movements: one that sustains the corporate food regime and the other that resists it. Then, they characterize each trend by considering Karl Polanyi's double movement theory. In his influential work *The Great Transformation* (1944; see also Block, 2008), Polanyi explains how markets are established and consolidated through a cyclical process of liberalization – or *laissez-faire* – phases contrasted by a regulatory protective counter-movement. The cyclical nature of the process is caused by various externalities produced during the liberalization phase. Once the destructive impacts reach a tipping point where it becomes impossible to manage them by market forces alone, the system reacts with an opposite motion that leads to the reintroduction of several forms of regulation. Polanyi describes this regulation as follows: “[the counter-movement] was the principle of social protection aiming at the conservation of man and nature as well as productive organization, relying on the varying support of those most immediately affected by the deleterious action of the market—primarily, but not exclusively, the working and the landed classes—and using protective legislation, restrictive associations, and other instruments of intervention as its methods” (1944, p. 138). Following Polanyi's idea of a counter-movement based on a principle of social protection and also on Block's discussion of double movement theory (2008), I characterize this counter-movement as protective.

### ***The laissez-faire movement***

The *laissez-faire* or liberalization movement is based on an international free market for agricultural goods. Holt-Giménez and Shattuck (2011) identify two orientations that characterize this movement. The first more conservative orientation strongly upholds a corporate food regime. Termed *food enterprise*, this orientation supports industrial and export agriculture and adopts cutting-edge industrial and biological technologies. Agribusiness lobbies, bilateral development agencies and influential philanthropic initiatives are the main proponents of this view. The objective is to maintain a regime of overproduction by sustaining rising yields and boosting international trade to guarantee low food prices. This production strategy targets decreasing food budgets to increase consumption of industrial goods and services. This model, however, requires chemical and mechanical inputs that have heavy socio-economic and ecological repercussions.

*Food security* represents a second orientation in the liberalization movement. This orientation, however, moderates liberalization by recognizing the environmentally damaging consequences of intensive practices. Although remaining market compliant, *food security* introduces regulation that limits the impact resulting from the regime's ecological, social and economic failures. International organizations, several international NGOs, movements lobbying for agricultural subsidies in developed countries, mainstream fair trade organizations and food aid programs all rely on this type of orientation. This production model is in step with *food enterprise* technologies, but it also protects international non-competitive production realities based on payments

for ecosystem services. Moreover, this regime supports internationally funded public research programs to increase production – mainly in marginal crop varieties or regions.<sup>3</sup> This production model also supports local empowerment initiatives with the creation of specific labels.

### ***The protective counter-movement***

This reverse movement favors subsistence farming. This sector is characterized by high levels of consumption of produce on the farm resulting in low contributions to international trade. Nevertheless, this movement remains vital to the livelihoods of approximately one billion people living in rural regions worldwide (Mazoyer & Roudart, 2002, p. 19) and should therefore not be overlooked. Thus, counter-movement activists argue for strong regulations to protect subsistence farmers from the socio-economic and ecological externalities caused by liberalization. These protections may be achieved through an alternative worldview. Holt-Giménez and Shattuck identify two orientations within the counter-movement. The first is *food justice*. Local food NGOs, community projects, and alternative fair trade networks adopt this orientation. They demand substantial institutional changes to protect local agricultural production from international competition. New regulations should integrate agroecological practices to meet basic needs at the local level. The expected results are improvements in social, economic and ecologic living standards, and the empowerment of local and rural communities.

Holt-Giménez and Shattuck (2011) refer to the second counter-movement orientation as *food sovereignty*. This perspective is antithetical to *food enterprise*, and many small-scale farmer movements support it. The proposed production model adopts agroecological techniques similar to *food justice*, but it calls for more radical solutions. Reassertion of regulation targets not only intends to protect local agricultural production systems from international competition but also to ensure autonomous and democratic control over agro-food policies and resources. This discourse aspires to a production model that empowers peasants through a protective regulation system that grants to small-scale producers the access to fundamental elements of production (i.e., seeds, land, and knowledge). David Cleveland and Daniela Soleri describe this conception of the farmer as the “socioculturally rational farmer”. “In part a response to the economic rationality viewpoint, the ‘socioculturally rational farmer’ perspective rejects the assumption that [...] unilineal, market-driven agriculture development can be sustainable. Instead it emphasizes the social and political relations believed to be implicit in conventional agricultural development, and proposes alternatives based on what proponents perceive to be the social and cultural perspectives of the farmers themselves” (2007, pp. 217–218).<sup>4</sup> This perspective means a deeper understanding of agroecology, which associates the technological changes toward sustainable agriculture with the socio-economical and political changes needed to support the relocalization and the protection of production. As stated by Paul Nicholson, a former farmer representative in LVC’s international coordination:

“Agroecology is the peasant’s proposal against the productivist model, a proposal that includes a social vision related to local economy and local employment, as well as cultural and political vision. Agroecology is widely used as an answer to the neoliberal model and its productive technology package. It holds a very important political value [...]” (Nicholson, Montagut & Rulli, 2012, p. 34). Therefore, *food sovereignty* extends further than *food justice* by demanding a more radical change concentrating on the empowerment of small-scale farmers at a global level and not addressing the situation of a specific disadvantaged community (La Vía Campesina, 2007).

Holt-Giménez and Shattuck use food sovereignty to describe the latest production orientation. Based on food regime theory, their categorization shares the same critique evoked before; it links food sovereignty to a specific type of protective counter-movement. From my perspective, food sovereignty is more than a simple production orientation. This notion is central to a larger lobbying discourse based on “the right to have rights” currently used by a transnational network of variegated civil society movements. Therefore, food sovereignty narratives may be found in all production orientations, such as the two protective counter-movements. This commonality could lead to heterogeneous uses and interpretation of food sovereignty narratives, which requires more exploration.

### **The innovation dimension**

I now discuss the branch of ecological economics that studies the institutionalization of private property (Steppacher, 2008; Gerber & Steppacher, 2012; van Griethuysen, 2002, 2010, 2012; van Griethuysen, Oviedo & Larsen, 2006). These works critically retrace the centrality of private property as the institution allowing the expansion of the capitalist model. By viewing the economy as a socially and ecologically open system (Gerber & Steppacher, 2012, pp. 111–126), their heterodox perspective and studies explain the relation between the agricultural production protective counter-movement and its innovation process. Rolf Steppacher (2008) argues that private property comprises two distinct aspects, possession and property. Understanding the different potentialities between these two aspects reveals the key role that property plays, allowing economic actors to control the innovation process (see also Gerber & Steppacher, 2012; Van Griethuysen, 2010).

Possession refers to the use of a given material resource and is designed to ensure the social reproduction of resources. Gerber and Steppacher define it as follow: “Possession rules define the rights and duties to the material use and yield of resources, production technologies, products and waste [...]. Such possession rules – inaccurately called ‘property’ in much of the literature – exist in all societies in various forms, and they respond to the universal question of social reproduction, often in great detail [...]. They are symbolized by the land and actualized by the concrete yield of production” (2012, pp. 112–113). By contrast, the idea of property is a Western creation, which adds to possession. Following the Gerber and Steppacher conception, “Property [...] is characterized by the

emission of property titles which allow a new economic potential: property rights are *de jure* claims which entitle their holders to the intangible capacities [...]. Property rights are symbolized by the fence around the land and actualized as the security of legal property title enabling the development of modern credit relations” (2012, p. 113). Property adds new economic potential to possession by allowing new intangible forms of market relations, such as credit, in which land becomes collateral for a loan. Gerber and Steppacher conclude that the “[...] modern institution of private property entails both potentials: a possession as well as a property aspect. Both potentials can be actualized in parallel [...] [even if] the logics of the two levels are very different” (Gerber & Steppacher, 2012, p. 113).

### ***Property innovation***

The corporate food regime is characterized by the development of the patent and *sui generis* systems. This property aspect has a profound impact over innovation. Gerber and Steppacher (2012) note that “the property aspect of what is referred to as ‘property rights’ [...] best defines the economic rationality of capitalism” (2012, p. 114). In this regime, credit relations orient the system toward perpetual economic growth, giving only marginal consideration to social and ecological impacts. Each decision is made following a hierarchy that evaluates all possible impacts regarding property. According to Gerber and Steppacher, “[f]ive different levels can be distinguished: (a) a general orientation towards the *monetary value* of the property engaged; (b) maintaining *solvency* as the existential condition of property engaged; (c) a *cost-benefit valuation* of all economic transactions [...] as a routine procedure; (d) *institutional considerations* based on how institutions define what is a cost and for whom (and on how they can be changed to the benefits of proprietors); and (e) considerations of a *social and ecological nature*, as distinguished from economic rationality” (2012, p. 115).

Patents are an extension of property over genetic resources that, following the model outlined above, orient innovation toward the development of industrial agricultural technologies, such as genetically modified seeds for monocultures. As a result, ecological and social concerns are considered last and only when conditions allowing the expansion of property are met. This rationale implies that property-based innovation in agriculture will focus on developing commercial products for new and better markets. This focus not only maintains solvency but also generates profits from interest payments. Meanwhile, the monopolistic privatization of genetic resources hinders alternative forms of innovation, such as those based on the use value of possession.<sup>5</sup>

### ***Possession innovation***

Innovation organized around possession differs from property-based innovation because it is centered “[...] on the levels of the concrete and contextualized ‘real economy’ (production and distribution) and the ‘real-real economy’ (material and energy flows) [...]” (Gerber & Steppacher, 2012, p. 115). According to van

Griethuysen (2012), this focus opens up the possibility of alternative institutional systems that concentrate on socio-economic and ecological concerns. One alternative consists of adjusting innovation toward the sustainable satisfaction of basic needs. These objectives cannot be met without considering the limits of the ecological and social environment. As a result, these innovative processes when applied to the agricultural sector typically mix traditional knowledge and agroecological technologies (Altieri, Funes-Monzote & Petersen, 2011).<sup>6</sup>

Another major difference between the private and possession aspects of property is that in a possession organized innovation process, interest groups are not able to rely on intellectual property rights to monopolize innovations. Innovations are viewed as the product of a collective process rather than individual isolated acts. Consequently, knowledge and technologies are developed in accordance with local practices, thereby reducing or altogether eliminating the artificial distinction between practitioners and inventors. This characteristic does not preclude collaboration with external experts. Practitioners and experts interact on equal footing, without experts imposing property-oriented innovation on practitioners.<sup>7</sup> Finally, the technologies developed through such processes are adapted to local practitioners' needs, capabilities and environment and are generally distributed freely through the exchange of resources and knowledge. Possession-based innovation is oriented toward the sustainable satisfaction of socio-ecological needs. Increasing revenue is only a secondary objective. As a result, this second trend lies within the protective counter-movement.

The analytical framework in Figure 2.2 shows the relations between the three approaches. Innovation based on property is more likely to be used in neoliberal economies, given their reliance on privatization, whereas innovation based on possession is often mobilized in the protective counter-movement and is based on the collective use of capital.

Within the *laissez-faire* movement, *food enterprise* is based on the premise that *entrepreneurial juris possessio* over biodiversity may be granted to innovators based on private property and patent rights. International treaties such as the UPOV convention (1991) or the WTO TRIPS Agreement (1995) define how intellectual property rights may be claimed on plants and genetic resources as a result of specific entrepreneurial activities, such as genetic modification.

In contrast, *food security* merges the four types of *juris possessio* as demonstrated in the FAO Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture (2001). Mainly *sovereignist* through the recognition of state control over plant genetic resources, the Treaty nevertheless acknowledges intellectual property rights over these resources, thereby endorsing *entrepreneurial* claims. The Treaty also includes provisions that reflect, though somewhat inadequately, the concerns of the protective counter-movement in two ways. First, the Treaty stipulates that some form of *communal juris possessio* over biodiversity should be implemented by states to promote the community rights of small-scale farmers and protect their knowledge and right to participate in benefit-sharing and national-scale decision-making regarding plant genetic resources. More importantly, the Treaty establishes a multilateral system that applies *common heritage juris possessio*

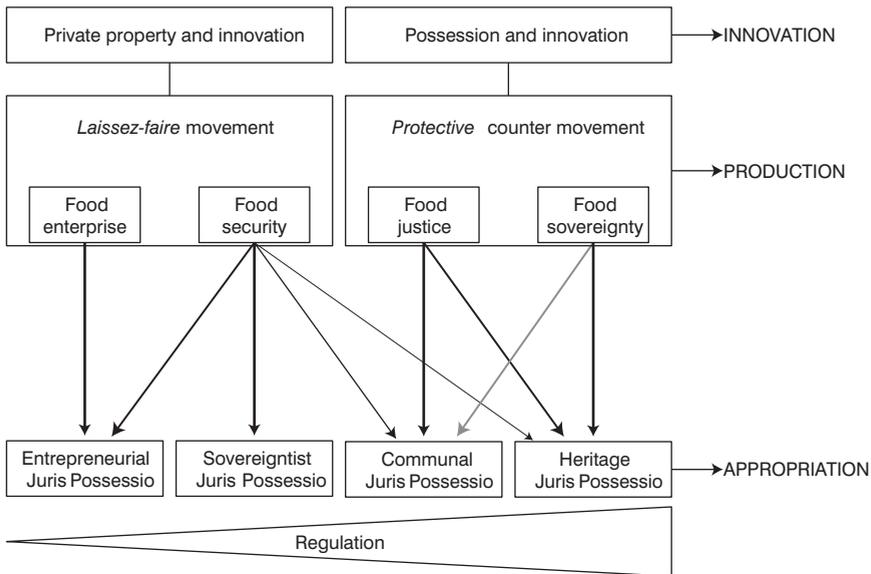


Figure 2.2 The integration of the three approaches

principles to 64 crops and forages. Contemporary *food security* discourse limits the negative externalities caused by the implementation of corporate-driven *food enterprise* discourse by promoting regulations that do not, however, appear particularly robust. As I have argued elsewhere (Brenni, 2009), this strategy has so far resulted in establishing institutional containers that put agrobiodiversity conservation at the service of the *food enterprise* production discourse in response to the pressure placed on resources by the industrial agricultural model.

The two counter-movement trends defend the *communal* and *heritage* notions of the legal possession of genetic resources. *Food justice* supports the empowerment of underserved and disadvantaged communities.<sup>8</sup> In this empowerment perspective, ownership of genetic resources by the group is thought to enhance conservation of plant genetic varieties as well as the cultural heritage associated with traditional production methods. By contrast, *food sovereignty* maintains stronger views regarding the *heritage* principles of *juris possessio*. *Food sovereignty* rejects the ownership approach and focuses on the satisfaction of basic needs and the producers' freedom of choice, claiming a "right to have rights". *Communal* possession of genetic resources is not supported insofar as the continued sharing of plant varieties among farming communities is thought to be more important than rewarding communities for the genetic material obtained from their fields. Following this idea, La Vía Campesina (2008, 2013) launched an international initiative – Seeds: Heritage of the People for the Good of Humanity – that through seed exchange initiatives and small-scale farmer selection programs, sustains the circulation of seeds among different communities without reclaiming a *communal juris possessio* over them.

I understand food sovereignty to be more than a particular production orientation. Food sovereignty is also key to the lobbying discourse of movements that are normally associated with other productive orientations, such as *food justice*. These differences become more apparent when the discourse is analyzed including the two other dimensions. In the following section, I will compare the agrobiodiversity conservation discourse of two movements that are representative of distinct trends in food sovereignty, namely the small-scale farmer and indigenous movements.

## **Food sovereignty's reforms: comparing the small-scale farmer and indigenous movements**

### ***Small-scale farmer movement***

At the 1996 World Food Summit, La Vía Campesina<sup>9</sup> first proposed the consideration of food sovereignty not as a policy of food autarchy but as a means to protect local agricultural systems from price dumping caused by free trade agreements (Patel, 2009; Wittman, Desmarais & Wiebe, 2010; Martínez-Torres & Rosset, 2010). In their view, food sovereignty proposes achieving local autonomy and farmers' freedom of choice as to how to cultivate their fields. Compliant with the *food sovereignty* production orientation, LVC's discourse considers that only localized agricultural practices can satisfy the needs of rural communities while at the same time respecting the environment and allowing farmers to live a dignified life (La Vía Campesina, 2008, 2013).

For LVC, the control of agrobiodiversity resources is a central issue that must be addressed to achieve food sovereignty. To support their campaigns presenting seeds as a "Patrimony of Rural Peoples in the Service of Humanity", LVC established an International Working Commission on "Biodiversity and Genetic Resources" (Martínez-Torres & Rosset, 2010, pp. 160–165). For LVC, seeds are part of the common heritage of mankind, and rural communities must hold them in trust (Martínez-Torres & Rosset, 2010, p. 169). This view stands in direct opposition to the commodification of seeds and more broadly, to the technologies developed by agribusiness. LVC's view is clearly stated in its Bali Seed Declaration (La Vía Campesina, 2011), which shows the problems encountered by small-scale farmers who adopt industrial seed varieties that are often hybrids and/or GMOs. These seeds require technological packages to grow properly and attain a satisfying yield. LVC movements denounce the ecological, economic and social unsustainability of these methods that reduce farmers' work to the mere reproduction of seed, thus depriving them of their knowledge, resources and innovation abilities (La Vía Campesina, 2013). To LVC, regaining control over seeds will ensure that farmers continue customary agricultural practices consisting of selecting, sharing and maintaining plant varieties. A free and open exchange of seeds is vital to food sovereignty as well as a strategy to conserve and enhance agrobiodiversity.<sup>10</sup>

### ***Indigenous peoples' movements***

Since the end of the 1970s, many international negotiations have provided indigenous peoples with a platform to express their cause (Schulte-Tenckhoff, 1997), such as their association with the Human Rights Council negotiations to establish the Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UN, 2007) or in WIPO's Intergovernmental Committee on Intellectual Property and Genetic Resources, Traditional Knowledge and Folklore. Relevant to this chapter is the participation of indigenous peoples in biodiversity conservation negotiations. As shown by many authors (Dumoulin, 2003, 2007; Foyer, 2008), indigenous peoples, supported by academics and experts, have played an important role during negotiations regarding the Convention of Biological Diversity (CBD) (UN, 1992). Their key strategy associated the preservation of cultural heritage with the conservation of genetic resources. Dumoulin (2007) defines this association as the "double conservation link", which has encouraged the creation of participatory biodiversity conservation projects.<sup>11</sup> These initiatives were relatively successful until the end of the 1990s when they began losing their momentum,<sup>12</sup> resulting in indigenous peoples' loss of influence in international negotiations.

Despite being an agreement covering all aspects of biodiversity, the CBD is more concerned with wild rather than domestic biodiversity. Therefore, indigenous movements were more mindful of conservation and recovery of the natural environment because it was considered the best strategy to achieve the objective of preserving cultural heritage. However, completion of the International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture in 2001 resulted in placing agricultural questions back on the agenda in many international arenas.<sup>13</sup> Facing the risk of marginalization, several indigenous movements subsequently embraced the issue of agrobiodiversity conservation, adopting food sovereignty as one of their goals. A good example is provided by the Indigenous Terra Madre meetings organized jointly with the NGO Slow Food (Terra Madre, 2011; Siniscalchi, 2013). Another example is the collaboration between some indigenous groups and the International Fund for Agricultural Development to sustain agricultural conservation initiatives based on traditional knowledge and resources (IFAD, 2009). Another example is the Indigenous Partnership for Agrobiodiversity and Food Sovereignty (IPABFS), which is emblematic of how indigenous movements have developed closer ties with agrobiodiversity conservation. IPABFS's Scoping Report (2010) adopts food sovereignty as a seed conservation strategy clearly inspired by the "double conservation" link. The main argument of the document is to return seeds currently held in international seed banks to the indigenous communities that have developed traditions associated with their use. Moreover, it equally intends to grant indigenous groups control over genetic resources and to associate these resources to the self-determination claims already allowing many indigenous groups to control a geographical area related to the conservation of their cultural heritage and practices. As stated in the Scoping Report: "Seed

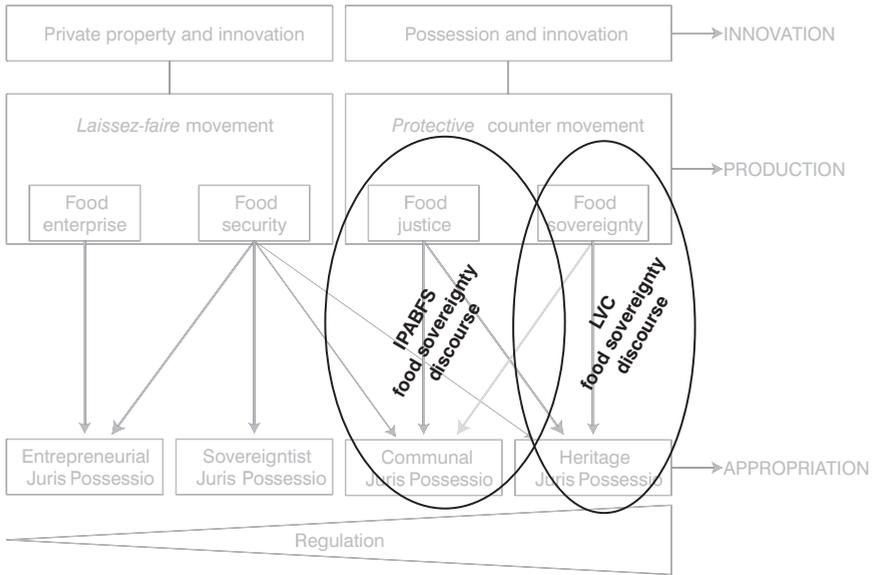


Figure 2.3 Representing the food sovereignty movements discourse in our framework

repatriation was suggested as an example of in situ conservation that could be used by the Indigenous Partnership. Participants felt that the incorporation of genetic diversity into agricultural practices through repatriation can ensure the connectivity of culture, spiritual values, and genetic and agriculture resources” (p. 13). Specifying the need for “identifying appropriate mechanisms to maintain an open exchange of planting materials under the control of indigenous communities, while taking into account the safeguards built by international conventions such as the United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity” (p. 16), the Scoping Report clearly links the in situ control of these genetic resources with the Prior informed consent and Access and benefits sharing systems of Article 8j of the CBD. This stance is more compliant with a *communal juris possessio* view than a *heritage* view.

Relying on this theoretical framework, the Figure 2.3 illustrates significant differences in how the two movements interpret food sovereignty regarding agrobiodiversity conservation.

Regarding the *juris possessio* dimension, LVC’s interpretation appears to be a mix of the *heritage* and *communal* perspectives, with a clear preference for the *heritage* view as indicated in the statement “Patrimony of Rural Peoples in the Service of Humanity” (Martínez-Torres & Rosset, 2010, pp. 160–165). This strong focus on heritage is reflected in their interpretation of *food sovereignty* that counters the *laissez-faire* neoliberal movement. The purpose is not only to propose an agrobiodiversity conservation strategy but also to challenge agribusiness techniques. An alternative model is offered based upon agroecological methods and the relocalization of production and consumption that integrates conservation

directly into agricultural practices. This model is then spread to other small-scale farmers through experience-sharing initiatives (Holt-Giménez, 2006).

IPABFS's interpretation of food sovereignty is more strongly grounded in the *communal* tenets of *juris possessio*. Though obviously critical of economic liberalism, this forum appears to be more concerned with achieving recognition from international actors for the preservation of indigenous customary practices than with bringing about fundamental changes in the international agricultural system. In the course of the CBD negotiations, indigenous movements obtained recognition of the need to protect knowledge and practices of indigenous communities through access and benefit-sharing arrangements. Strengthening community rights over their resources as a means to conserve biodiversity became an issue deemed to be taken up *de lege ferenda*.

Furthermore, the CBD emphasizes their role as stewards of biodiversity (Schulte-Tenckhoff & Horner, 1995). Currently, it seems that they rely on food sovereignty to affirm their control over specific agrobiodiversity resources that can be linked to their traditional practices and to the control of ancestral territories through the establishment of natural reserves. From the indigenous point of view, food sovereignty is a goal pursued by specific groups within the boundaries of their territories, resources and agricultural practices. For these reasons, they are closer to *food justice*, which focuses on the empowerment of local communities. They eschew much of the critical appraisal of the world food system addressed by proponents of *food sovereignty*. Regarding innovation processes, representatives of indigenous communities appear to display less willingness to adopt or develop new agroecological practices than small-scale farmers. Small-scale farmers may be less incited to protect their knowledge against misappropriation as this could result in major disincentives to share seeds and agricultural practices among farmers.

Furthermore, indigenous peoples' movements – at least the ones considered here – do not have the same relationship with international organizations and NGOs as the small-scale farmers of IVC. Indigenous peoples actively seek alliances with international NGOs, such as Slow Food, and collaborate closely with some international organizations, such as IFAD.<sup>14</sup> The IPABFS document (2010) emphasizes the potentially positive aspects of the conservation project rather than underscoring the critical elements that food sovereignty may convey. At times the document seems to have certain similarities with *food security* discourse as well as with the possibility of creating an institutional container to offer conservation services to the corporate food regime. In light of this, production output would be limited as a result of the consumption of their own produce, or would at best serve the needs of niche groups willing to pay the extra cost for exclusive production. Either way, the production system of the corporate food regime is not challenged. These considerations are in line with the argument of Thomas Hall and James Fenelon (2008): “While the forms of resistance have changed significantly over time, a key difference for indigenous movements is that they typically are not interested in reforming the system. Rather, they are interested in autonomy and preserving their own political-cultural space to remain different” (2008, p. 1).

## Conclusion

Following a bottom-up approach, I have deconstructed two food sovereignty discourses, allowing me to demonstrate the multiple interests composing the category of *local communities* in the field of agrobiodiversity conservation. My framework proposes a taxonomic differentiation of the actors involved in the arenas of negotiation over innovation, property and modes of production. The larger rights-based definition of food sovereignty adopted throughout this chapter, relative to the narrow one proposed by Holt-Giménez and Shattuck (2011) that links this notion to a specific production orientation, shows that the adoption of food sovereignty narratives by movements other than small-scale farmers introduced some heterogeneous interpretations. Of course, this chapter was limited to the analysis of some indigenous peoples' movements. However, in this case, the use of food sovereignty is connected more with empowering and maintaining a specific community than a radical change in the organization of world agricultural production. Therefore, it is worth pursuing this research by comparing the food sovereignty discourse of other non-farmer-based movements to better capture the different views and potential tensions that exist in the protective counter-movement. Indeed, one can ask if these heterogeneous understandings of food sovereignty, made commonly by *food justice* movements, could moderate the original anti-establishment food sovereignty message by reducing it to an empowerment strategy for marginalized communities.

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## Notes

- 1 These food policies were strategically used to counter the Red Revolution in contested regions during the Cold War (Yapa, 1993).
- 2 On institutionalization of plant varieties intellectual property rights over plant varieties, see Kloppenburg (2004).
- 3 For example, see the CGIAR drought resistant crops selection program. See also the Climate Change, Agriculture and Food Security program of the CGIAR, <http://ccafs.cgiar.org/>.
- 4 Not all small-scale farmers adopt this perspective. As discussed by Cleveland and Soleri (2007), small-scale farmers can also act in an "economically rational" way conveyed by the development project associated to the second food regime. These two authors conceive a third category of small-scale farmers, conceiving their role with an "ecological rationality", putting the ecological sustainability of agriculture before all other considerations. Finally, a fourth view is the "complex farmer", which considers sustainability in a more holistic way, including ecological, socio-economical and environmental elements.

- 5 These considerations explain the corporate concentration in the following sectors: R&D process (Vanloqueren & Baret, 2009); commercial seeds and chemical inputs production (Howard, 2009); and food chains distribution (Patel, 2008).
- 6 This view could also be linked to the contribution of Cleveland and Soleri (2007). Indeed, as discussed above (cf. endnote 4), this conception of agricultural innovation could be linked with their alternative views on farmers relating to the “economically rational ones”.
- 7 For example, see the MASIPAG farmers association (Bachmann, Cruzada & Wright, 2009; Brenni, 2009).
- 8 Such initiatives, for example, sustain a small-scale agricultural producer in western states, advocate for farm workers’ rights or fight for the right to access to healthy and nutritious food in marginalized neighborhoods or regions.
- 9 There is extensive literature on this movement. We can recommend to interested readers the following: Borras (2004; 2008; 2010), Desmarais (2007), Holt-Giménez (2006), Martínez-Torres & Rosset (2010), Newell (2008), Patel (2005).
- 10 This model counters also the *ex-situ* strategy of conservation promoted by institutions such as the CGIAR. Indeed, even if this model relies on a common heritage perspective, the seeds are stocked and controlled by international gene banks and not by small-scale farmers (La Vía Campesina, 2013, pp. 1–4 ; La Vía Campesina, 2014, p. 14).
- 11 As a typical example of this type of initiative, see the activities of the NGO Terralingua (terralingua.org) and the book by Luisa Maffi and Ellen Woodley (2010).
- 12 Concerning this decline and the challenges posed to the conservationist movement by the participatory approach, see Mac Chapin’s article (2004).
- 13 The renewed interest of the World Bank in agricultural development policies proves the point. Indeed, in its 2008 annual World Development Report, it calls for reinvestments in agriculture. This is a departure from policies established in the 1980s that emphasized debt restructuring by means of structural adjustment policies, thus neglecting the importance of this domain for the development of countries.
- 14 Holt-Giménez and Shattuck (2011, p. 117) place Slow Food in the *food security* orientation. For the type of activities and for being very close to the FAO, IFAD is also compliant with this orientation.

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