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Towards Food Sovereignty

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Executive Summary

Localised food systems provide the foundations of people's nutrition, incomes, economies, ecologies and culture throughout the world. In this way food is primarily sold, processed, resold and consumed locally, with many people deriving their incomes and livelihoods through work and activities at different points of the food chain, from seed to plate. These local food systems provide a livelihood for more than 2.5 billion small-scale farmers, pastoralists, forest dwellers and artisanal fisherfolk worldwide.

However, despite their current role in and future potential for meeting human needs and sustaining diverse ecologies, local food systems—and the organisations that govern them—are threatened by two main processes. The first is the global restructuring of agri-food systems, with a few transnational corporations gaining monopoly control over different links in the food chain. This process is undermining local people's capacity for autonomy and self-determination. The second threat is the modernist development agenda pursued by organisations such as the World Bank and the Gates Foundation. This agenda envisages achieving the Millennium Development Goals by reducing the number of people engaged in food production and instead encouraging them to get jobs in the largely urban-based manufacturing and service sectors—regardless of the social and ecological costs.

The food sovereignty movement has emerged as a reaction to this situation. It aims to guarantee and protect people's space, ability and right to define their own models of food production, distribution and consumption. The concept, and the struggle to achieve it, is bringing together farmers, indigenous peoples, pastoralists and all manner of rural and urban groups from both the South and the North.

This paper describes how achieving food sovereignty will entail a fundamental shift away from the industrial and neo-liberal paradigm for food and agriculture towards:

- More direct democracy and greater citizen participation in framing policies for food and agriculture; respecting and including the voices of the very poor and marginalised (especially women).
- Federations of elected citizen-based local councils linking villages, towns, neighbourhoods, local economies and ecological units to act as a significant counter-power to the state and transnational corporations.
- Democratised research and strong networks of local innovators.
- Reformed and equitable access and resource use rights, including land, water, forests, seeds and the means of production.
- Re-localised and resilient food systems based on agro-ecology, eco-literacy and circular economy models.

Towards Food Sovereignty

Michel Pimbert

Introduction

Most of the world's food is still grown, collected and harvested by over 2.5 billion small-scale farmers, pastoralists, forest dwellers and artisanal fisherfolk. This food is primarily sold, processed, resold and consumed locally, with many people deriving their incomes and livelihoods through work and activities at different points of the food chain, from seed to plate. Such localised food systems provide the foundations of people's nutrition, incomes, economies and culture throughout the world. They start at the household level and expand to neighbourhood, municipal and regional levels. And localised food systems depend on many different local organisations to co-ordinate food production, storage and distribution, as well as people's access to food. Moreover, the ecological and institutional contexts in which diverse food systems are embedded also depend on the co-ordinated activities of local organisations for their renewal and sustainability (Box 1).

But despite their current role in and future potential for meeting human needs and sustaining diverse ecologies, local food systems—and the organisations that govern them—are largely ignored, neglected or actively undermined by governments and corporations.

First, the global restructuring of agri-food systems and livelihoods threatens these 'autonomous spaces', with a few transnational corporations gaining monopoly control over different links in the food chain (Magdoff *et al*., 2000; Pimbert *et al*., 2001; McMichael, 2004). Local people's loss of capacity for autonomy and self-determination is a direct consequence of the expansion of the industrial, heteronomous[1] model of development rooted in commodity production. An important mechanism in this process is what Ivan Illich has termed 'radical monopoly': "*the substitution of an industrial product or a professional service for a useful activity in which people engage or would like to engage*", leading to the deterioration of autonomous systems and modes of production (Illich, 1975). Radical monopolies replace non-marketable use-values with commodities by reshaping the social and physical environment and by appropriating the components that enable people to cope on their own, thus undermining freedom, independence and culture (Illich, 1973).

Second, many of those striving to achieve the Millennium Development Goals consider that there will need to be a reduction in the number of people engaged in farming, fishing and land/water-based livelihoods. It is assumed that small-scale food producers, rural artisans, food workers and many of the rural poor will inevitably migrate to urban areas and find new and better jobs. And indeed, most international and national social, economic

1 Heteronomy refers to a system that is driven by an industrial and productivist rationale (Illich, 1970).

and environmental policies envision fewer and fewer people directly dependent on localised food systems and their environments for their livelihoods and culture. Encouraging people to move out of the primary sector and get jobs in the largely urban-based manufacturing and service sectors is seen as both desirable and necessary—regardless of the social and ecological costs (see for example Gates Foundation, 2008; World Bank, 2008).

BOX 1. FOOD SOVEREIGNTY IN THE PERUVIAN ANDES

The valley of Lares-Yanatile in Cusco (Peru) is rich in biodiversity, containing three different agro-ecological zones between the altitudes of 1,000 and 4,850 metres: *yunga*, *quechua* and *puna*. Andean tubers and potatoes are grown in the highest zone; corn, legumes and vegetables in the middle area; and fruit trees, coffee, coca and yucca in the lower part.

Every week a barter market is held in the middle area of the valley, where nearly 50 tonnes of goods are traded each market day—ten times the volume of food distributed by the National Programme of Food Assistance. Anyone can participate and can trade any amount of any crop. Women are key players in this non-monetary market, which is vital in ensuring that their families have enough food to eat, and that they have a balanced diet. The rainforest supplies vitamin C, potassium and sodium through fruit, such as citrus and bananas, which do not exist in the *quechua* and *puna* zones. The middle and high zones supply starches, mainly potatoes and corn, which provide desperately needed carbohydrates to the rainforest zone. Principles of reciprocity and solidarity guide the economic exchange of a diversity of foods, ensuring that important needs of people and the land are met in culturally unique ways.

Indeed, recent action research has generated new evidence on the importance of Andean barter markets for:

- **Access to food security and nutrition by some of the poorest social groups in the Andes.**
- **Conservation of agricultural biodiversity (genetic, species and ecosystem) through continued use and exchange of food crops in barter markets.**
- **Maintenance of ecosystem services and landscape features in different agro-ecological belts along altitudinal gradients and at multiple scales.**
- **Local, autonomous control over production and consumption—and, more specifically, control by women over key decisions that affect both local livelihoods and ecological processes.**

A web of local organisations operating at different scales (from household to whole landscape) governs these forms of economic exchange and contributes to the adaptive management of environmental processes and natural resources. In addition to contributing to the food security of the poorest of the poor, this decentralised web of local organisations also enhances cultural, social and ecological resilience in the face of risk and uncertainty.

Sources: Marti and Pimbert, 2006 and 2007.

This modernist development agenda and the corporate thrust for radical monopoly control over the global food system are mutually supportive elements of the same paradigm of economic progress. This view of progress assumes that history can repeat itself throughout the world. However, it is becoming increasingly clear that there is a direct relationship between the vast increases in productivity achieved through the use of automated technology, re-engineering, downsizing and total quality management, *and* the permanent exclusion of high numbers of workers from employment, in both industry and the service sector. This erosion of the link between job creation and wealth creation calls for a more equitable distribution of productivity gains through a reduction of work-

ing hours, and for alternative development models that provide opportunities and local *autonomous* spaces for the generation of use values rather than exchange values (Gollain, 2004; Gorz, 2003; Latouche, 2003).

Regenerating autonomous food systems—*with*, *for* and *by* citizens—is a key challenge in this context. Reclaiming such spaces for autonomy and well-being depends on strengthening the positive features of local food systems and on large-scale citizen action grounded in an alternative theory of social change.

This is the historical context that gave birth to the concept of 'food sovereignty'. In this paper I define the main features of this alternative policy framework for food, agriculture and land/water use.

Food sovereignty: an alternative paradigm for food and agriculture

"Food Sovereignty is the right of peoples to define their own food and agriculture; to protect and regulate domestic agricultural production and trade in order to achieve sustainable development objectives; to determine the extent to which they want to be self reliant; to restrict the dumping of products in their markets; and to provide local fisheries-based communities the priority in managing the use of and the rights to aquatic resources. Food Sovereignty does not negate trade, but rather it promotes the formulation of trade policies and practices that serve the rights of peoples to food and to safe, healthy and ecologically sustainable production." (www.viacampesina.org).

Throughout the world, civil society, indigenous peoples and new social movements—rather than academics or professional policy think tanks—are the prime movers behind a newly emerging food sovereignty policy framework. This alternative policy framework for food and agriculture is also a citizens' response to the multiple social and environmental crises induced by modern food systems everywhere (MA, 2005; IAASTD, 2008; Pimbert, 2009). At heart, this alternative policy framework for food and agriculture aims to guarantee and protect people's space, ability and right to define their own models of production, food distribution and consumption patterns. This notion of 'food sovereignty' is perhaps best understood as a *transformative* process that seeks to recreate the democratic realm and regenerate a diversity of autonomous food systems based on equity, social justice and ecological sustainability.

Food sovereignty is a relatively new political concept, first brought to international attention at the World Food Summit organised by the United Nation's Food and Agriculture Organisation in 1996. It was put forward by *La Vía Campesina*, an international movement which co-ordinates peasant organisations of small and medium-sized producers, agricultural workers, rural women, and indigenous communities from Asia, America, and Europe (Box 2). Since then many social movements, organisations and people have adopted and taken part in developing the concept of food sovereignty. *La Vía Campesina*'s definition focuses on the right of smallholder farmers to produce food, which is undermined in many countries by national and international agricultural trade policy regulations.

BOX 2. *LA VÍA CAMPESINA* AND THE CONCEPT OF FOOD SOVEREIGNTY

La Vía Campesina **is a global, autonomous, pluralistic movement, independent of all political, economic, or other denominations. It was formed in April 1992, when several peasant leaders from Central America, North America, and Europe got together in Managua, Nicaragua, at the Congress of the National Union of Farmers and Livestock Owners (UNAG). From the beginning, *La Vía Campesina* distanced itself from large-scale or 'corporate' farmers and non-governmental organisations. Its members have always emphasised that *La Vía Campesina* is the initiative of peasants and not of NGOs. At the 1996 World Food Summit, *La Vía Campesina* refused to sign the NGO declaration as it *"felt that it did not address sufficiently the concerns and interests of peasant families"* (Desmarais, 2002). Similarly, it distances itself from the International Federation of Agricultural Producers (IFAP), which was seen by many to be *"representing the interests of larger farmers primarily based in the industrialised countries"* and supporting the liberalisation and globalisation of agriculture (Desmarais 2007). *La Vía Campesina* was in fact created as a *"much needed and radical alternative to the IFAP"* (Desmarais, 2007) to more adequately represent peasant, indigenous, small family farmers and other marginalised small-scale producers.[a]**

In the face of a development model geared to ensuring the extinction of subsistence farmers, nomadic pastoralists and other small-scale food providers, *La Vía Campesina* is redefining what it means to be a 'peasant'. Among the multiple terms by which small-scale, family-based, producers are referred (e.g. smallholders, traditional farmers, subsistence gardeners, petty producers…), the term 'peasant' is often laden with negative values and prejudice in different countries and languages. In *"the popular imagination… 'peasants' represented backwardness"* (Edelman, 2003).[b] More national and regional organisations are proudly embracing the term 'peasant' to describe themselves, projecting an alternative identity and modernity rich in meaning and hope for the future.

"This is a politicized identity. It reflects people who share a deep commitment to place, who are deeply attached to a particular piece of land, who are all part of a particular rural community, whose mode of existence is under threat. This place-bound identity, that of 'people of the land', reflects the belief that they have the right to be on the land. They have the right and obligation to produce food. They have the right to be seen as fulfilling an important function in society at large. They have a right to live in viable communities and the obligation to build community. All of these factors form essential parts of their distinct identity as peasants; in today's politicized globalization, articulating identity across borders and based on locality and tradition is a deeply political act" **(Desmarais, 2007).**

Since its creation in 1993, *La Vía Campesina* has held four international meetings to bring together its member organisations and discuss and define common positions, strategies and actions. These actions primarily involved participation in several important international meetings and forums, such as the 1996 World Food Summit and the 2002 World Food Summit: five years later (both of which took place in Rome, Italy and were convened by the FAO); the 2000 Global Forum on Agricultural Research (held in Dresden and hosted by the FAO); and the 2001 World Social Forum held in Porto Alegre, Brazil. At all of these meetings representatives of *La Vía Campesina* stated their opinions and recommendations on issues of agricultural trade, agricultural production methods, genetic resources, land reform, the right to food, and other aspects. Their statements show how they shaped and developed the concept of food sovereignty.

However, to define the concept more formally and democratically, *La Vía Campesina* organised two major international conferences on food sovereignty: one in 2001 at La Havana, Cuba—the World Forum on Food Sovereignty—and the other in 2007—the Nyéléni Forum on Food Sovereignty—held in Mali. This latest event brought together 600 representatives of family farmers, indigenous peoples, landless people, migrants, pastoralists, for-

est communities and artisanal fisherfolk, as well as civil society organisations, academics and researchers, rural workers, youth organisations, consumers, environmental and urban movements from more than 80 countries. The broad range of farmers and other citizens involved in these ongoing discussions has decisively shaped the concept of food sovereignty over the last decade. The concept has thus been discussed, debated and defined under the leadership of *La Vía Campesina*, but with the support and participation of a growing number of other organisations, social movements and citizens throughout the world.

a. IFAP claims to speak *"on behalf of 83 national organizations of family farmers in 59 countries throughout the world, over half of which are developing countries"* (IFAP, 1996). However, several farmers' organisations in developed and developing countries do not belong to IFAP, for a range of reasons, such as the very high membership costs (Desmarais, 2007).

b. Both Marxist and capitalist ideologies have similar views on the future of peasants in modern industrial society. *"The two dominant modernist ideologies of our time give short thrift to the peasantry. In classical socialism, peasants were viewed as relics of an obsolete mode of production and designated for transformation into a rural working class producing on collective farms owned and managed by the state. In the different varieties of capitalist ideology, efficiency in agricultural production could only be brought about with the radical reduction of the numbers of peasants and the substitution of labour by machines. In both visions, the peasant had no future"* (Bello, 2007).

During the 1996 World Food Summit, *Vía Campesina* presented a set of mutually supportive principles as an alternative to the world trade policies and to realise the human right to food. In their statement, *Food Sovereignty: A Future Without Hunger* (1996), they declared that *"Food Sovereignty is a precondition to genuine food security"*. Since 1996, subsequent declarations and documents by *La Vía Campesina* and other organisations have built on these principles (see Windfuhr and Jonson, 2005; www.nyeleni2007.org).

Food sovereignty thus implies individuals', peoples', communities' and countries' *right*:

- to define their own agricultural, labour, fishing, food, land and water management policies which are ecologically, socially, economically and culturally appropriate to their unique circumstances;
- to food and to produce food, which means that all people have the right to safe, nutritious and culturally appropriate food, to food-producing resources and to the ability to sustain themselves and their societies;
- to protect and regulate domestic production and trade and prevent the dumping of food products and unnecessary food aid in domestic markets;
- to choose their own level of self-reliance in food;
- to manage, use and control life-sustaining natural resources: land, water, seeds, livestock breeds and wider agricultural biodiversity, unrestricted by intellectual property rights and free from genetically-modified organisms;
- to produce and harvest food in an ecologically sustainable manner, principally through low-external input production and artisanal fisheries.

Behind the development of the food sovereignty policy framework lies a global network of social movements and civil society organisations, and a number of conferences, fora and declarations which have resulted in several significant statements on food sovereignty. The concept, and the struggle to achieve it, is bringing together farmers, indigenous peoples, pastoralists and all manner of rural groups, from both the South and the North. New issues and challenges are constantly brought up in the debates.

For example, at the Nyéléni Forum on Food Sovereignty (Box 2), the participants further developed the political, economic, social and ecological dimensions of this alternative policy framework for food and agriculture. They also sought to strengthen the political power of those advocating for food sovereignty by (1) expanding the debate outside producer groups to consumer groups and workers' trade unions; (2) building momentum and support among governments who are in favour of food sovereignty; and (3) developing a collective and global strategy to ensure that the right of peoples to food sovereignty is recognised as a specific and full right, and that its defence is legally binding for states and guaranteed by the United Nations.[2]

For its supporters, food sovereignty is an approach that offers practical solutions for farmers and other citizens in both the North and South. But in all situations, moving towards endogenous food systems that are rich in bio-cultural diversity calls for radical changes in four closely interrelated domains: ecological, political, social and economic. Food sovereignty is not, and cannot be, a piecemeal approach. It entails a fundamental shift away from the industrial and neo-liberal paradigm for food and agriculture (Table 1).

TABLE 1. DOMINANT MODEL VERSUS THE FOOD SOVEREIGNTY MODEL (ROSSET, 2003)

Issue	Dominant Model	Food Sovereignty Model
Trade	Free trade in everything	Food and agriculture exempt from trade agreements
Production priority	Agroexports	Food for local markets
Crop prices	"What the market dictates" (leave intact mechanisms that enforce low prices)	Fair prices that cover costs of production and allow farmers and farmworkers a life with dignity
Market access	Access to foreign markets	Access to local markets; an end to the displacement of farmers from their own markets by agribusiness
Subsidies	While prohibited in the Third World, many subsidies are allowed in the US and Europe – but are paid only to the largest farmers	Subsidies that do not damage other countries (via dumping) are okay; i.e. grant subsidies only to family farmers, for direct marketing, price/income support, soil conservation, conversion to sustainable farming, research, etc.
Food	Chiefly a commodity; in practice, this means processed, contaminated food that is full of fat, sugar, high fructose com syrup, and toxic residues	A human right: specifically, should be healthy, nutritious, affordable, culturally appropriate, and locally produced

2 See www.nyeleni2007.org.

Issue	Dominant Model	Food Sovereignty Model
Being able to produce	An option for the economically efficient	A right of rural peoples
Hunger	Due to low productivity	A problem of access and distribution; due to poverty and inequality
Food security	Achieved by importing food from where it is cheapest	Greatest when food production is in the hands of the hungry; or when food is produced locally
Control over productive resources (land, water, forests)	Privatised	Local; community controlled
Access to land	Via the market	Via genuine agrarian reform; without access to land, the rest is meaningless
Seeds	A patentable commodity	A common heritage of humanity, held in trust by rural communities and cultures; "no patents on life"
Rural credit and investment	From private banks and corporations	From the public sector; designed to support family agriculture
Dumping	Not an issue	Must be prohibited
Monopoly	Not an issue	The root of most problems; monopolies must be broken up
Overproduction	No such thing, by definition	Drives prices down and farmers into poverty; we need supply management policies for US and EU
Genetically modified organisams (GMOs)	The wave of the future	Bad for health and the environment; an unnecessary technology
Farming technology	Industrial, monoculture, chemical-intensive; uses GMOs	Agroecological, sustainable farming methods, no GMOs
Farmers	Anachronisms; the inefficient will disappear	Guardians of culture and crop germplasm; stewards of productive resources; repositories of knowledge; internal market and building block of broad-based, inclusive economic development
Urban consumers	Workers to be paid as little as possible	Need living wages
Another world (alternatives)	Not possible / not of interest	Possible and amply demonstrated

The need for such a holistic approach was strongly emphasised by the Nyéléni participants because many actors today are increasingly co-opting the term 'food sovereignty'

to imply self sufficiency and isolationist proposals that ignore exchanges and complementarities between regions. Other actors cherry pick elements of the food sovereignty framework and neglect others, thereby reproducing narrow approaches that ultimately hamper positive change. This trend is evident in ill-informed or deliberate attempts to equate the notion of 'food security' with 'food sovereignty' (Box 3).

BOX 3. FOOD SOVEREIGNTY: THE ONLY WAY TO ACHIEVE REAL FOOD SECURITY

The food sovereignty concept has developed as a reaction to the increasing (mis)use of the term 'food security'. The mainstream definition of food security, endorsed at food summits and other high level conferences, talks about everybody having enough good food to eat each day. But it doesn't talk about where the food comes from, who produced it, or the conditions under which it was grown. This allows the food exporters to argue that the best way for poor countries to achieve food security is to import cheap food from them or to receive it free as 'food aid', rather than trying to produce it themselves. This makes those countries more dependent on the international market, drives peasant farmers, pastoralists, fisherfolk and indigenous peoples who can't compete with the subsidised imports off their land and into the cities, and ultimately worsens people's food security.

How can we achieve food sovereignty?

So far, the food sovereignty movement has developed a broad policy vision and discourse. And rather than presenting a fixed menu of policy instruments, it identifies a range of policy shifts and directions for national governments and other actors who seek to implement food sovereignty within their societies. Some of these are listed below.

Enabling national policies and legislation

- Implement equitable land reform and redistribute surplus land to tenants, within a rights-based approach to environment and development.
- Reform property rights to secure gender-equitable rights of access and use of common property resources, forests and water.
- Protect the knowledge and rights of farmers and pastoralists to save seed and improve crop varieties and livestock breeds, for example banning patents and inappropriate intellectual property right (IPR) legislation.
- Re-introduce protective safeguards for domestic economies to guarantee stable prices that cover the cost of production, including quotas and other controls against imports of food and fibre that can be produced locally.
- Implement policies that guarantee fair prices to producers and consumers, as safety nets for the poor.
- Re-direct both hidden and direct subsidies towards supporting smaller-scale producers and food workers to encourage the shift towards diverse, ecological, equitable and more localised food systems.

- Increase funding for, and re-orientate, public sector R&D and agricultural/food-sciences extension towards participatory approaches and democratic control over the setting of upstream strategic priorities, the validation of technologies and the spread of innovations.
- Broaden citizen and non-specialist involvement in framing policies, setting research agendas and validating knowledge, as part of a process to democratise science, technology and policy making for food, farming, environment and development.

Enabling global multilateralism and international policies

- Re-orient the end goals of trade rules and aid, so that they contribute to the building of local economies and local control, rather than international competitiveness.
- Manage supply to ensure that public support does not lead to over-production and dumping that lowers prices below the cost of production—harming farmers in North and South.
- Set up international commodity agreements to regulate the total output to world markets.
- Create regional common agricultural markets that include countries with similar levels of agricultural productivity. For example: North Africa and the Middle East, West Africa, Central Africa, South Asia and Eastern Europe.
- Protect these regional common markets from the dumping of cheap food and fibre. Use quotas and tariffs to guarantee fair and stable prices to marginalised small-scale producers, food processors and small food enterprises. Prices should allow small-scale producers, artisans and food workers to earn a decent income, invest in and build their livelihood assets.
- Challenge corporate investor rules and transform the current international investment law regime. The expansion of current foreign investment rules should be blocked and arbitration processes should be reformed to ensure transparency and fairness. Alternative rules should also be constructed and implemented, focusing on the responsibilities of international investors to ensure sustainable development and enhance environmental, labour and human rights protection.
- Create mechanisms to ensure that the real costs of environmental damage, unsustainable production methods and long-distance trade are included in the cost of food and fibre.
- Ensure clear and accurate labelling of food and feedstuffs, with binding legislation for all companies to ensure transparency, accountability and respect for human rights, public health and environmental standards.
- Restrict the concentration and market power of major agri-food corporations through new international treaties, competition laws and adoption of more flexible process and product standards.

- Develop international collaboration for more effective antitrust law enforcement and measures to reduce market concentration in different parts of the global food system (concerning seeds, pesticides, food processing and retailing, for example).
- Co-operate to ensure that corporations and their directors are held legally responsible for breaches in environmental and social laws, and in international agreements.
- Co-operate on a global level to tax speculative international financial flows (US $1,600 thousand million/day), and redirect funds to build local livelihood assets, meet human needs and regenerate local ecologies.

It is acknowledged that policies for food sovereignty cannot be specified in detail for all people and places. They have to take into account local history and culture as well as the unique social and ecological contexts in which food systems are embedded. In this context, democratic participation and citizen empowerment are seen as crucial for the process of policy making (who makes policy and how it is made) and the implementation of policies (Box 4). As Patel puts it, the food sovereignty movement argues *"for a mass re-politicization of food politics, through a call for people to figure out for themselves what they want the right to food to mean in their communities, bearing in mind the community's needs, climate, geography, food preferences, social mix and history..."* (Patel, 2007).

BOX 4. FOOD SOVEREIGNTY: RADICAL REORIENTATIONS IN ACTION

Already, some developing country governments are seeing the value of a food sovereignty policy framework and are taking their own steps to implement it. For example, the government of Mali was involved in a consultation process with farmers to draft its new agricultural framework law. After more than a year of work, this law has enshrined food sovereignty as a priority for allowing the country to improve rural and urban living standards. Malian farmer organisations and the government are now discussing ways of implementing the food sovereignty framework throughout the country (LOA, 2006).

Overcoming the constraints to achieving food sovereignty

In the face of the organised power of science, business and mainstream politics, the more diffuse, but networked, power of the growing food sovereignty movement is confronted with many interrelated challenges and constraints. Overcoming these constraints partly depends on strengthening local organisations of food providers and on citizens reclaiming power over their lives. It also requires a deep process of systemic change. I have suggested elsewhere (Pimbert, 2009) that this systemic change depends on several interrelated and mutually reinforcing processes of transformation, including:

- *Nurturing citizenship*. Politics are too important to be left to professionals: they must become the domain of amateurs—of ordinary citizens. Food sovereignty implies greater citizen participation and more direct forms of democracy in the governance of food systems. It assumes that every citizen is competent and reasonable enough to participate in democratic politics. This calls for the development of a different kind of character from that of passive taxpayers and voters. With training and experience citizens can learn to deliberate, make decisions, and implement their choices responsibly. However,

like any form of civilised behaviour, these practices and virtues do not arise spontaneously; they have to be consciously nurtured and are the result of careful political education, which includes character formation. The Athenians called this education *paideia*: the sustained and intentional cultivation of the civic and ethical qualities necessary for citizenship.

- *Confederalism*. Nurturing and strengthening citizen-centred food systems and autonomy calls for forms of political and social organisation that can institutionalise interdependence without resorting to the market or the central state. Combining localism with interdependence across large areas is a key challenge here. The principle of confederalism is a way of linking together several political entities into a larger whole. Confederalism involves a network of citizen-based (as opposed to government) bodies or councils with members or delegates elected from popular face-to-face democratic assemblies, in villages, tribes, towns and even neighbourhoods of large cities. These confederal bodies or councils become the means of interlinking villages, towns, neighbourhoods and ecological units into a confederation based on shared responsibilities, full accountability, firmly mandated representatives and the right to recall them, if necessary.
- *Dual power*. The larger and more numerous the linked federations and confederations become, the greater is their potential to constitute a significant counter-power to the state and transnational corporations that largely control the global food system. Confederations can eventually exert 'dual power', using this to further citizen empowerment and democratic change. For example, they can seek power within local government through strategies of collaboration and political negotiation, while also maintaining strong community and municipal organising strategies at the grassroots. Multiple lanes for engagement can also be used to link community-based food systems, social movements and political parties with direct local governance strategies.
- *Embracing equity and gender inclusion*. Throughout the world, widening social inclusion and representation are key for most civil society organisations and federations that seek food sovereignty. Although farming and natural resource management are becoming increasingly feminised, rural organisations still seem to reflect and reinforce the patriarchal relations that characterise many rural societies. Thus if raising the voice of poor people in food and agricultural policy is a general problem, then raising the voice of poor women in these policy discussions is particularly challenging. Gender equity and learning how to better include and respect the voices of the very poor and marginalised remain urgent challenges for the food sovereignty movement and civil society at large.
- *Transforming knowledge and ways of knowing*. There is a need to actively develop more autonomous and participatory ways of knowing to produce knowledge that is ecologically literate, socially just and relevant to context. The whole process should lead to the democratisation of research, diverse forms of co-inquiry based on specialist and non-specialist knowledge, an expansion of horizontal networks for autonomous learning and action, and more transparent oversight.
- *Reclaiming property rights and territory*. Food sovereignty implies the implementation of radical processes of agrarian reform and equitable re-distribution of rights of access and use over resources, including land, water, forests, seeds and the means of produc-

tion. Comprehensive agrarian reforms need to consider 'territory' as a more inclusive and important concept than mere 'land' and, with this, the right to self determination of indigenous peoples in their territories. Broader concepts of territory, collective rights, autonomy and self determination must be at the heart of future agrarian reforms that seek to balance the needs, rights and demands of diverse actors. These actors include women, men and young people, indigenous peoples, farmers, pastoralists, forest dwellers, migrants, colonists on the agricultural frontiers, rural workers, fisherfolk and others.

- *Deepening democracy in the age of globalisation*. There is a need for economic arrangements that offer enough material security and time for citizens (both men and women) to exercise their right to participate in shaping policies for the public good and to develop autonomous food systems. Only with some material security and time can people be 'empowered' to think about what type of policies they would like to see and how they can contribute to them. Levelling the economic playing field for democratic participation and sustainable livelihoods calls for radical and mutually reinforcing structural reforms, including: 1) a guaranteed and unconditional minimum income for all; 2) a tax on financial speculations; 3) a generalised reduction of time spent in wage-work and a more equitable sharing of jobs; and 4) the re-localisation of pluralist economies that combine both subsistence and market oriented activities.

These critical reflections and proposals for action are offered in a spirit of solidarity with the newly emerging food sovereignty movement and as a contribution to 'learning our way out' of the current impasse of industrial food and farming.

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